

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Item: Item 2: Sri Lanka – Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Date: 25 February 2021

Speaker: Harini Sivalingam

Oral Statement to the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), NGO in special consultative status

Prevailing Impunity and Lack of Accountability for Human Rights Violations in Sri Lanka

Mme. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada thanks the High Commissioner for her report.¹ We share the concern that the prevalence of impunity in Sri Lanka warrants the Council's immediate attention. The lack of accountability and deliberate failures to implement recommendations by this Council to address past violations against Tamils peoples including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture and sexual violence increases the likelihood of their reoccurrence.

We are disturbed by the systematic pattern of surveillance, harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, lawyers, and victims of human rights violations and their families in attempt to silence these voices. The government's suppression of memorialization of victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, the continued crackdown on protests, as well as the forced cremations of Muslim and other religious minorities under a militarized Covid-19 framework are deeply alarming trends. These warning signs are evident that Sri Lanka is on the wrong path, and any domestic mechanisms for justice and accountability will fail. International intervention is urgently required to prevent a further decay of human rights.

We call upon the Council to:

1. Strengthen its monitoring in Sri Lanka and set out a coherent, effective, and time-bound plan to advance accountability options at the international level;
2. Take the necessary steps towards the referral of the situation in Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court;
3. Urge Member States to utilize the principle of universal jurisdiction to actively pursue within their national courts the prosecution of international crimes committed in Sri Lanka and to impose sanctions such as travel bans and freezing assets of known perpetrators of grave human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

Thank you, Mme. President.

¹ Promotion reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka.

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session46/Documents/A_HRC_46_20_AEV.docx