

UN Human Rights Council 48: Core Group Statement on Sri Lanka

Thank you Madam President

This statement is by the Core Group on Sri Lanka comprising Canada, Germany, North Macedonia, Malawi, Montenegro and the UK.

We thank the High Commissioner for her update on Sri Lanka and call for OHCHR to be granted the resources needed to implement resolution 46/1.

We recognise the challenges Sri Lanka is facing due to the COVID 19 pandemic and express our condolences to the people of Sri Lanka for the many lives that have been lost.

We continue to stress the importance of a comprehensive reconciliation and accountability process. We note Sri Lanka's declared intent to promote reconciliation and to ensure the continuity of the work of the Office of Missing Persons and the Office for Reparations. We call on the Government to ensure the political independence of these institutions. We are disappointed that even the limited progress made on accountability on key emblematic cases has regressed. Recent developments on the case involving the disappearance of 11 youths in 2008-2009 is of particular concern.

We are deeply concerned about current human rights developments, in particular increased limitations being put on civic space including reports of surveillance and intimidation of civil society groups, intimidation of journalists and reprisals against those protesting peacefully. We stress the importance of providing a safe and enabling environment for civil society actors.

We further reiterate our request made at the 47th session for independent and impartial investigations into deaths in police custody.

The Government of Sri Lanka's outreach to the international community and statements of intent regarding reforming the Prevention of Terrorism Act is welcome, though our longstanding concerns about this legislation still remain. We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to bring its counter-terrorism legislation in line with its international human rights obligations. We call on the government of Sri Lanka to reconsider their intention to introduce a rehabilitation process under the Prevention of Terrorism Act that lacks judicial oversight. In this context we remain concerned about the ongoing detention of human rights lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah and the poet and teacher Ahnaf Jazeem under the PTA.

We call on Sri Lanka to cooperate fully with the High Commissioner and remain ready to support the Government on the implementation of resolution 46/1.

Thank you.