



THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

**IMADR Oral Statement: 31st session of the Human Rights Council
Item 2: Annual report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**

10 March 2016

Thank you Mr. President,

IMADR and Franciscans International welcome the High Commissioner's visit to Sri Lanka last month, in which he oversaw the progress in implementing the consensus resolution "*Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka (A/HRC/RES/30/1)*". We appreciate that his visit was received in a friendly and cooperative environment, though we note that a smear campaign was launched by the supporters of the former regime which illustrates the dangers to democratic yearnings of the people of Sri Lanka.

We commend the efforts of the new Government to address challenges related to setting up of transitional justice process including the initiative taken to launch a broad consultation related to the constitutional reform. We also appreciate the steps taken to keep the engagement with the civil society in these efforts. The appointment of Task Force headed by prominent civil society leaders is one such example. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the recommendations of their report will be incorporated and implemented.

The President and Prime Minister made statements which have created uncertainties and anxieties in the minds of the families of the disappeared and those seeking accountability in the post war context. It is our experience that Sri Lanka needs international expertise at all levels in order to effectively implement the resolution 30/1. Wider consultation with victims and survivors is necessary in building the transitional justice mechanisms.

While we welcome the recent developments in a few well-known cases including the disappearance of journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda, there are a countless number of cases waiting for investigation. However, rule of law remains fragile as a result of the decades-long conflict and political manipulation.

Against this backdrop, we urge the Government to carry out a swift judicial reform as part of confidence building measures, including revision of the Victims and Witness Protection Act, adoption of the pending Right to Information Act, repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and strengthening independent commissions. The Government should also launch investigations into cases which sufficient evidences and witnesses are ready to be presented, such as the "Trinco 5" and "ACF (Action Contre la Faim)" cases. Finally, we call upon the Government to ensure transparency and raise public awareness on transitional justice mechanisms and pledges given under resolution 30/1.

Thank you Mr. President.