

Mr Volker Türk  
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais Wilson, 52 rue des Pâquis,  
CH-1201 Geneva,  
Switzerland

June 16, 2025

Dear High Commissioner,

***Subject: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights upcoming visit to Sri Lanka***

We are writing this public letter in connection with your forthcoming visit to Sri Lanka, from June 23 to 26, 2025. We recognize your office's continued engagement on human rights in Sri Lanka, and your commitment to promoting justice, truth and reparation in the country.

As you are aware, OHCHR has been closely involved on Sri Lanka for nearly two decades. Sri Lanka has continuously been on the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) agenda since the end of the country's internal armed conflict, [starting with a resolution in 2012](#). As successive Sri Lankan governments repeatedly reneged on their pledges to the international community, including those made during visits by your predecessors, the UNHRC process has remained an important source of hope for victims and survivors who continue to seek justice, truth and reparation.

The relatively new government led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake made fresh promises prior to elections, but it has shown little political will in addressing them after coming to power, and has so far maintained much of the same policy positions of its predecessors. While justice and accountability for human rights violations and abuses and war crimes committed during the 1983-2009 armed conflict with the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and in its aftermath remain outstanding, there also remain thousands of unaddressed enforced disappearances in the south, associated with the 1988-1990 Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) uprising. However, instead of providing justice, truth, and reparation, the government has sought to deflect international pressure over the lack of accountability for crimes under international law and to persuade the UNHRC to end its scrutiny of Sri Lanka.

It is imperative that your visit is not used by the Sri Lankan government to reinforce its calls to end the mandate given to your office by the UNHRC, particularly the work of the Sri Lanka Accountability Project (OSLAP) and to monitor and report on progress on human rights. OSLAP has gathered thousands of pieces of information, many of which could be used as evidence in future prosecutions, and it continues to collect and analyze new information. Over the last decade, Sri Lankan human rights defenders have repeatedly traveled to Geneva to seek justice and want this mandate to be renewed and strengthened by the UNHRC in September.

Patterns of violations and abuses, previously highlighted in your reports, have continued since last year's elections. Despite a pledge in the government's manifesto to repeal the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act it remains in use, typically to arbitrarily detain people for exercising the right to

freedom of expression protected by international law. In the north and east, government agencies, including the Department of Archaeology and security forces, often acting in concert with hardline Buddhist monks, continue to appropriate land and infrastructure held by Tamils – including Hindu temples, which are then transformed into Buddhist temples. Civil society, victims and survivors who engage with OSLAP and the UNHRC process continue to face harassment and intimidation at the hands of state agents. There has been little apparent progress in investigations into the 2019 Easter Sunday Bombings, but hundreds of Muslim families whose members were accused of involvement continue to suffer police harassment and discrimination.

We urge you to use your visit to stand in solidarity with victims, survivors and their families, and to reiterate that international scrutiny and involvement – including evidence gathering by OSLAP – remains indispensable in the absence of any credible domestic steps to advance accountability. We believe that your visit would be a crucial opportunity to:

- Publicly call on the government to ensure accountability for violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law, especially those constituting crimes under international law, including by allowing OSLAP investigators access to Sri Lanka.
- Publicly recognize and endorse the efforts of victims and survivors to seek justice and accountability and to engage with OSLAP and call on the government to end reprisals against those who engage with OSLAP and the UNHRC process.
- Publicly support calls from victims and survivors for the continuation of OSLAP's mandate, and, in particular, its work on gathering, consolidating and preserving evidence of violations and abuses under international human rights and humanitarian law.
- Publicly identify clear and measurable benchmarks for progress that are needed for international assistance to be impactful.
- Meet with the families of victims of enforced disappearances, both from the north and east and from the south of the island.
- Visit Mullivaikal. We believe that all high-level international visitors to Sri Lanka concerned with human rights should witness the scene of the final atrocities of the war to make clear to both survivors and victims' families and the government that they insist upon recognizing and addressing those events.
- Visit mass grave sites associated with civil war rights abuses, such as that at Chemmani near Jaffna, as well as mass graves associated with the JVP uprising in the south.
- Publicly call on the government to fulfill its manifesto commitment to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and introduce an immediate moratorium on its use. Any replacement counter-terrorism legislation should comply with international human rights law and standards, which previously published proposals, known as the Anti-Terrorism Bill, did not.
- Publicly call on the government to end ongoing violations of land rights and the right to freedom of religion or belief, notably in the Eastern and Northern Provinces, where government agencies are engaged in seizing land, as well as Hindu temples, from Tamil communities.

- Publicly call upon the government to pursue and make public a complete investigation of the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, prosecute and bring to justice in fair trials those against whom evidence is found, and end the police harassment of families whose members were earlier detained arbitrarily.
- Insist that any measures proposed by the government of Sri Lanka purportedly to advance truth, justice and accountability, such as reforms to the Office of Missing Persons or a [proposed truth and reconciliation commission](#), meet international standards including for accountability, and are done in consultation with victims' and survivors' groups and Sri Lankan human rights experts.
- Call on the Sri Lankan authorities to promptly accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and implement it fully into national law.

Thanking you for your consideration. We wish you a successful visit and stand ready to provide further information or to discuss these matters with you ahead of your visit.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development

Human Rights Watch

International Commission of Jurists

The Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice