



**UN Human Rights Council
Thirty-third Session
13 September – 30 September 2016**

Item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Interactive Dialogue with the
Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance

Delivered on 15 September 2016

Mr Vice-president,

When Sri Lanka co-sponsored UN Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1 in October 2015, among the commitments made were initiatives to account for enforced disappearances.

The Working Group has transmitted more than 12,000 complaints to Sri Lanka. Although the second highest in the world, these represent only the “tip of the iceberg.” In May, the Sri Lankan government acknowledged receiving at least 65,000 complaints of enforced disappearances since 1995.

Amnesty International agrees with the Working Group that Sri Lanka’s invitation to visit the country in 2015 and its increasing openness to international engagement are encouraging signs. There is however still much more to be done to ensure that victims and their families can reliably expect truth, justice and reparation for the grave crimes under international law that they and their loved ones have experienced. In this regard, we welcomed Sri Lanka’s ratification in May of the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Sri Lankans are however still waiting for the legislation that would make enforced disappearances a crime under Sri Lankan law. Families hoped that the Office on Missing Persons would finally, after years of waiting, deliver the truth about the fate of their missing loved ones, but expressed frustration that they were not adequately consulted before its creation. This is a lesson for other promised truth and justice mechanisms.

Sri Lanka has acknowledged that the Prevention of Terrorism Act (which contributed to enforced disappearances) does not meet international standards. It issued directives designed to protect detainees but people continue to be detained under the Act. Lawmakers should repeal the Act and stop its use immediately.

Sri Lanka must step up its reform efforts in genuine consultation with victims and with all Sri Lankans. It should welcome the help of the Working Group while doing so.

What would the Working Group recommend that the Human Rights Council do to help ensure that Sri Lanka fulfils its commitments to account for enforced disappearances and guard against their recurrence?

Thank you Mr Vice-president.