



To Permanent Representatives of Member and Observer States of the United Nations Human Rights Council

September 15, 2025

*Resolution on Sri Lanka must maintain international scrutiny on the human rights situation and advance international accountability efforts*

Excellencies,

As you begin deliberations at the 60th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) on a new resolution promoting human rights and accountability in Sri Lanka, we call on your delegation to support a strong resolution which renews the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)'s Sri Lanka Accountability Project (OSLAP) for a minimum of two years. This is essential for it to carry out its work in gathering evidence for future accountability processes, which is critical in the absence of credible domestic efforts to advance accountability for human rights violations and abuses and crimes under international law.

While commitments by the Sri Lankan government to establish an independent Office of the Public Prosecutor are welcome, establishing such an institution and ensuring it is fully operational will take months if not years and will require considerable political will, which is yet to be demonstrated. Stated commitments to establish a Public Prosecutor's Office alone are insufficient, without further significant trust building measures and reforms, including to incorporate international crimes and proper modes of liability into domestic law. After the establishment of at least ten different commissions over the last two decades—none of which led to meaningful accountability for violations, abuses, or war crimes—victims, their families, and communities have lost trust in domestic institutions and processes that appear to protect alleged perpetrators. Victims' families have therefore engaged with OSLAP, despite the risk of government reprisals – [a risk that continues under the current administration](#). Recent [media reports](#) suggest that the government is prepared to proceed with a domestic accountability mechanism with technical assistance from the HRC -- a proposal that risks failing again, in the absence of substantive improvements on the ground. Further reforms, including of the security sector and of the victim and witness protection framework are essential conditions for the setting up of a credible domestic accountability mechanism, but they do not exist. On the contrary, victims campaigning for justice continue to face harassment and intimidation from government security forces. Without effective international participation as envisaged in HRC resolution 30/1, which was adopted by the HRC in 2015 without a vote, a purely domestic accountability mechanism will not secure the support and participation of victims.

Sri Lanka elected a new government in 2024, but after one year in office the government is yet to take concrete steps that depart from past abusive practices, or to translate its rhetoric of respecting human rights into reality. Minority communities in the north and east of Sri Lanka, especially the Tamil community, that are affected by a nearly three-decade long internal armed conflict, are still waiting for truth, justice and reparations sixteen years after hostilities ended. UN investigations found credible allegations of human rights violations and abuses as well as crimes under international humanitarian law. Successive Sri Lankan governments have failed to implement the comprehensive and systematic reforms needed to build trust with minority communities to create conditions conducive for robust domestic transitional justice processes, such as returning land in conflict-affected areas to

its rightful owners, or to give effect to commitments previously made to the HRC.

The Sri Lankan government made positive commitments to repeal the draconian counter terrorism law, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which numerous UN reports and HRC resolutions have deemed to be incompatible with international human rights law. However, 49 arrests were made this year under the Act as of May 2025, and 38 arrests were made in 2024. The State security and surveillance apparatus harasses and intimidates human rights activists and journalists, especially in the north and east of the country, including those working on land issues and accountability for unlawful killings and enforced disappearances, among other crimes. Military Intelligence recently made a complaint with the Counter Terrorism and Investigation Division against Tamil journalist and Human Rights Defender Kumanan Kanapathippillai for (among other reasons) working closely with the Tamil community, “releasing photographs of protests and commemorations to draw international attention”. This is legitimate work that should be protected and promoted. Mass graves unearthed at around 20 sites have yet to be meaningfully investigated in order to complete excavation, exhumation and identification processes with a view to handing remains back to loved ones for dignified last rites, and for criminal investigations to uncover those suspected of criminal responsibility for what are potentially crimes under international law. Investigations of most emblematic cases are at a standstill, with the Attorney General’s department making little effort to address entrenched impunity.

The High Commissioner’s report notes that “international engagement, including through the Human Rights Council, remains essential and can be supportive of accountability and long-term reconciliation and sustainable peace.” Presently, in the absence of clear, demonstrable domestic action, the Sri Lanka Accountability Project of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is critical in providing assistance to jurisdictions pursuing cases under universal jurisdiction in accordance with international due process and fair trial standards.

We urge the HRC to maintain its scrutiny of Sri Lanka, extending the mandate of the OHCHR’s Sri Lanka Accountability Project for a minimum of two years to ensure a credible avenue of redress for victims and survivors.

Yours faithfully,

Amnesty International

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development

Human Rights Watch

International Commission of Jurists