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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 60/1, provides a written update on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka suffered the impact of a devastating cyclone in November 2025 and continuing shocks from armed conflict in West Asia. In the report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights notes that, while the Government has pledged to address several long-standing issues – including accountability in some emblematic cases and institutional reforms – these commitments to ensure truth and justice risk stalling, with momentum for transformative change being lost. The report contains recommendations for both the Government and the international community aimed at advancing accountability, reconciliation and the protection of human rights.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 60/1, in which the Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to present, at its sixty-third session, a written update on progress in reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka. The report analyses the human rights situation in Sri Lanka during the period from the adoption of that resolution, October 2025, until July 2026, with reference to events in previous years, where appropriate. Particular attention is paid to the Government's commitments made in its election manifesto and during the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to Sri Lanka in June 2025.

2. OHCHR notes the Government's rejection of Human Rights Council resolutions 46/1, in particular paragraph 6 thereof, and 51/1, particularly paragraph 8 thereof. OHCHR sent questions to the Government and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka during the preparation of the present report, and received a written response from the latter. The draft report was shared with the Government for factual comments, which were received on 31 August 2026.

3. In June 2026, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children visited Sri Lanka. The Committee on Enforced Disappearances reviewed the initial report of Sri Lanka under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in September 2025 and issued concluding observations.[1] Despite the standing invitation of Sri Lanka to special procedure mandate holders, eight visit requests were pending as of July 2026. In April 2026, Sri Lanka ratified the International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), on recognizing the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.[2]

II. Human rights context

4. Following the visit to Sri Lanka by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in June 2025[3] and the report by OHCHR to the Human Rights Council at its sixtieth session,[4] the country was hit by successive exogenous shocks, including unilateral trade measures, a catastrophic cyclone and spillovers from armed conflict in West Asia.

5. The Government led by the National People's Power, which assumed office in late 2024, committed in its manifesto to undertaking substantial reforms and addressing persistent human rights concerns, including by repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act, taking efforts to combat corruption, establishing an independent public prosecutor's office and promoting accountability for the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks and other emblematic cases.[5]

6. While the Government has continued to promote national unity and denounce racism, it has continued to rely on the repressive Prevention of Terrorism Act and has yet to repeal or undertake meaningful revisions to the law and other legislation that impact fundamental freedoms across all of Sri Lankan society. Activists and victims of the decades-long civil war continue to face surveillance, questioning and intimidation by State intelligence services, particularly in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, undermining conditions for genuine reconciliation. The National People's Power also pledged to introduce a new constitution to guarantee equality and democracy and the devolution of political and administrative power

[1] CED/C/LKA/CO/1. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities considered the initial report of Sri Lanka in August 2026 (CRPD/C/LKA/1).

[2] On 18 August 2026, the Cabinet approved the establishment of an inter-ministerial standing committee on human rights, to strengthen reporting and follow-up on human rights.

[3] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/06/turk-ends-mission-sri-lanka.

[4] A/HRC/60/21.

[5] See https://muragala.lk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NPP_manifesto_English_2024.pdf.

to every local government, district and province.[6] Although local government elections were conducted in May 2025, provincial council elections under the thirteenth constitutional amendment have not been held since 2014.

7. The Government has taken notable steps to tackle corruption. High-profile arrests have been made and police-led investigations into some political killings, enforced disappearances and the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks have been carried out. Meaningful progress, however, remains largely absent in relation to accountability for international crimes allegedly committed by both State security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam during the armed conflict.

A. Human rights impacts of the economic crisis and corruption

8. Cyclone Ditwah made landfall on 28 November 2025, impacting 2.2 million persons across all 25 districts of the country.[7] As at 17 April 2026, the Government had reported 687 deaths and 147 missing persons, with 5,866 homes completely destroyed and 109,629 others partially damaged.[8] There was wide public mobilization of support for the humanitarian response. Early assessments by the United Nations Development Programme indicated that over half of the people in flooding areas were already living in households facing multiple vulnerabilities, including unstable income, high debt and a limited capacity to cope with disasters.[9] Protection concerns affecting children, older people and people with disabilities were also reported during the humanitarian response.[10] The cyclone resulted in an estimated $2 billion in physical damage and $1.3 billion in economic losses, with total recovery and reconstruction needs estimated at $3.4 billion.[11]

9. Spillover effects from armed conflict in West Asia since 28 February 2026 threatened further strains on the economy and household welfare, given the country's limited fiscal space, as well as energy, food and fertilizer price shocks.[12]

10. The poverty rate in Sri Lanka was estimated to be 22.1 per cent in 2025.[13] Poverty was also characterized by unequal distribution, with severe pockets of deprivation in structurally disadvantaged areas, particularly in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, highlighting the intersectionality between vulnerability and shock exposure.[14]

11. In the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah, food insecurity was estimated as affecting 31 per cent of the population in December 2025 and 21 per cent in February 2026. Household food security, however, remained precarious given inflationary pressures due to spikes in energy prices and risks to agricultural production resulting from fertilizer shortages.[15]

[6] See https://muragala.lk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NPP_manifesto_English_2024.pdf.
[7] See https://reliefweb.int/attachments/d0ce3688-3d4e-4c71-9f00-a37384f9000b/Cyclone_Ditwah__SitRep%20%2313.pdf.
[8] See https://www.dmc.gov.lk/images/dmcreports/Ditwah_Situation_Summary_Report_at_1000hrs_on_2026__1776403312.pdf.
[9] See https://geosmart.undp.org/arcgis/apps/storymaps/stories/25866fbc805c4d70b6bf35c23f896daf.
[10] See https://reliefweb.int/attachments/489d9312-13b0-4609-a526-4435b72a0179/MDRLK023OU3.pdf.
[11] See https://www.dmc.gov.lk/images/pdfs/PDNA_Full_Report_Final%20Updated.pdf.
[12] See https://reliefweb.int/attachments/41e0b5ea-b424-4395-aa81-1734f898abeb/WFP-0000172511.pdf.
[13] See https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstreams/fef5cb1d-2333-4269-8d91-7a7bcd33424a/download.
[14] See https://www.preventionweb.net/media/118273/download?startDownload=20260811.
[15] See https://reliefweb.int/attachments/f378d7a1-8598-456e-947c-02a4fd55db2c/WFP-0000173144.pdf.

12. According to OHCHR calculations, in the 2026 budget,[16] 49.38 per cent of Government revenue (7.6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP)) was allocated to servicing interest payment on public debt; this figure increases to 82.59 per cent of total revenue (12.7 per cent of GDP) when also accounting for principal repayments. In comparison, health, education and social protection received allocations of 1.9 per cent, 2 per cent and 2.4 per cent of GDP, respectively. Following Cyclone Ditwah, the Government passed a supplementary budget amounting to 500 billion rupees ($1.6 billion) to restore livelihoods and support affected communities.[17] It also sought and obtained $206 million in emergency financing from the Rapid Financing Instrument of the International Monetary Fund (IMF),[18] among other support pledged by development partners. According to information made available to OHCHR, the United Nations had mobilized $28.5 million for the humanitarian response as of 30 April 2026. Debt vulnerabilities, however, will remain elevated over the medium term. Following a mission in June 2026, IMF acknowledged that the Government had successfully maintained macroeconomic stability, despite external shocks.[19]

13. Since entering the current IMF Extended Fund Facility programme in 2023, Sri Lanka has changed its electricity pricing to a cost-reflective, periodically adjusted system. As of May 2026, electricity tariffs had risen twice – first in April[20] and then in May[21] – due in part to elevated fuel costs stemming from the armed conflict in West Asia. Given the direct impact of electricity prices on the right to an adequate standard of living, particularly on persons living in poverty, the Government committed, with IMF agreement, to providing a subsidy of 15 billion rupees ($45 million), protecting households consuming less than 180 units of electricity each month.[22]

14. In March 2026, the Supreme Court issued two landmark rulings affirming the State's obligations to protect the rights to life, health and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The Court held that a former health minister and senior officials had violated fundamental rights by bypassing legal safeguards in a drug procurement process.[23] Separately, it found that authorities had been responsible for the Meethotamulla garbage dump disaster, when unsafe waste dumping led to a deadly collapse of an open garbage dump in 2017, reinforcing institutional accountability for public health and safety and the obligation to prevent harm.[24]

15. Anti-corruption efforts since late 2025 reflect a combination of legal reforms, institutional strengthening and an uptick in investigations and prosecutions, although implementation remains uneven. In April 2026, the Government released its 2026 Governance Action Plan,[25] which includes commitments relating to the establishment of a public beneficial ownership registry, the enactment of public procurement legislation and the decentralization of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption through regional offices. The Commission has launched investigations and prosecuted numerous cases,[26] including new investigations into the Sri Lankan Airlines–Airbus case, implicating former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.[27] Investigations into alleged irregularities

[16] See https://www.treasury.gov.lk/api/file/fd6a1601-54a4-484c-84fa-465d9cfc77f6.
[17] See https://www.parliament.lk/en/home/parliament-news/view/4996.
[18] See https://www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/cr/2025/english/1lkaea2025003-source-pdf.pdf.
[19] See https://www.imf.org/en/news/articles/2026/06/30/pr26229-sri-lanka-imf-staff-concludes-visit.
[20] See https://www.gazette.lk/2026/03/pucsl-electricity-tariff-revision-2026-april-new-electricity-charges.html.
[21] See https://www.ft.lk/top-story/PUCSL-approves-18-electricity-tariff-hike-from-today/26-791698#.
[22] See https://www.treasury.gov.lk/api/file/a253a866-0d69-47d4-8381-163fefce5bf3.
[23] See https://supremecourt.lk/wp-content/uploads/judgements/sc_fr_65_2023_with_sc_fr_82_2023.pdf. See also A/HRC/60/21, para. 14.
[24] See https://supremecourt.lk/wp-content/uploads/judgements/sc_fr_311_2015_and_sc_fr_318_2015-3.pdf.
[25] See https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/assets/pdf/GovernanceActionPlanPublication2026.pdf.
[26] See https://www.ft.lk/news/CIABOC-records-154-arrests-115-cases-and-Rs-2-8-m-fines-in-2025/56-787508.
[27] See https://www.themorning.lk/articles/CDDe5pGWk6hJNF1120nU.

surrounding coal procurement are ongoing,[28] as are judicial proceedings against former President Ranil Wickremesinghe for alleged misuse of public funds.[29] The deaths, reportedly by suicide, of key suspects in some high-profile cases have complicated efforts to establish responsibility and secure accountability.[30]

B. Emergency powers, legislative developments and institutional reform

1. Emergency regulations and extended use

16. Following Cyclone Ditwah, in December 2025, the President declared a nationwide state of emergency and the Government simultaneously gazetted emergency regulations. These regulations granted broad and exceptional powers to the executive, such as to authorize arrests and detentions without a warrant and with limited judicial oversight, conduct searches and seizures without prior judicial approval, restrict movement and public assembly, impose curfews and deploy the military in civilian functions.[31] In December 2025, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka wrote to the President expressing concerns that the emergency regulations appeared to be based on a recurring government template and that several provisions were incompatible with the Constitution and international human rights norms and standards.[32] The emergency regulations were repeatedly extended until they were finally allowed to lapse on 28 June 2026.

17. Moreover, the President continued to renew extraordinary gazette notifications under section 12 of the Public Security Ordinance, which authorizes the President to deploy the armed forces to maintain public order, including during protests.

2. Legislative and institutional developments

18. The National People's Power pledged to abolish all oppressive acts, including the Prevention of Terrorism Act, in its campaign manifesto.[33] In December 2025, the Government initiated and published draft legislation – entitled the "Protection of the State from Terrorism Act" – intended to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act. OHCHR provided preliminary comments to the Government on the draft bill in February 2026, expressing serious concern that the bill reproduced and expanded concerns arising from the implementation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, including risks of overly broad criminalization, restrictions on fundamental freedoms, extensive executive powers with limited safeguards, arbitrary detention, exposure to torture and enforced disappearance, and insufficient due process and fair trial protections.[34]

19. Meanwhile, the Government continued to apply the Prevention of Terrorism Act, resulting in arbitrary arrests and prolonged detention without charge. OHCHR received information from the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka that it had been notified of 46 Prevention of Terrorism Act-related detention cases in 2025 and 12 cases in the first three months of 2026.

20. In parallel, other proposed legislative reforms, specifically, amendments on terrorist financing, the financial transactions reporting bill and legislation to combat organized

[28] See https://news.lk/current-affairs/full-powered-presidential-commission-to-investigate-coal-procurement.

[29] See https://www.newswire.lk/2026/07/08/court-fixes-september-date-for-state-funds-misuse-case-against-ranil/.

[30] See https://island.lk/high-stakes-in-pursuing-corruption-cases/.

[31] See https://web.archive.org/web/20260225112703/https://documents.gov.lk/view/extra-gazettes/2025/11/2464-31_E.pdf.

[32] See https://www.hrcsl.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HRCSL-Press-Notice-05122025.pdf.

[33] See https://muragala.lk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NPP_manifesto_English_2024.pdf.

[34] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/sri-lanka/ohchr-comments-sri-lanka-psta.pdf. On 17 August 2026, the Cabinet approved the publishing of the bill entitled "Protection of the State from terrorism" in the Government gazette. As of 31 August 2026, the latest draft had not been made public.

crime,[35] triggered concern that powers similar to those under the Prevention of Terrorism Act – particularly those relating to detention, surveillance and asset seizure – may be preserved or expanded in new laws.[36] On 19 May 2026, the Supreme Court ruled that the terrorist financing (amendment) bill could be passed by a simple majority and that the financial transactions reporting (amendment) bill may proceed; however, clauses 22 and 39 relating to the imposition of administrative sanctions required amending to include specified safeguards.[37] OHCHR is concerned that such powers could be extended beyond counter-terrorism to areas such as crime and drug control and could increase State control and monitoring of the activities of civil society organizations, including in the context of disaster response.

21. Civil society actors have raised concerns about limited public consultation, lack of transparency in legislative drafting and short scrutiny periods, particularly when bills are gazetted shortly before being tabled in Parliament.[38]

22. While the Government indicated that it was finalizing amendments to the Online Safety Act, the original law is still in force, including in investigations involving online speech and alleged defamation cases.[39] Courts and law enforcement continue to apply the law in cases involving "false", "harmful" or "defamatory" online content, with some high-profile summons and investigations reported in 2025 and 2026.[40] The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka has raised serious concerns about the Act, warning that its use to limit freedom of expression, even on grounds of preventing defamation, could be unconstitutional. It recommended a moratorium on its use, followed by repeal and replacement with more effective legislation developed through broad consultation with civil society and relevant experts.[41]

23. On 19 February 2026, the Supreme Court heard a petition by comedian Natasha Edirisooriya, arrested in May 2023 under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act for allegedly "insulting Buddhism".[42] A Criminal Investigations Department officer issued a formal apology to Ms. Edirisooriya and, subsequently, in March 2026, the Inspector General of Police issued new guidelines for arrests, significantly tightening the procedural requirements for police action under the law, including requiring prior approval from the Attorney General before any arrest, imposing stricter evidentiary thresholds to ensure that each arrest is properly documented and justified and providing for disciplinary action against officers who fail to comply with those requirements.[43]

24. In January 2026, the Ministry of Justice initiated consultations on the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act.[44] The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka informed OHCHR that it had submitted updated recommendations and legal observations to the Ministry, focusing on strengthening equality, non-discrimination and access to justice. As of July 2026, the review had not advanced.

[35] See https://www.newsfirst.lk/2026/02/26/new-bill-to-combat-organized-crime-ready-for-cabinet-next-week.

[36] See https://www.cpalanka.org/cpa-statement-on-the-proposed-bills-tabled-on-9-april-2026/.

[37] See https://www.parliament.lk/uploads/bills/gbills/scdet/6423.pdf.

[38] See https://www.cpalanka.org/cpa-statement-on-the-proposed-bills-tabled-on-9-april-2026/.

[39] See https://lankalaw.net/2025/01/19/cases-filed-under-online-safety-act/.

[40] See https://eusee.hivos.org/alert/police-summons-of-journalist-raises-concerns-on-media-freedom-and-continued-use-of-the-online-safety-act; and https://freedomhouse.org/country/sri-lanka/freedom-net/2025.

[41] See https://www.hrcsl.lk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/HRCSL-Statement-on-the-Freedom-of-Expression-and-Online-Safety-in-Sri-Lanka_English_03_02_2026.pdf.

[42] A/HRC/57/19, para. 13.

[43] See https://adaderana.lk/news/120250; and https://lankanewsweb.net/archives/184916/igp-issues-new-guidelines-on-arrests-under-iccpr-act/.

[44] See https://www.moj.gov.lk/index.php/en/public-consultation/public-feedback-from-on-reforms-to-the-muslim-marriage-and-divorce-act-of-sri-lanka.

25. A private member's bill submitted to Parliament in April 2023 seeking to repeal or amend sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code to decriminalize consensual sexual conduct between adults did not advance during the reporting period, despite the Supreme Court affirming the bill's constitutionality.

26. With regard to the independence of the judiciary, the Judicial Service Association of Sri Lanka, the Colombo High Court Lawyers' Association and the Bar Association of Sri Lanka expressed concern that the Government was planning constitutional amendments to extend the retirement age of Supreme Court and Court of Appeal judges.[45] The Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers has consistently emphasized that judges' tenure, conditions of service and retirement age should be secured by law and protected from executive interference.[46] The Special Rapporteur has also emphasized the importance of consultations and transitional arrangements. International human rights standards stress that judicial career processes must be insulated from political influence and that both real and perceived judicial independence are essential to maintaining public confidence in the administration of justice. The National People's Power-led Government committed to creating an independent office of the public prosecutor, separating prosecutorial functions from the Attorney General's Department. A technical committee was established and tasked in early 2025 with studying the legal structure of the Office and proposing draft recommendations for new legislation, but there has been no reported progress on this or on an operational office of the public prosecutor.[47]

27. In May 2026, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka recommended strengthening the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act to make non-compliance with the Commission's recommendations an offence.[48] After the Government came to power, it operationalized the National Women's Commission (established through the Women's Empowerment Act 2024) and appointed its Chair and members. In January 2026, four months after her appointment, the Chair of the National Women's Commission resigned, reportedly due to lack of operational independence, dedicated budget, office space and human resources.[49] In June 2026, a new Chair was appointed.

C. Ongoing human rights concerns

1. Arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and other human rights violations and abuses

28. During the reporting period, cases of deaths in police custody, allegedly resulting from torture or ill-treatment, deaths in prison and reports of arbitrary arrests continued to be reported. Reports also indicated that the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance had been used to detain individuals for prolonged periods without bail. On 3 May, a 40-year-old inmate, detained for a minor drug-related offence, died at Welikada Prison in Colombo, allegedly following severe beatings. Reports indicated that he had been captured after an

[45] See, for example, https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/BASL-urges-President-not-to-raise-retirement-age-of-Superior-Court-Judges/108-341832; and https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Colombo-High-Court-Lawyers-Association-opposes-proposed-extension-of-judges-retirement-age/108-341994. On 18 August 2026, the bill was presented in Parliament (see https://www.parliament.lk/en/home/parliament-news/view/5355).

[46] See https://independence-judges-lawyers.org/supplementing-the-un-basic-principles-on-the-independence-of-the-judiciary/. On 7 August 2026, the Special Rapporteur addressed a communication to the Government on the reported proposal to amend the Constitution, to which the Government responded that the amendments were not intended to prolong the mandates of specific judges or alter the composition of the judiciary for institutional purposes. See LKA 4/2026 and response, available from https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments.

[47] See https://www.cpalanka.org/strengthening-sri-lankas-prosecutorial-framework-options-for-reform-and-institutional-independence.

[48] See https://www.hrcsl.lk/hrcsl-recommends-legislative-reforms-to-strengthen-independence-and-human-rights-protection/.

[49] See https://www.newswire.lk/2026/01/28/chair-of-sri-lankas-womens-commission-resigns-over-independence-concerns/.

alleged escape attempt and later died while receiving treatment at the prison hospital.[50] Reportedly, three prison officers were arrested in connection with his death. That case followed the death of another inmate in the prison system only days earlier, on 27 April 2026.[51] In a separate case, a 23-year-old man alleged that he had been subjected to torture after being arrested on 27 February 2026 by police officers at Talawakelle Police Station in connection with a financial fraud investigation.[52] In May 2026, two separate custodial deaths were reported on consecutive days. On 23 May 2026, a man died at Karadiyanaru Police Station in Batticaloa; his family claimed that he had been assaulted by police officers.[53] This was followed by the alleged suicide of a 46-year-old death-row inmate at Jaffna Prison on 24 May 2026.[54]

29. In one high-profile case, a 17-year-old Tamil boy, Albino Arul Pius, was shot by Sri Lankan police in Jaffna on 10 February 2026 after officers said that the vehicle he was travelling in had failed to stop at a checkpoint.[55] Police claimed that the deceased was an adult.[56] According to information received by OHCHR, the victim was critically injured after a bullet struck his head, and he died after being admitted to the teaching hospital in Jaffna. The family has reported ongoing intimidation, including surveillance and threats, raising concerns about their safety and the integrity of the investigation, and has called for an independent investigation.

30. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka reported to OHCHR that it had received 18 cases of deaths in custody in 2025 and 3 cases during the period January–April 2026, as well as 3 cases of enforced or involuntary disappearances in 2025. It had documented 602 cases of torture and ill-treatment in 2025 and 138 cases during the period January–April 2026, along with 1,125 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention in 2025 and 351 cases during the first quarter of 2026. It stated that no police action had been taken in 530 of the 1,125 cases of arbitrary arrest in 2025 and in 108 of the 138 cases recorded in the first quarter of 2026.

31. In July 2026, violent clashes inside Negombo Prison resulted in at least 32 deaths (22 detainees and 10 prison officials). Although a committee of inquiry was appointed, the events occurred against a backdrop of long-standing structural issues, including inadequate resources and severe overcrowding resulting in part from the overcriminalization of minor offences such as drug use.[57] OHCHR urged the authorities to grant the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka unfettered access to Negombo Prison, as well as to all other prisons and detention facilities where prisoners had been transferred and allegedly subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment.[58] The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka reported being denied access to Welikada prison following the transfer of detainees and the subsequent death of one transferred detainee.[59]

32. The arrest of a senior Buddhist monk in early May 2026 on allegations of the abduction and repeated sexual abuse of a 14-year-old girl has intensified scrutiny of the institutional responses to such allegations, including the handling of investigations and the treatment of suspects. On 22 May 2026, a court granted him bail, prompting widespread public protests. In response, the Council of Monks of the Malwatte Chapter announced his

[50] See https://srilankamirror.com/news/welikada-prison-inmate-was-beaten-to-death.

[51] On 27 April 2026, an altercation reportedly broke out involving two inmates and a prison guard inside the prison. All three were reportedly injured and one of the inmates later died from his injuries.

[52] See https://srilankabrief.org/police-accused-of-torturing-youth-threatened-to-insert-cricket-wicket-into-his-anus-victim-says-vision-in-eye-now-weakened.

[53] https://www.tamilguardian.com/index.php/content/batticaloa-man-dies-police-custody-family-alleges-assult.

[54] See https://adaderana.lk/news/cmpkpyzxk0002356q64863sny.

[55] See https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/final-rites-held-boy-shot-dead-sri-lankan-police-allaipiddy.

[56] See https://www.newswire.lk/2026/02/11/kayts-van-shooting-police-now-say-suspect-was-19-not-17/.

[57] See A/HRC/57/19.

[58] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/07/sri-lanka-there-must-be-truth-and-accountability-prison-violence.

[59] See https://www.hrcsl.lk/hrcsl-directs-commissioner-general-of-prisons-to-protect-inmates-and-ensure-access-to-prisons.

suspension pending the outcome of legal proceedings. The National Child Protection Authority has reported that approximately 300 Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka have been accused of child abuse over the past three years, with around 27 formally charged.[60]

2. Civic space restrictions and reprisals

Surveillance, intimidation and harassment

33. Information received by OHCHR, including 16 allegations received from victims and their representatives, indicates a clear and continuing pattern of State surveillance, intimidation and reprisals by military and civilian intelligence officials, including from the Criminal Investigations Department and the Counter-Terrorism Investigation Division, against civil society actors, activists and journalists for their human rights, humanitarian and advocacy work. Individuals are repeatedly questioned about their travels, especially to Geneva, and their engagement with United Nations human rights processes, as well as their organizational affiliations, funding sources and participation in protests or commemorative events. For instance, in January 2026, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances received allegations that State authorities had threatened a person who participated in its September 2025 review of Sri Lanka and had provided information to the Committee.[61]

34. Organizations and individuals involved in human rights activities, the memorialization of the conflict and issues affecting the Tamil community in the Northern and Eastern Provinces have faced surveillance, intimidation and threats, ranging from explicit death threats and warnings of disappearance to fabricated criminal charges. Such actions are often accompanied by visits to homes, coercive questioning and, in some cases, attempts to discredit activists. Some peaceful protests, especially those linked to land disputes and enforced disappearances, are unreasonably restricted, including through court orders, arrests, surveillance and intimidation. Similarly, while there is increased space for memorial events, they are often closely monitored, restricted or disrupted, with authorities photographing participants and pressuring organizers. Such measures undermine reconciliation efforts, particularly in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

35. In April 2026, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka raised concerns with the Ministry of Public Security and the Inspector General of Police about routine harassment and intimidation by law enforcement officials in the Northern and Eastern Provinces against women human rights defenders, who carry out vital work on long-standing post-conflict issues such as enforced disappearances, land disputes and the treatment of ex-combatants. Based on complaints received and other monitoring, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka stated that it had observed an increase in interventions by Criminal Investigations Department and Counter-Terrorism Investigation Division officers in 2025 and that women human rights defenders faced multiple obstacles, including gender-based violence, social stigma and mistreatment.

36. Civil society organizations more broadly faced excessive interference with their exercise of the right to freedom of association through unannounced visits, scrutiny of finances and collection of staff data, while some activists, journalist and religious leaders were subjected to questioning, threats and reputational attacks. In one high-profile case concerning a journalist, Sulochana Ramiah Mohan, Deputy Editor of *Ceylon Today*, was questioned by the Criminal Investigations Department after she had gathered information on injured sailors from the Islamic Republic of Iran at Karapitiya Hospital. Subsequently, the social media platform informed her that the Criminal Investigations Department had requested that her post, which referred to an article she had written about the Government's handling of energy and coal procurement issues, be deleted.[62]

37. In their 2025 concluding observations, both the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances expressed concern about funding restrictions and bureaucratic obstacles for non-governmental

[60] See https://www.occrp.org/en/news/child-abuse-claims-sri-lankan-buddhist-monks.

[61] HRI/MC/2026/2, para. 27.

[62] See https://ceylontoday.lk/2026/04/26/post-on-x-examining-coal-procurement-sawm-sl-slams-cid-action-against-ct-journalist/.

organizations (NGOs), including the requirement for clearance by the Ministry of Defence for registration.[63] In July 2026, the NGO Secretariat shared an amended NGO (registration and supervision) bill, at the request of civil society.[64] Apart from a lack of proper consultation, the bill raises significant concerns regarding the independent functioning of NGOs, including mandatory registration and burdensome registration requirements, requirement for alignment with government policies, excessive inspection and control over NGO activity, overly broad grounds for suspension and deregistration and disproportionate sanctions.

38. In April 2026, the Government gazetted bills to amend three existing laws, reportedly to align the legal framework with Financial Action Task Force standards on money-laundering.[65] These include the financial transactions reporting (amendment) bill, the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorist Financing (amendment) bill and the prevention of money-laundering (amendment) bill. Sri Lankan civil society actors have expressed concern that the 2026 amendments to the Financial Transactions Reporting Act expand the anti-money-laundering and counter-terrorism financing framework in major ways by introducing new offences, broadly defining offences, introducing mandatory reporting by banks on all transactions above an unspecified threshold, expanding data-retention and record-keeping requirements and enhancing the powers of the Financial Intelligence Unit, but with limited judicial oversight.[66]

3. Land issues and threats to religious sites

39. Although the President has signalled the importance of land issues to reconciliation, stating that "land belonging to the people should rightfully remain with them",[67] and the Government has stated that the Cabinet has appointed a special interministerial committee to examine issues related to land release, progress in land restitution has been piecemeal. In 2025, the Government reportedly released almost 1,000 acres of land held by the military in the north and east of the country.[68] At the same time, communities continued to demand the release of thousands of acres of land held by the military for decades in Vasavilan and Valikamam, Jaffna,[69] and in Keppapilavu, Mullaitivu.[70]

40. Certain land-related cases have exacerbated religious tensions, including the installation of a religious statue on a public beach in Trincomalee in violation of coastal conservation regulations;[71] the reported construction of a Buddhist temple within the Hindu Pillaiyar Temple complex in Kallumalai, Vavuniya;[72] and reported plans to install a radar system by the Sri Lankan Air Force within the Hindu Thirukoneswaram Temple in

[63] CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/9, para. 49; and CED/C/LKA/CO/1, para. 69 (b).

[64] See https://ngosec.gov.lk/news-events/national-secretariat-for-non-governmental-organizations-holds-consultative-meeting-with-ngo-collective-on-the-draft-ngo-registration-and-supervision-bill-2026.

[65] See https://www.ft.lk/business/Sri-Lanka-advances-in-third-AML-CFT-Mutual-Evaluation-on-site-review-set-for-October/34-790090.

[66] See https://www.cpalanka.org/cpa-statement-on-the-proposed-bills-tabled-on-9-april-2026/.

[67] See https://www.news.lk/current-affairs/peoples-land-should-rightfully-belong-to-them-the-issue-of-land-disputes-in-the-north-is-being-reviewed-and-steps-are-being-taken-to-expedite-the-return-of-land-to-the-people-president.

[68] See https://www.onlanka.com/news/sri-lanka-defence-committee-focuses-on-land-release-road-reopening-and-recovery.html; and https://www.ft.lk/news/Over-700-acres-of-land-in-North-and-East-released-to-public/56-783411.

[69] See https://www.tamilguardian.com/index.php/content/land-under-sri-lankan-military-control-decades-returned-owners-jaffna; https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/valikamam-north-residents-protest-outside-military-commanders-bungalow-over-occupied-lands; and https://www.jaffnamonitor.com/tamil-families-displaced-since-1990-vow-weekly-protests-until-military-held-lands-are-returned/.

[70] See https://www.themorning.lk/articles/arksuLknDp3GFRixTZoN; and https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/keppapilavu-protesters-call-release-171-acres-under-military-occupation.

[71] See https://tamilguardian.com/content/sri-lankan-police-return-buddha-statue-unauthorised-buddhist-shrine-trincomalee; and https://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=118300.

[72] See https://tamilguardian.com/content/tamil-residents-raise-concerns-over-illegal-vihara-construction-pillaiyar-temple-site.

Trincomalee.[73] A long-standing dispute in Thaiyiddy, Jaffna, involving a religious shrine built on private land remains unresolved.[74]

41. Several large-scale infrastructure projects were also the subject of peaceful protests by communities in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, highlighting issues of land ownership, livelihoods, ecological considerations, minority rights and meaningful community consultation. In Trincomalee, farmers from Muthunagar demanded the reversal of a government decision to lease their agricultural lands to private companies for solar power projects;[75] in Mannar, communities expressed strong opposition towards a wind power project;[76] and a recent Cabinet decision to resume the Kivul Oya Reservoir Development Project has reignited concerns among communities in Mullaitivu and Vavuniya.[77]

42. The aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah fully exposed the vulnerability of the Malaiyahar Tamil community in the central highlands due to their landlessness and inadequate housing. When the colonial era plantation-owned "line houses"[78] that were built on steep slopes were destroyed and swept away by floods and landslides, many families were unable to access government relief and compensation schemes due to a lack of property ownership documentation, despite special measures put in place by the Government.[79] Consequently, hundreds of families remain in temporary shelters, unsafe houses or dilapidated estate buildings, with little clarity as to reconstruction or resettlement programmes.[80] The Cabinet approved a mechanism to allocate land plots and funds to construct houses for estate workers in areas declared high risk or uninhabitable.[81]

III. Impunity, accountability and reconciliation

A. Conflict-era impunity

43. Since the Government came to power in late 2024, there has been some movement in certain criminal cases related to post-war violations and abuses and high-profile corruption cases. However, there is little evidence of a meaningful shift toward effectively investigating crimes allegedly committed by all parties during the conflict period or addressing long-standing structural barriers to accountability. Further, meaningful and comprehensive security sector reform is yet to take place. This continued failure to advance accountability risks further eroding victims' trust in domestic institutions and perpetuating decades of impunity.

44. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has emphasized the need for decisive action on accountability for past human rights and humanitarian law violations and for crimes under international law and to move from commitments to a formal, time-

[73] See https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/sri-lankan-militarys-continuous-occupation-thirukoneswaram-holy-land-raises-fresh-concerns.

[74] See https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/we-are-punished-bureaucracy-while-buddhist-monks-are-treated-honour-thaiyiddy-landowners; and https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/survey-disputed-thaiyiddy-lands-stalled-after-theros-intervension-despite-prior-state.

[75] See https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/muthunagar-farmers-continue-satyagraha-protest-52nd-day-over-land-leases.

[76] See https://tamilguardian.com/index.php/content/foundation-stone-laid-50mw-hywind-one-wind-power-project-mannar.

[77] See https://www.cpalanka.org/land-ownership-use-alienation-development-revisiting-the-proposed-kivul-oya-project/; and https://www.themorning.lk/articles/fpHmzYdOIVCaFVFVPqVf.

[78] A/HRC/51/26/Add.1, para. 54.

[79] See https://groundviews.org/2025/12/12/reconstruction-of-the-hill-country/; and https://ceylontoday.lk/2026/01/31/cyclone-ditwah-leaves-malaiyaha-tamils-in-prolonged-crisis/.

[80] See https://www.newswire.lk/2026/03/19/malaiyaha-collective-presses-for-housing-land-rights-after-cyclone/.

[81] See https://www.cabinetoffice.gov.lk/cab/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=49&lang=en&dID=13871.

bound plan of implementation.[82] However, the Government is yet to present a clear vision or road map to deliver long-overdue justice and accountability for past abuses.

B. Emblematic cases

45. During the reporting period, there were several high-profile arrests or renewed investigative steps in a few emblematic cases, especially those involving ex-paramilitary actors or intelligence officers. For instance, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan (also known as Pillayan), who was arrested by the Criminal Investigations Department in April 2025,[83] has been remanded in custody by the magistrates court in connection with the disappearance of the Vice Chancellor of Eastern University, Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath, in 2006. In a positive development, on 26 March 2026, the Court of Appeal annulled the 2016 acquittal in the 2006 killing of Member of Parliament Nadarajah Raviraj and ordered a retrial. Most of the other cases continue to be stalled for years, including due to the transfer of investigators, repeated changes to court dates, frequent postponements of hearings and witness intimidation. August 2026 marked the twentieth anniversary of the killing of 17 aid workers of Action Contre La Faim in Muttur in August 2006, with no new steps reported as being taken in this emblematic case.

46. On 16 January 2026, Sandya Ekneligoda, the wife of Prageeth Ekneligoda, a cartoonist who had been forcibly disappeared in January 2010, received a phone call containing explicit death threats from a caller identifying himself as a retired brigadier. On 13 April 2026, she received another call from a different caller shortly after she had written to the President concerning the promotion of a military intelligence officer who is accused of involvement in her husband's case.

C. Enforced disappearances and mass graves

47. Enforced disappearances remain a defining feature of the long-standing and entrenched impunity in Sri Lanka. Decades later, families of the disappeared continue to seek truth, justice and information on the fate and whereabouts of their relatives amid ongoing surveillance, intimidation and reprisals.[84] Despite its mandate to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared, the Office on Missing Persons has yet to establish the fates of the disappeared, and trust in domestic truth and accountability mechanisms remains low.[85] Many parents and spouses of those who disappeared are dying without knowing what happened to their family members[86] and human rights groups have emphasized the urgency of establishing a legally protected and independent body for voluntary family DNA collection and analysis to identify remains that have already been uncovered and those that may be found in future investigations.[87]

48. In September 2025, the Government approved a special project to accelerate investigations into complaints received by the Office on Missing Persons, including 25 subcommittees of retired judges and senior officials to address the backlog.[88] In January 2026, the Minister of Justice stated that, of the 11,000 complaints received, investigations into 5,000 cases would be concluded during the year, with the remainder completed within two years.[89] Under international law and the Office on Missing Persons Act, the Office's mandate

[82] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/09/hc-turk-sri-lanka-needs-clear-roadmap-accountability-and-reform.
[83] See https://www.dailynews.lk/2025/04/09/lawnorder/759216/pillayan-arrested/.
[84] OHCHR, "Accountability for enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka" (Geneva 2024).
[85] A/HRC/54/20, para. 44; A/HRC/57/19, paras. 39 and 40; and A/HRC/60/21, paras. 31–33.
[86] See https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/families-disappeared-vavuniya-demand-justice-their-deaths.
[87] See https://srilankacampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/DNA-Bank-Concept-Paper-External.pdf.
[88] See https://ceylontoday.lk/2025/09/05/govt-approves-omp-fast-track-project.
[89] See https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/11-000-complaints-regarding-disappearances-investigations-to-be-completed-in-two-years/108-331147.

extends beyond processing files to actively tracing missing persons, clarifying their fate and whereabouts, preserving and disclosing evidence and enabling accountability and reparations. It remains unclear how these obligations will be met under the proposed fast-track approach and how evidence from this process will be referred for further investigation and prosecution. OHCHR reiterates the need for legislative reforms to strengthen the independence, capacity, investigative powers and witness protection capacities of the Office on Missing Persons and to ensure full cooperation from State agencies and security forces so that the Office can credibly fulfil its mandate.

49. A three-day forensic excavation at the Kurukkalmadam site, ordered following court action by victims, concluded in April 2026 without any human remains or artefacts being found, but the court ordered investigations to continue nearby. Exhumations at the Chemmani mass grave site in Jaffna had, as of late July 2026, yielded the skeletal remains of more than 477 individuals, including children.[90] In September 2025, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka published its fact-finding report into the Chemmani mass grave site investigation and issued recommendations on ensuring a credible, transparent and scientifically guided process in line with international human rights standards.[91] Following a seven-month suspension of the excavation works due to rain and pending the allocation of additional funds, Jaffna Magistrates' Court ordered the recommencement of the works in April 2026 and granted permission for diplomatic representatives to observe the proceedings. While welcoming this development, OHCHR urges the Government to build on this progress by seeking international forensic and technical support to ensure that exhumations meet international standards, including the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death, and that they are accompanied by impartial criminal investigations, including into possible command responsibility.[92] OHCHR recommends the implementation of all existing court orders and requests that the authorities expedite all high-profile habeas corpus cases, particularly those concerning serious human rights violations, including enforced disappearances.

D. Conflict-related sexual violence

50. Among the long-standing accountability gaps linked to the armed conflict, conflict-related sexual violence remains particularly underacknowledged and insufficiently addressed, despite years of documentation by the United Nations.[93] Survivors continue to face profound barriers to justice, including persistent intimidation and stigma, fear of reprisals, lack of trust in State institutions, gaps in the domestic legal and institutional framework, the absence of meaningful accountability for perpetrators and limited access to acknowledgment, reparations, rehabilitation and psychosocial support. Against this backdrop, on 13 January 2026, OHCHR published a brief on accountability for conflict-related sexual violence in Sri Lanka, based on consultations with 27 survivors and their representatives, highlighting the continuing barriers that victims have faced in seeking recognition and accountability, as well as their ongoing trauma and harassment.[94] In a note verbale dated 1 May 2026 addressed to OHCHR, the Government rejected the brief and has not to date taken up the Office's offer of a technical exchange on its findings and good practices from other conflict situations. An event was held by the United Nations in Colombo to commemorate International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict on 16 June 2026.

[90] See https://www.ucanews.com/news/families-seek-global-probe-into-sri-lankan-mass-grave/114426.

[91] See https://www.hrcsl.lk/documentation/fact-finding-reports.

[92] A/HRC/60/21, para. 33.

[93] See, for example, S/2016/361/Rev.1, para. 82; and CAT/C/LKA/CO/5. See also the conference room paper of OHCHR on its investigation on Sri Lanka, paras. 1131–1135 (available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session30/list-reports).

[94] OHCHR, *Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sri Lanka: "We Lost Everything – Even Hope for Justice"* (Geneva, 2026).

E. Accountability for the Easter Sunday attacks

51. OHCHR notes the substantial investigative and judicial activity surrounding the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, including the appointment of a four-member committee to study the report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, the removal of senior security and police officials, the implementation of the 2023 Supreme Court orders for personal compensation by the former President, the continuation of proceedings before the Special Trial-at-Bar and the arrest in February 2026 of the former State Intelligence Service Director, Suresh Sallay, in connection with the attacks.[95] On 3 June 2026, the Colombo Fort Magistrate imposed a travel ban on former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and two Sri Lanka Army intelligence officers in connection with ongoing investigations into the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks.[96] On 31 July 2026, a majority of the three-member Colombo Special Trial-at-Bar found former Inspector General of Police Pujith Jayasundara and former Defence Secretary Hemasiri Fernando guilty of several charges and sentenced both to death.[97] The Government stated that payments to beneficiaries from the Victim Fund had been completed by June 2026.

52. However, concerns persist regarding ongoing proceedings on the Easter Sunday attacks, particularly that they may fall short of international due process and fair trial standards, and may be subject to the imposition of the death penalty. Concerns include periods of ineffective or absent legal representation due to withdrawal of the counsel representing 22 accused, inadequate access and restrictions placed on family members, and lack of public access to court proceedings.[98]

F. Further options for advancing accountability

53. For several years, OHCHR has advocated comprehensive security sector reform in Sri Lanka, including the need for effective vetting of security personnel implicated in human rights violations. In this context, the deployment of members of the Sri Lankan security forces to Haiti as a part of the Security Council-authorized multinational Gang Suppression Force in Haiti highlights the urgency and importance of a robust human rights screening process to ensure full compliance with international human rights norms and standards and prevent individuals credibly assessed as having been involved in serious violations from participating in United Nations and other international operations.

54. In the absence of progress towards accountability by domestic mechanisms, and further to the mandate contained in Human Rights Council resolution 46/1, OHCHR established its Sri Lanka accountability project. In its resolution 60/1, the Council decided to extend the mandate of OHCHR as regards the work requested of it by the Council. However, to date, the Government of Sri Lanka has declined to engage with OHCHR on the accountability project and has continued to reject the accountability-related resolutions of the Council. In April 2026, OHCHR published an update on the achievements of its accountability project during 2025 and the project's priorities for the period 2026–2027, including activities aimed at supporting future accountability and transitional justice processes.[99]

[95] See https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/25/sri-lankas-former-intelligence-chief-arrested-over-2019-easter-attacks.

[96] See https://dailynews.lk/2026/06/04/lawnorder/1005583/travel-ban-on-gota-two-former-intelligence-officers-in-easter-sunday-bomb-case/.

[97] See https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Former-IGP-Pujith-Jayasundara-sentenced-to-death-over-Easter-Sunday-attacks/108-347078; and https://english.newsfirst.lk/2026/07/31/ex-defence-secretary-hemasiri-fernando-sentenced-to-death.

[98] See https://groundviews.org/2026/03/20/pursuing-justice-for-the-easter-sunday-attacks/.

[99] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sri-lanka/2026-2027-update-ohchr-sri-lanka-accountability-project-april-2026.pdf.

55. The repository of the OHCHR Sri Lanka accountability project now comprises more than 123,000 items and information originating from over 500 witnesses and sources. During the reporting period, the project published a public snapshot of the repository and guidance for civil society organizations on secure information-sharing in English, Tamil and Sinhala.[100] The project has continued accountability-related investigations in priority crime areas, including unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment and conflict-related sexual violence, while responding to formal requests for assistance from competent jurisdictions in accordance with applicable United Nations standards and procedures.

56. Working with more than 230 civil society organizations and over 40 human rights defenders, OHCHR has maintained a victim-centred approach in a context in which victims, witnesses, civil society actors and affected communities continue to face threats and intimidation, while the withdrawal of key international funding has further undermined local documentation and preservation efforts.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

57. **The National People's Power-led Government came to power with commitments to implement transformative reforms, including implementing constitutional change, repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act, releasing all political prisoners, advancing accountability and addressing ethnic discrimination and divisive politics. The President's rejection of ethno-religious politics and commitment to reconciliation marked a notable departure from previous Governments. During his visit to the country in June 2025, the High Commissioner encouraged the Government to seize this historic opportunity for change. While recognizing that these issues have accumulated over many decades and require sustained attention, the momentum for change has not yet translated into legal and institutional reforms, and efforts for truth-seeking and reconciliation have largely stalled. Resources and political attention have also been diverted by the impact of Cyclone Ditwah and other economic shocks.**

58. **Despite progress in a few important cases, including the Easter Sunday attacks, there has been no recognition or accountability for crimes under international law, gross human rights violations and serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by all parties during the civil war. Long-standing structural barriers to accountability efforts, including surveillance and the intimidation of victims and witnesses, and deeply entrenched impunity continue to erode public confidence in domestic institutions.**

59. **OHCHR remains deeply concerned about continuing patterns of surveillance, threats, intimidation and violence against conflict-era victims, journalists and civil society actors, as well as ongoing human rights violations such as arbitrary arrests and detention, torture and custodial deaths, despite raising repeated concerns and recommendations. It is also concerned about the excessive restrictions on non-governmental organizations, including funding controls and administrative barriers.**

60. **OHCHR has repeatedly urged Sri Lanka to undertake comprehensive security sector reform, including rigorous vetting to remove individuals implicated in serious violations, to strengthen accountability, restore public trust and prevent the recurrence of serious human rights violations.**

61. **International engagement, including through the Human Rights Council, remains essential to advancing accountability, long-term reconciliation and sustainable peace. While the primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting crimes under international law and ensuring accountability rests with the State, international mechanisms can play a complementary and supportive role. The Council and individual States should continue to support OHCHR and utilize the strengthened capacities**

[100] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/sri-lanka/250919-infographic-oslap-s-repository-for.pdf.

established under Council resolutions 46/1, 51/1, 57/1 and 60/1 to advance accountability-related efforts and contribute to meaningful reconciliation and justice processes, both within Sri Lanka and internationally.

62. **Further to the recommendations set out in previous reports,[101] OHCHR urges the Government to:**

(a) **Foster an enabling environment for reconciliation, accountability and national unity by implementing confidence-building measures, including the release of military-occupied lands, preventing further land acquisitions and expediting land titling processes in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, releasing long-term detainees held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, supporting victims' memorialization initiatives and strengthening the independence and credibility of the Office on Missing Persons through international expertise and independent monitoring;**

(b) **Implement its commitment to the devolution of political and administrative power to every local government, district and province;**

(c) **Impose a moratorium on the Prevention of Terrorism Act, expedite the repeal thereof and ensure that any replacement legislation complies with international human rights law and the benchmarks set out by United Nations human rights experts;[102]**

(d) **Repeal or amend laws, including proposed legislation, that unduly restrict the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly, such as the Online Safety Act, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act and the amended non-governmental organization (registration and supervision) bill;**

(e) **Publicly issue clear instructions to all military, intelligence and police forces that enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual violence and other human rights violations are strictly prohibited and will be thoroughly investigated and prosecuted;**

(f) **Remove from office, and refrain from appointing or promoting to senior positions in Government, the security sector or the diplomatic service individuals credibly alleged to have committed human rights violations;**

(g) **Establish a credible domestic human rights screening and accountability framework aligned with United Nations standards to provide adequate safeguards in connection with the participation of Sri Lanka in operations mandated or supported by the United Nations and in other international security deployments;**

(h) **Expedite the establishment of a public prosecutorial body and ensure that it is fully independent, effective and robust enough to investigate and assess relevant information and make independent prosecutorial decisions;**

(i) **Consider creating a special judicial mechanism with an independent special counsel in relation to the cases of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law committed in previous decades, and seek international assistance;**

(j) **Accelerate investigations and prosecutions in all cases of human rights violations, including emblematic cases and the Easter Sunday bombings, in compliance with international human rights norms and standards, seek international assistance to strengthen capacities and ensure victim and witness protection;**

(k) **Accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;**

(l) **Pursue prison reform to address systemic issues of violence and overcrowding, including restricting imprisonment as a measure of last resort and adopting a health-centred response to drug use;**

[101] A/HRC/46/20, para. 60; A/HRC/49/9, paras. 67–69; A/HRC/51/5, paras.70–72; A/HRC/54/20, paras. 64–68; and A/HRC/60/21, paras. 63 and 64.

[102] See LKA 7/2021, available from https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments.

(m) **Following full and meaningful participation, ensure equitable reconstruction and land and housing rights for the Malaiyahar Tamil community;**

(n) **Ensure that pledges on land return are time-bound, transparent, adequately reviewed and recorded and publicly available;**

(o) **Order all security and intelligence agencies to immediately end all forms of surveillance and harassment of and reprisals against representative of civil society organizations, human rights defenders, journalists and conflict-era victims and their families, especially women;**

(p) **Extend invitations to relevant special procedure mandate holders to conduct country visits.**

63. **OHCHR recommends that the Human Rights Council and States, as applicable:**

(a) **Assist Sri Lanka in advancing legal and institutional reforms, including initiatives to ensure accountability in accordance with international standards, and support country-wide reconciliation;**

(b) **Cooperate in the investigation and prosecution, through States' competent national judicial processes, of individuals alleged to have committed crimes under international law in Sri Lanka, through the application of extraterritorial or universal jurisdiction, mutual legal assistance and other international avenues where appropriate;**

(c) **Consider, as part of a broader set of accountability measures consistent with international law, the adoption of targeted sanctions, such as asset freezes and travel restrictions, against individuals credibly alleged to be responsible for serious violations of international human rights law or international humanitarian law;**

(d) **Support Sri Lanka in its reconstruction efforts following Cyclone Ditwah, with particular focus on population groups most at risk, in line with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.**