



49th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 2: Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner on the OHCHR written update
on Sri Lanka (res. 46/1)

Delivered by Ahmed Adam
On behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
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Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner,

We welcome the High Commissioner's written update on Sri Lanka.

We remain concerned at the human rights situation in Sri Lanka which stands in stark contrast to the government's narrative of supposed improvements and reforms in the country.

Harassment, intimidation and surveillance of human rights defenders, civil society, victims, and their families continue to intensify. The Terrorism Investigation Division regularly targets NGOs and their staff in clear attempts to intimidate and silence them. Those campaigning for credible investigations and accountability for 2019 Easter attacks continues to face harassment.

The proposed amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism Act at the core of the government's narrative of purported reforms are cosmetic and insufficient to address serious concerns with the law and its implementation. We call for an immediate moratorium on the use of the law until it is replaced by a law that fully complies with international standards, as recommended by the High Commissioner, to demonstrate genuine willingness to reform.

Recent appointment of a presidential taskforce to implement the concept of 'one country, one law', and the appointment as its chairperson a leader of an extremist organization known for anti-Muslim rhetoric, is yet another blatant attempt at perpetuating discrimination against minorities for political gain.

The government continues to obstruct accountability through political interference.

The current economic crisis caused by the mismanagement of the economy and the COVID19 pandemic has deepened the human rights crisis and widened the inequality gap.

The Council must not be distracted by superficial gestures of reform and engagement aimed at warding off international criticism. In absence of tangible progress, the Council must be prepared to take further action to advance accountability through international mechanisms including by supporting for and strengthening the OHCHR capacity to collect and preserve evidence as mandated in the Council resolution 46/1.

Thank you.