

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 34th Session
Geneva – 22nd March 2017

ITEM 2 - ID on HC report on Sri Lanka

Oral statement submitted by Dominicans for Justice and Peace and Franciscans International

Mr. President,

Dominicans for Justice and Peace and Franciscans International welcome the recent report of the OHCHR. We also welcome the increasing engagement of the Government of Sri Lanka with the United Nations system since 2015. However, based on our own observations on the ground, we concur with many of the concerns of the OHCHR, especially about slowness and inadequacy in implementing commitments made in resolution 30/1 and continuing surveillance, intimidation and threats to human rights defenders.

Many victims feel that the grievances giving rise to the conflict and immediate problems they face have not been addressed since the unity government came into power in 2015. Hopes they had are fading and confidence eroding. This is evident by long and widespread protests by families of disappeared, landless, unemployed, workers etc. The Government cannot delay any more to release political prisoners and land occupied by the military, operationalise the Office of Missing Persons (OMP) and enact legislation for other transitional justice mechanisms.

We also urge the government to review the Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act of 2015 to ensure its independence.

We believe that this process must be victim-centered, meaning that their rights, needs and interests are prioritized. We therefore call on the Government to ensure that victims can actively participate in each stage of the process, from the design to the implementation of the transitional justice mechanisms.

Mr. President,

We are concerned that that the opportunities presented by the coalition government of two major parties, support of key smaller parties and international community may be lost, unless the Government acts promptly to address urgent concerns on the ground such as ones mentioned above, and ensure transitional justice mechanisms and a new constitution will address grievances and aspirations of survivors, victim's families and all communities in Sri Lanka.

Thank you Mr. President.