

**53rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review**

10 July 2023

Delivered by Patrick Sujeewa Perera OFM

Thank you, Mr. President,

We welcome the outcome of the 4th UPR Cycle of Sri Lanka. We express our concerns that the recommendations on accountability¹, a global policy to search for the disappeared² and the need to have a comprehensive strategy on transitional justice and reconciliation³ are not supported by Sri Lanka, neither the recommendations to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)⁴.

On transitional justice and accountability, we are deeply concerned about the failure of the government to deliver justice for the victims of the 2019 Easter Bomb Attack. The Sri Lankan Catholic Church and the families of victims have been requesting an independent investigation for more than four years, yet justice for the victims has been delayed and impunity prevails.

Regarding the position of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), the Government of Sri Lanka should take into consideration the report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on the Easter Attacks and the Supreme Court Judgement in the SCFR 195/2019 case, to avoid nominating those are facing disciplinary actions.

The families of the disappeared in Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka are still searching for truth and justice for victims of enforced disappearances. Despite the establishment of the Office of Missing Persons (OMP), it has not been able to trace a single disappeared person or clarify the fate of the disappeared in meaningful ways.⁵

We are also concerned about the use of the PTA to silence critical voices in Sri Lanka. It has been used to arrest and intimidate human rights defenders and activists involved in anti-Government protests, including during the Galleface Aragalaya in 2022. The PTA allows for arbitrary and indefinite deprivation of liberty of any individual suspected of a wide range of ill-defined activities.

Therefore, we urge the Sri Lankan Government to abolish the PTA and to ensure that any new legislation is in line with its constitutional guarantees, under Article 13 (6), and its obligations under international human rights law.

Finally, we urge the Government of Sri Lanka to cooperate with the Sri Lanka Accountability Project (SLAP) established by the Council Resolution 46/1. Thank you.

¹ UPR Recommendations 65.94-97

² UPR Recommendation 65.69

³ UPR Recommendation 65.109

⁴ UPR Recommendations 65.72-87.

⁵ See "Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka, Comprehensive Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights", A/HRC/51/5, para 42.