

13<sup>th</sup> January 2017

To: Members States of the United Nations Human Rights Council

**CONTINUED SUPPORT ON SRI LANKA**

We, the undersigned activists, academics and organisations from Sri Lanka, write this letter in the lead up to the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) at which Sri Lanka is to be taken up for discussion as provided by the Resolution titled 'Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka (Resolution 30/1). In light of the limited progress made on the commitments made in Resolution 30/1, we urge you to support a comprehensive resolution that continues to monitor the situation in Sri Lanka and provides for the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to monitor and report back to the UNHRC in 18 months.

The continued engagement by the UNHRC on Sri Lanka is critical at a moment when significant reforms are at stake. At the time of writing this letter, none of the four mechanisms committed to in Resolution 30/1 have been established, despite expedited enactment of legislation for the Office of Missing Persons (OMP) in August 2016. Nor is there demonstrable progress with legal reforms such as the enactment of domestic legislation criminalising enforced disappearances, although recent media reports allude to steps being taken to repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) to be replaced by a proposed Counter Terrorism Act which is yet to be publicly shared. While certain efforts including some land releases in the North and East and the enactment of legislation on the Certificates of Absence have been made, progress on most commitments is extremely disappointing. It also needs to be noted that some violations have reduced in scale, but the very continuation of such abuses have raised concerns that adequate steps are not being taken to ensure due protection for human rights.

In the oral update by the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Council, June 2016, concerns were raised by him on the inaction of the Government of Sri Lanka. The High Commissioner went on to urge the Government of Sri Lanka to have *'a comprehensive strategy that enables it to pursue different processes in a coordinated, integrated and appropriately sequenced manner. Such a strategy would bring together the currently unwieldy coordination arrangements within Government and facilitate greater coordination of international donor support. It should be backed up by a concerted public information campaign that would mobilise the power and participation of civil society behind the transitional justice process. This would also increase transparency and ensure that the current consultation process with victims and civil society can be maximized and have a meaningful input into the design of transitional justice mechanisms'*. Unfortunately, the Government is yet to make demonstrable progress on any of the above.

In 2015 we welcomed both the report of the OHCHR investigation on Sri Lanka and Resolution 30/1, hoping that the Government of Sri Lanka would initiate much needed reforms soon. The report by the Consultations Task Force (CTF) released this month confirms the support among progressive sections of the population across Sri Lanka for the commitments made in 2015, and reiterates the need for urgent steps by the Government of Sri Lanka. In such a context, it is critical to continue to engage and support Sri Lanka to fulfil its commitment through extending the duration of the resolution.

Thank you.

**Signatories;**  
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### **Organisations**

83. Association of War Affected Women (AWAW)
84. Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA)
85. Equal Ground
86. Families of the Disappeared (FoD)
87. Human Rights Organization (HRO), Kandy
88. INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre
89. Mannar Citizens Committee (MCC)
90. Mannar Women's Development Federation (MWDF)
91. National Fisheries Solidarity Organization (NAFSO)
92. National Peace Council (NPC)
93. Right to Life Human Rights Center (R2L)
94. SAMADANA/M - Centre for promoting Nonviolence, Conflict Resolution & Handling and Peace Building
95. South Asia Centre for Legal Studies (SACSL)
96. The International Movement against all forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) - Asia Committee
97. Women's Action Network (WAN)