IMADR

THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

Oral Statement: 46th session of the Human Rights Council
Item 2: Interactive Dialogue on the OHCHR report on Sri Lanka

24 February 2021

Madam President,

We welcome the High Commissioner's report on Sri Lanka. Human rights in Sri Lanka are now threatened by the centralisation of executive powers and weakening of the independence of the judiciary and key commissions including the Human Rights Commission and the Office on Missing Persons (OMP). With the rubber-stamping Parliamentary Council, President Rajapaksa has absolute powers to appoint members of these institutions. This Council must stay alert to appointments of OMP commissioners once the current members finish their mandate this week.

The report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on "political victimisation" threatens the democratic fabric of the country which includes recommendations to take legal actions against those pursued human rights investigations. This is a direct threat to human rights defenders, victims and witnesses. It heightens fear of reprisal and brings back memories of the past.

Although the recent Government's indication to allow burials of COVID-19 victims is a positive step, the Council must remain concerned by the continuing discriminatory treatments of Tamil and Muslim minorities such as the arbitrary use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), increased surveillance, and the demolition of the memorial monument in the Jaffna University, to name a few.

While we have continuously called for an international accountability mechanism on Sri Lanka, we support the High Commissioner's recommendations and urge the Human Rights Council to give monitoring and evidence-gathering mandates to the OHCHR.

Thank you.