

THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

IMADR Oral Statement: 25th session of the Human Rights Council

Item 4: General Debate

18 March 2014

Thank you Mr. President,

IMADR welcomes the report of the High Commissioner on Sri Lanka, and endorse its recommendations. It is particularly worrying that the armed forces, Terrorist Investigation and Surveillance Units of Sri Lanka are used to intimidate and harass human rights defenders, especially family members of the disappeared. We call on the Human Rights Council to assure the safety of the three human rights defenders who have been recently detained under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act: Ruki Fernando; Father Praveen; Balendran Jeyalakshmi; and her 13 years old daughter. Since there is no justifiable reason for their arrest and detention, we demand their immediate release.

Between 15th June 2012 to 13th June 2013, violence, intimidation and the cultivated environment of fear hindered the cooperation between the United Nations (UN) human rights mechanisms and the victims, their family members and human rights defenders in Sri Lanka. High-level government officials in Sri Lanka, including the President, continue to make negative statements about the UN human rights mechanisms and portray those cooperating with the UN as "traitors," "terrorists" and "being against the country". A state-controlled radio station aired a programme where a number of listeners openly called for the elimination of human rights defenders, including myself.

Mr. President,

The Human Rights Council has our lives and rights in its hands. We, as human rights defenders, gather here with full confidence to use this forum to address the experiences of peoples, whose civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights have been deprived. We discuss these matters under thematic areas. States are obliged to respect and promote human rights of all under the UDHR, and further comply with the various Conventions they have ratified. Who have the responsibility to ensure that the rights enshrined in the international statutes are enjoyed by peoples all over the world? The member States should lead this struggle to make this world humane, where we can fully enjoy human rights. We regret that negotiations for human rights have been politicised and negated the ideal of democracy.

IMADR remains committed to support all endeavours of the OHCHR for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Thank you Mr. President.