

# Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

February 27, 2012

Organization: Lawyers Rights Watch Canada  
Item: Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner  
Speaker: Gary Anandasangaree  
Re: Human Rights abuses in Sri Lanka

Thank you Madam President.

Madam High Commissioner – Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada welcomes your annual report and commends the work undertaken by your office. We call for increased resources to assist your office to fulfill these responsibilities.

It was a bad year for governments who have continuously suppressed the fundamental rights and freedoms of their people. People stood against tyranny. The “Arab Spring” offered a glimpse into the power of the people - especially in light of a militarized response. We share in your concern about the escalating grave human rights violations and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria. We support initiatives to end the conflict peacefully, without further violence and loss of lives. In this regard, we look forward to the second report of the Commission of Inquiry investigating the alleged violations of international human rights law.

One of the first casualties of war is truth, and those who seek it.

We are particularly saddened by the continued attack on journalists in places like Syria. Just 12 days ago, Journalist Marie Colvin and Remi Ochlik were killed while they told the stories of the deaths and destruction of individuals in Syria. We ask your Excellency to increase your vigilance in proactively working towards the protection of journalists.

Since winning the war in 2009, Sri Lanka has failed in attaining peace.

The President of this Council is in receipt of both the reports of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission and the Secretary General's Panel of Experts.

The LLRC report was never meant to be an accountability mechanism. However, some useful findings, if implemented, could assist in the reconciliation process.

The Panel of Experts Report provides a comprehensive analysis on the issues of accountability in Sri Lanka and offers insight into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Sri Lanka has enjoyed the support of this Council. Sri Lanka has been given the appropriate time and space to offer a path towards peace and reconciliation. However, for close to three years, it squandered these opportunities, and has instead commenced a full frontal attack on anyone seeking the universal application of human rights laws, and standards, including human rights defenders in Sri Lanka and those attending this very Council. Government delegates continue to hinder the full participation of NGO's at this Council, and we have seen a marked reduction in individuals attending from Sri Lanka as a result.

As you correctly point out your Excellency, both reports must be discussed and appropriate measures must be taken to ensure the recommendations are acted on, with a definitive timeline for its implementation.

Thank you Madam President.