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**THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM****Oral Statement: 48th session of the Human Rights Council  
Item 2: General Debate on the High Commissioner's oral updates**

14 September 2021

Madam President,

At the outset, we echo the High Commissioner's concerns on the deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan and regret that this Council failed to adopt a robust resolution at the special session. We joined the open appeal<sup>1</sup> for the creation of an independent investigative mechanism on Afghanistan to protect the rights of Afghans including women and girls, and ethnic and religious minorities.

We thank the High Commissioner for her oral update on Sri Lanka. At the beginning of this year's March session, we alerted the Council to the imminent risk to the independence of the judiciary and key commissions including the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) due to unfettered powers given to the President by the 20<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution to make appointments to key positions at such public bodies.<sup>2</sup> While new OMP commissioners have been reportedly appointed after the end of the previous commissioners' term of office in February this year, there was no announcement nor criteria for selection made public. Such a lack of transparency and due process seriously erodes the confidence of families of the disappeared in the OMP. Families have forwarded their concerns to the authorities.

The continued use of the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) to arbitrary arrest and detain individuals, many of whom belong to minority groups, warrants the Council's attention. One such case is prominent Muslim lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah who remains detained under the PTA from April last year. The latest Sustainable Development Report also shows that Sri Lanka regressed in the indicators for unsentenced detainees and the access to justice in Goal 16.<sup>3</sup>

As the statement of the Sri Lankan Civil Society Platform issued yesterday highlighted the shrinking of civic space and a series of human rights challenges in the last two years, the Government of Sri Lanka has demonstrated a lack of commitment to pursue truth, justice, accountability and reconciliation. Against this backdrop, we call on UN Member States to support the full operationalisation of the OHCHR mandate to collect, consolidate, analyse and preserve information and evidence for future accountability processes.

Thank you.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/4694/2021/en/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://imadr.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Oral-Statement\\_HRC46\\_Item2\\_ID\\_Sri-Lanka.pdf](https://imadr.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Oral-Statement_HRC46_Item2_ID_Sri-Lanka.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/sri-lanka>