



For immediate release

Tamil Diaspora Calls on UNHRC Member States to Pass New Resolution on Sri Lanka *Victim Community Endorses strong recommendations of High Commissioner Bachelet*

GENEVA - February 02, 2021: We, members of the Tamil diaspora spread across the world call on the states gathered to deliberate at the 46th Human Rights Council session to pass a new resolution on Sri Lanka following the recommendations laid out in the January 2021 [report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#). The report clearly confirms that, in the twelve years since the end of the war, Sri Lanka has failed to demonstrate that it has the political will¹ to move forward on a domestic or hybrid justice process and reparations for atrocity crimes committed during the war which ended in 2009.

We strongly endorse High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet's call for "alternative international options for ensuring justice and reparations," including referral to the International Criminal Court, the exercise of universal jurisdiction and sanctions and travel bans on alleged Sri Lankan war criminals and State officials. We welcome the High Commissioner's call for a mechanism for collecting and preserving evidence for future judicial processes and urge a stronger, more widely based OHCHR presence in Sri Lanka. We welcome the tone of urgency by the High Commissioner that there are "**clear early warning signs of a deteriorating human rights situation and a significantly heightened risk of future violations**" and her strong call for preventative action by the Council.

It is commendable that the High Commissioner's report recognizes that the 1983-2009 war was a result of the ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. We welcome the recognition that this ethnic conflict continues following the war, with Tamils and Muslims "increasingly marginalized and excluded". However, too much credit was given to the previous Sirisena government of 2015-2019 despite not making any tangible progress on reconciliation, accountability, and human rights.

Tamils have felt under threat from ethnic majoritarianism since independence when the Sinhalese-majority parliament's very first act was to disenfranchise a third of the Tamil-speaking population. Tamils have endured the ever-increasing destruction of their community through discrimination, ethnic violence, forced removal of Tamil habitations and genocidal war.

We hold even less confidence than the High Commissioner in the Government's efforts towards development and reparations, as the Government is continuing to enrich the Sinhala-Buddhist ethnicity

¹ "the inability and unwillingness of the State to prosecute and punish perpetrators of crimes when State agents are the alleged perpetrators," #51, page 13, HCHR report

over other indigenous ethnicities with government-led demographic changes in the areas of historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil speaking peoples.²

To move forward on transitional justice, the United Nations and its member states must push Sri Lanka toward a more just and equitable society, in hopes of a more prosperous and stable future for all Sri Lankans. While urging passage of a comprehensive Resolution at the Human Rights Council, we also reiterate the High Commissioner's call for bilateral action, including: "Member States can also apply targeted sanctions, such as asset freezes and travel bans against State officials and other actors credibly alleged to have committed or be responsible for grave human rights violations or abuses."

Note: The above statement was jointly issued by the Australian Tamil Congress (ATC), British Tamils Forum (BTF), Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC), Irish Tamils Forum (ITF), Solidarity Group for Peace and Justice in Sri Lanka (South Africa), and the United States Tamil Action Group (USTAG).

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² 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord, [IN LK 870729 Indo-Lanka Accord.pdf \(un.org\)](#)