

**51st Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 2: Interactive Dialogue on the report of OHCHR on
promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka**

12 September 2022

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Mr President,

We welcome the High Commissioner Comprehensive report on Sri Lanka (A/HRC/51/5). In particular, we commend the recommendations on the need to have a comprehensive strategy for transitional justice and accountability.

The unprecedented economic crisis in Sri Lanka has generated a situation in which widespread violations of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights are occurring. In this context, civil society organizations, family of victims, religious leaders and people from various sectors have peacefully gathered in Galeface in Colombo, demanding the fulfilment of their rights.

However, we strongly condemn the excessive use of force and the violent crackdown on the peaceful assembly and protest, like on May 9 and July 22, 2022, where allegedly at least forty-two protesters were wounded. We also deplore the increasing reprisals against human rights defenders and protesters. The police arrested several protesters for minor offences by using emergency law and even using the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

On transitional justice and accountability, we are deeply concerned by the failure of the government to deliver justice for the victims of the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings. The Sri Lankan Catholic Church and the family of victims have been requesting an impartial and independent international investigation, as reflected in the statement of His Eminence Cardinal Malcom Ranjith at the 49th Session of the Council.

The Council resolution 46/1 has mandated OHCHR to work on the so-called Sri Lanka Accountability Project (SLAP) to document human rights violations. This work is more relevant than ever.

Therefore, we urge the Council to strengthen it by ensuring its independence; allocate more resources and have the mandate to cover war time atrocities, serious human rights violations during and after the war; Easter Sunday bombings and the current economic and political crisis. We also request the Council to consider establishing a new independent mechanism to complement the SLAP and to monitor the ongoing human rights violations, the progress towards accountability and towards the implementation of the High Commissioner Comprehensive Report on Sri Lanka. I thank you.