

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 2: General debate

Date: 9 September 2025

Speaker: Harini Sivalingam

Oral Statement to the 60th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) NGO in special consultative status

Sri Lanka must delivery on its promises for past atrocities

Mr. President,

The OHCHR report¹ on the situation of human rights in Sri Lanka makes it clear that the new administration has failed to deliver on its promises of justice for past atrocities. Serious abuses continue, including arbitrary detention, torture, deaths in custody, and misuse of counter-terrorism laws, especially against Tamils and Muslims.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act remains in force despite repeated promises of repeal and is being weaponized to arbitrarily arrest and detain persons without charge or trial, including those who seek to memorialize victims or advocate for justice.

Of particular concern is the tens of thousands that remain unaccounted for, despite the continuous funding of the Office on Missing Persons. Human rights defenders and families searching for truth on accountability for enforced disappearances face relentless surveillance, intimidation and harassment by security agencies. These patterns of intimidation extend to ongoing efforts to investigate mass graves, including in Chemmani, where over 200 bodies have been uncovered.

These realities underscore what victims and civil society have long made clear: domestic mechanisms are incapable of delivering justice for atrocity crimes committed in Sri Lanka.

We urge the Human Rights Council to renew the Sri Lanka Accountability Project and support international efforts to end impunity and deliver justice for victims and survivors in Sri Lanka.

Thank you.

¹ Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/60/21, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-21-aev.pdf>