

37th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 2: General Debate - Oral briefing of the High Commissioner on Sri Lanka

Oral Statement

22 March 2018

Thank you, Mr. President.

We thank the High Commissioner for the written update on Sri Lanka. We note the progress made towards operationalizing the long overdue Office on Missing Persons (OMP) by appointing members, though we are concerned about the appointment of a retired Army officer, who is allegedly responsible for several enforced disappearances.

Most of the commitments made in Resolution 30/1 two and half years ago remain mostly or completely unachieved. Even the draft legislation for the three remaining mechanisms that the Government committed to establish has not been made available for public consultation. The fulfilment of transitional justice commitments made under Resolution 30/1 has come to a virtual standstill.

We express our concern that a clear timeline on a comprehensive transitional justice strategy has yet to be made publicly available. Over a year ago the Government-appointed Constitutional Task Force on Reconciliation submitted their final report to the Government. However, the Sri Lankan Government has still failed to officially respond

Relatives of the disappeared have been protesting on roadsides in the North and East for over a year, seeking information about their loved ones. Despite meeting with Government politicians, Ministers and even the President several times, they have not received any constructive responses.

There have been several recent incidents in which religious minorities were targeted - especially Muslims. In Kandy and Ampara, the violence was spurred on by videos on social media and statements by politicians. Police have failed to stop the mobs and have delayed in apprehending perpetrators, which include Buddhist monks, despite clearly available evidence and provisions within the legal framework. The lack of prosecutions and convictions for previous incidents has resulted in a culture of impunity and has encouraged repetition. Franciscans International strongly condemns the violence and urges the Government to immediately investigate these incidents in order to counter impunity and prevent further violence.

Finally, we urge UN States to commit to future engagement with the Sri Lankan government, both through the Council and also bilaterally, to ensure the full implementation of commitments made through Resolution 30/1.

Thank you.