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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. The report notes that, while the Government pledged to address several longstanding 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 provides recommendations for both the Government and the international community aimed at advancing accountability, reconciliation, and protection of human rights.

* The present report was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 60/1, which requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to present a written update on progress in reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka at its sixty-third session. This report analyses the human rights situation in Sri Lanka since adoption of resolution 60/1 in October 2025 until July 2026, with reference to events in previous years, where appropriate. The report pays particular attention to the Government's commitments made in its election manifesto and during the High Commissioner's visit 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 resolution 51/1, particularly paragraph 8 thereof. OHCHR sent questions to the Government and Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) in preparation for this report, and received a written response from the latter. The draft report was shared with the Government for factual comments, and comments were received on 31 August 2026.

3. In June 2026, the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children visited Sri Lanka. The United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) reviewed Sri Lanka's initial report in September 2025 and issued concluding observations.[1] Despite its standing invitation to United Nations special procedures mandate holders, there were eight visit requests pending as of July 2026. In April 2026, Sri Lanka ratified International Labour Organization Convention 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. Since the High Commissioner's visit to Sri Lanka in June 2025[3] and the Office's report to the sixtieth session of the Human Rights Council[4], the country was hit by successive exogenous shocks, including unilateral trade measures, a catastrophic cyclone, and spillovers from armed conflict in Western Asia.

5. The National People's Power (NPP)-led Government that assumed office in late 2024 committed in its manifesto to undertake substantial reforms and address persistent human rights concerns, including repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), efforts to combat corruption, establishment of an independent public prosecutor's office, and promotion of 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 PTA 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 decades-long civil war continue to face surveillance, questioning, and intimidation by state intelligence services, particularly in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, undermining conditions for genuine reconciliation. The NPP also pledged a new constitution to 'guarantee equality and democracy and the devolution of political and administrative power to every local Government, district and province.'[6] While local

[1] CED/C/LKA/CO/1: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CED%2FC%2FLKA%2FCO%2F1&Lang=en . The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reviewed Sri Lanka's first report in August 2026.

[2] On 18 August 2026, the Cabinet approved establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee on Human Rights, to strengthen reporting and follow-up on human rights.

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

[4] A/HRC/60/21

[5] https://www.npp.lk/en/policies; https://www.npp.lk/en/policies/npppolicystatement

[6] "A Thriving Nation, A Beautiful Life", NPP electoral manifesto, August 2024.

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government elections were conducted in May 2025, Provincial Council elections under the 13th Constitutional Amendment have still not been held since 2014.

7. The Government has taken notable steps to tackle corruption and made high-profile arrests and police-led investigations into some political killings, enforced disappearances and the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks. 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 of 17 April 2026, the Government 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 indicated that "over half of the people in flooding areas were already living in households facing multiple vulnerabilities before Cyclone Ditwah, 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 USD 2 billion in physical damages and USD 1.3 billion in economic losses, with total recovery and reconstruction needs estimated at USD 3.4 billion.[11]

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

10. As of May 2026, 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 intersectionality between vulnerability and shock exposure.[14]

11. In the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah, food insecurity was estimated to be 32 per cent in December 2025,[15] and improved to 21 per cent in February 2026.[16] Household food security, however, remained precarious given inflationary pressures due to spikes in energy prices and risks to agricultural production resulting from fertilizer shortages.[17]

12. In the 2026 budget,[18] 49.38 per cent of Government revenue (7.6 per cent of 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, 2, and 2.4 per cent of GDP respectively. Following Cyclone Ditwah, the Government passed a supplementary budget amounting LKR 500 billion (USD 1.6 billion) to restore livelihoods and support communities affected.[19] It also sought and obtained USD 206 million in emergency financing from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Rapid Financing Instrument[20] among other support pledged by development partners. The United Nations

[7] https://reliefweb.int/attachments/d0ce3688-3d4e-4c71-9f00-a37384f9000b/Cyclone_Ditwah__SitRep%20%2313.pdf
[8] Ditwah_Situation_Summary_Report_at_1000hrs_on_2026__1776403312.pdf
[9] https://geosmart.undp.org/arcgis/apps/storymaps/stories/25866fbc805c4d70b6bf35c23f896daf
[10] https://reliefweb.int/attachments/489d9312-13b0-4609-a526-4435b72a0179/MDRLK023OU3.pdf
[11] https://www.dmc.gov.lk/images/pdfs/PDNA%20Full%20Report_Final%20Published%20on%2021%20May.pdf
[12] https://reliefweb.int/attachments/41e0b5ea-b424-4395-aa81-1734f898abeb/WFP-0000172511.pdf
[13] https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstreams/fef5cb1d-2333-4269-8d91-7a7bcd33424a/download
[14] https://www.preventionweb.net/media/118273/download?startDownload=20260811
[15] https://reliefweb.int/attachments/4873ee1f-fb77-5eaa-92f5-40407b89062b/WFP-0000171465.pdf
[16] https://reliefweb.int/attachments/f378d7a1-8598-456e-947c-02a4fd55db2c/WFP-0000173144.pdf
[17] Ibid.
[18] https://www.treasury.gov.lk/api/file/fd6a1601-54a4-484c-84fa-465d9cfc77f6
[19] https://www.parliament.lk/en/home/parliament-news/view/4996
[20] https://www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/cr/2025/english/1lkaea2025003-source-pdf.pdf

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itself mobilized USD 28.5 million for the humanitarian response as of 30 April 2026. Debt vulnerabilities, however, remain elevated over the medium-term. An IMF mission in June 2026 acknowledged the Government had successfully maintained macro-economic stability despite external shocks.[21]

13. Since entering the current IMF Extended Fund Facility programme in 2023, Sri Lanka's electricity pricing has changed to a cost-reflective, periodically adjusted system. As of May 2026, electricity tariffs have risen twice – first in April[22] and then in May[23] – 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 the poor, the Government committed, with an IMF agreement, to provide a LKR 15 billion (USD 45 million) subsidy, protecting households consuming less than 180 units of electricity each month.[24]

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 former Health Minister and senior officials violated fundamental rights by bypassing legal safeguards in a drug procurement process.[25] Separately, it found that authorities were responsible for the Meethotamulla garbage dump disaster, where 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.[26]

15. Sri Lanka's 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,[27] which includes commitments relating to establishment of a public beneficial ownership registry, enactment of public procurement legislation, and decentralization of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) through regional offices, amongst others. CIABOC has launched investigations and prosecuted numerous cases,[28] including new investigations into the Sri Lankan Airlines–Airbus case, implicating former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.[29] Investigations into alleged irregularities surrounding coal procurement are ongoing,[30] as are judicial proceedings against former President Ranil Wickremesinghe for alleged misuse of public funds. The deaths, reportedly by suicide, of key suspects in some high-profile cases has complicated efforts to establish responsibility and secure accountability.[31]

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.[32] These regulations granted broad and exceptional powers to the executive, such as to authorize arrest and detention without warrant and with limited judicial oversight, conduct

[21] https://www.imf.org/en/news/articles/2026/06/30/pr26229-sri-lanka-imf-staff-concludes-visit
[22] https://www.gazette.lk/2026/03/pucsl-electricity-tariff-revision-2026-april-new-electricity-charges.html
[23] https://www.ft.lk/top-story/PUCSL-approves-18-electricity-tariff-hike-from-today/26-791698#
[24] https://www.treasury.gov.lk/api/file/a253a866-0d69-47d4-8381-163fefce5bf3
[25] 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.
[26] https://supremecourt.lk/wp-content/uploads/judgements/sc_fr_311_2015_and_sc_fr_318_2015-3.pdf
[27] https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/assets/pdf/GovernanceActionPlanPublication2026.pdf
[28] https://www.ft.lk/news/CIABOC-records-154-arrests-115-cases-and-Rs-2-8-m-fines-in-2025/56-787508; See: https://ciaboc.gov.lk/media-centre/latest-news
[29] https://www.themorning.lk/articles/CDDe5pGWk6hJNF1120nU
[30] https://news.lk/current-affairs/full-powered-presidential-commission-to-investigate-coal-procurement
[31] https://island.lk/high-stakes-in-pursuing-corruption-cases/
[32] https://web.archive.org/web/20260225112703/https://documents.gov.lk/view/extra-gazettes/2025/11/2464-31_E.pdf

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searches and seizures without prior judicial approval, greater ability to restrict movement and public assembly, impose curfews, and deployment of the military in civilian functions.[33] In December 2025, the HRCSL wrote to the President expressing concerns that the Emergency Regulations appeared to be based on a recurring government template and that several provisions of the Regulations were incompatible with Sri Lanka's Constitution and international human rights norms and standards.[34] These Regulations were repeatedly extended until they were finally allowed to lapse on 28 June 2026.

17. Additionally, 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.[35]

2. Legislative and institutional developments

18. The NPP pledged to abolish all oppressive acts, including the PTA, in its campaign manifesto.[36] In December 2025, the Government initiated and published draft legislation – entitled the Protection of the State from Terrorism Act (PSTA) – intended to replace the PTA. OHCHR provided preliminary comments to the Government on the draft bill in February 2026, expressing serious concerns that it reproduces and expands concerns arising from implementation of the PTA, including risks of overbroad 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.[37]

19. Meanwhile, the Government continued to apply the PTA, resulting in arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions without charge. OHCHR received information from the HRCSL that it had been notified of 46 PTA-related detention cases in 2025 and 12 cases as of March 2026.[38]

20. In parallel, other proposed legislative reforms, specifically, amendments on terrorist financing, the Financial Transactions Reporting Bill, and legislation to combat organized crime,[39] triggered concern that powers similar to those under the PTA – particularly those relating to detention, surveillance and asset seizure – may be preserved or expanded in new laws.[40] On 19 May 2026, the Supreme Court ruled that the Terrorist Financing (Amendment) Bill could be passed by a simple majority, and the Financial Transactions Reporting (Amendment) Bill may proceed; however, Clauses 22 and 39 relating to imposition of administrative sanctions required amendment to include specified safeguards.[41] OHCHR is concerned that such powers could be extended beyond counterterrorism to areas such as crime and drug control, as well as increasing state control and surveillance of civil society organisations' (CSOs) activities, including in contexts of disaster response.

21. Civil society actors have also 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.[42]

22. While the Government indicated that it is finalising amendments to the Online Safety Act (OSA), the original law is still in force, including in investigations involving online speech and alleged defamation cases.[43] Courts and law enforcement continue to apply the law in cases involving "false," "harmful," or defamatory online content, with some high-profile

[33] Ibid.
[34] https://www.hrcsl.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HRCSL-Press-Notice-05122025.pdf
[35] Extraordinary Gazette No. 2499/03 - 27 July 2026
[36] NPP Policies| Statements of Jathika Jana Balawegaya Policies
[37] https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/sri-lanka/ohchr-comments-sri-lanka-psta.pdf ; On 17 August 2026, the Cabinet approved publishing the Bill "Protection of the State from Terrorism" in the Government gazette. As of 31 August 2026, the latest draft had not been made public.
[38] HRCSL's response to OHCHR's questions, 18 May 2026.
[39] https://www.newsfirst.lk/2026/02/26/new-bill-to-combat-organized-crime-ready-for-cabinet-next-week
[40] https://www.cpalanka.org/cpa-statement-on-the-proposed-bills-tabled-on-9-april-2026/
[41] https://www.parliament.lk/uploads/bills/gbills/scdet/6423.pdf
[42] https://www.cpalanka.org/cpa-statement-on-the-proposed-bills-tabled-on-9-april-2026/
[43] https://lankalaw.net/2025/01/19/cases-filed-under-online-safety-act/

Advance unedited version

summons and investigations reported in 2025-2026.[44] The HRCSL has raised serious concerns about the OSA, warning that its use to limit freedom of expression, even on grounds of preventing defamation, may 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.[45]

23. On 19 February 2026, the Supreme Court heard a petition by comedian Natasha Edirisooriya, arrested in May 2023 under the ICCPR Act for allegedly "insulting" Buddhism.[46] A Criminal Investigations Department (CID) officer issued a formal apology to 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 disciplinary action against officers who fail to comply with these requirements.[47]

24. In January 2026, the Ministry of Justice initiated consultations on the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA),[48] and the HRCSL submitted updated recommendations and legal observations to the Ministry, focusing on strengthening equality, non-discrimination, and access to justice.[49] As of July 2026, the MMDA review had not advanced.

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.[50]

26. With regard to independence of the judiciary, the Judicial Service Association of Sri Lanka, Colombo High Court Lawyers' Association, 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.[51] The United Nations 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.[52] She also emphasized the importance of consultations and transitional arrangements. International human rights standards further 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 NPP-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 to study the legal structure for

[44] https://eusee.hivos.org/alert/police-summons-of-journalist-raises-concerns-on-media-freedom-and-continued-use-of-the-online-safety-act/#:~:text=In%20its%20statement%2C%20the%20HRCSL,finalisation%20of%20the%20amendment%20process; https://freedomhouse.org/country/sri-lanka/freedom-net/2025

[45] 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

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

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

[48] 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

[49] HRCSL's response to OHCHR's questions, 18 May 2026.

[50] http://supremecourt.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/sc_sd_13_2023.pdf

[51] https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/BASL-urges-President-not-to-raise-retirement-age-of-Superior-Court-Judges/108-341832; 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

[52] 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: https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TmSearch/RelCom?code=LKA%204/2026

Advance unedited version

the Office and draft recommendations for new legislation, but there has been no reported progress on this or an operational Public Prosecutor's Office yet.[53]

27. In May 2026, the HRCSL recommended strengthening the HRCSL Act to make non-compliance with its recommendations an offence.[54] After the Government came into power, it operationalised the Women's Commission (established through the Women's Empowerment Act 2024) and appointed its chairperson and members. In January 2026, four months after her appointment, the Chair of the National Commission on Women resigned, reportedly due to lack of operational independence, dedicated budget, office space and human resources.[55] 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 prisons and reports of arbitrary arrests continued to be reported. Reports also indicate that the Poisons, Opium, and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance was 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 due to severe beatings. Reports indicated he was recaptured after an alleged escape attempt and later died while receiving treatment at the prison hospital.[56] Reportedly, three prison officers were arrested in connection with his death. This case followed the death of another inmate in the prison system only days earlier, on 27 April 2026.[57] In a separate case, a 23-year-old man alleged that he was subjected to torture after being arrested on 27 February 2026 by police officers at Talawakelle Police Station in connection with a financial fraud investigation.[58] In May 2026, two separate custodial deaths were reported over consecutive days. On May 23, 2026, a man died at Batticaloa's Karadiyanaru Police Station amid family claims of assault, followed by the alleged suicide of a 46-year-old death-row inmate at Jaffna Prison on May 24.[59]

29. In one high-profile case, a 17-year-old Tamil boy, Albino Arul Pius, was shot by Sri Lankan police in Allaipiddy/Kayts, Jaffna, on 10 February 2026 after officers said the vehicle failed to stop at a checkpoint.[60] Police initially claimed that the deceased was an adult.[61] 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.[62] 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 HRCSL reported to OHCHR that it received 18 cases of deaths in custody in 2025 and three cases as of April 2026, as well as three cases of enforced or involuntary disappearances in 2025. It also documented 602 cases of torture and ill-treatment in 2025 and 138 cases as of April 2026, along with 1,125 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention in 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[62] Information on file.

Advance unedited version

and 351 cases during the first quarter of 2026. It stated that no police action had been taken in 530 of 1,125 in 2025 and in 108 of 138 cases recorded in 2026.[63]

31. In July 2026, violent clashes inside Negombo Prison resulted in at least 32 deaths (22 detainees and ten prison officials). While a Committee of Inquiry was appointed, the events occurred against a backdrop of longstanding structural issues including inadequate resources, and severe prison overcrowding including due to overcriminalization of minor offences such as drug use resulting in incarceration.[64] OHCHR urged the authorities to grant the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka unfettered access to Negombo Prison, as well as all other prisons and detention facilities where prisoners were transferred and allegedly subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. [65]

32. The recent arrest of a senior Buddhist monk in early May 2026 on allegations of abduction and the repeated sexual abuse of a 14-year-old girl has intensified scrutiny of 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 suspension pending the outcome of legal proceeding. 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.[66]

2. Civic space restrictions and reprisals

Surveillance, intimidation and harassment

33. Information, including 16 allegations received directly by OHCHR from victims or 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 or the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) against civil society actors, activists and journalists for their human rights, humanitarian, and advocacy work.[67] Individuals are repeatedly questioned about their travels, especially to Geneva and engagement with UN human rights processes, as well as their organisational affiliations, funding sources, and participation in protests or commemorative events. For instance, in January 2026, the UN CED received allegations that State authorities threatened a person who participated in its September 2025 review of Sri Lanka and had provided information to the Committee.[68]

34. Organizations and individuals involved in human rights activities, 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 or 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 regions.

35. In April 2026, the HRCSL raised concerns with the Ministry of Public Security and the Inspector General of Police about routine harassment and intimidation by law enforcement officials against women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in the Northern and

[63] HRCSL's response to OHCHR's questions, 18 May 2026.

[64] See: A/HRC/57/19

[65] https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/07/sri-lanka-there-must-be-truth-and-accountability-prison-violence; HRCSL reported being denied access to Welikada prison following the transfer of detainees and the subsequent death of one transferred detainees: https://www.hrcsl.lk/hrcsl-directs-commissioner-general-of-prisons-to-protect-inmates-and-ensure-access-to-prisons/

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

[67] Information on file.

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

Advance unedited version

Eastern provinces, who carry out vital work on longstanding post-conflict issues such as enforced disappearances, land disputes, ex-combatants. Based on complaints received and other monitoring, the HRCSL stated that it had observed an increase in interventions by CID and CTID officers in 2025 and that WHRDs 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 CID after she gathered information on injured Iranian sailors at the Karapitiya Hospital. Subsequently, X (formerly Twitter) contacted her informing that CID had requested that her tweet, which referred to an article she wrote about government handling of energy and coal procurement issues, be deleted.[69]

37. In their 2025 concluding observations, both CEDAW and CED expressed concerns about funding restrictions and bureaucratic obstacles for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the requirement of clearance by the Ministry of Defence for registration.[70] In July 2026, the NGO Secretariat shared an amended draft NGO (Registration and Supervision) bill upon request of civil society.[71]Apart from 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, overbroad grounds for suspension and deregistration, and disproportionate sanctions.

38. In April 2026, the Government gazetted bills to amend three existing laws, reportedly to align Sri Lanka's legal framework with Financial Action Task Force standards on money laundering.[72] 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 concerns that the 2026 amendments to the Financial Transactions Reporting Act expands the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing framework in major ways by introduction of new offences, broad definition of offenses, mandatory reporting by banks on all transactions above an unspecified threshold, expansion of data retention and record-keeping requirements and enhanced powers of the Financial Intelligence Unit with limited judicial oversight, among others.[73]

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,"[74] and the Government stated that Cabinet 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.[75] At the same time communities continued to demand release of thousands of acres

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

[70] CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/9, para. 49; CED/C/LKA/CO/1, para 69.

[71] 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

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

[73] For instance, see https://www.cpalanka.org/cpa-statement-on-the-proposed-bills-tabled-on-9-april-2026/

[74] 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#:~:text=President%20Anura%20Kumara%20Dissanayake%20stated,He%20further%20emphasized%20that%20the

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

Advance unedited version

of land held by the military over decades in Vasavilan and Valikamam, Jaffna,[76] and in Keppapilavu, Mullaitivu.[77]

40. Certain land-related cases have exacerbated religious tensions, including installation of a religious statue on a public beach in Trincomalee in violation of coastal conservation regulations;[78] reported construction of a Buddhist temple within the Hindu Pillaiyar Temple complex in Kallumalai, Vavuniya;[79] as well as reported plans to install a radar system by the Sri Lankan Air Force within the Hindu Thirukoneswaram Temple in Trincomalee.[80] A long-standing dispute in Thaiyiddy, Jaffna involving a religious shrine built on private land remains unresolved.[81]

41. Several large-scale infrastructure projects were also the subject of peaceful protests by communities in the north and east, highlighting issues of land ownership, livelihoods, ecological considerations, minority rights, and meaningful community consultation. In Trincomalee, farmers from Muthunagar demanded reversal of a Government decision to lease their agricultural lands to private companies for solar power projects;[82] in Mannar, communities expressed strong opposition towards the HyWind One 50-megawatt wind power project;[83] and a recent Cabinet decision to resume the Kivul Oya Reservoir Development Project has reignited concerns among communities in Mullaitivu and Vavuniya.[84]

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"[85] that were built on steep slopes were destroyed and swept away by floods and landslides, many families were unable to access the Government's relief and compensation schemes due to lack of property ownership documentation, despite special measures put in place by the Government.[86] Consequently, hundreds of families remained in temporary shelters, unsafe houses, or dilapidated estate buildings, with little clarity as to reconstruction or resettlement programmes.[87] The Cabinet approved a mechanism to allocate land plots and funds to construct houses for estate workers in areas declared high risk or uninhabitable.[88]

[76] 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; https://www.jaffnamonitor.com/tamil-families-displaced-since-1990-vow-weekly-protests-until-military-held-lands-are-returned/

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Advance unedited version

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 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-bound plan of implementation.[89] However, the Government is yet to present a clear vision or roadmap 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 involving ex-paramilitary actors or intelligence officers. For instance, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan (also known as Pillayan), who was arrested by the CID in April 2025,[90] has been continuously remanded by the Magistrate court in connection with the disappearance of Vice Chancellor of Eastern University Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath in 2006.[91] 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 (ACF) in Muttur in August 2006, with no new steps reported on this emblematic case.

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

C. Enforced disappearances and mass graves

47. Enforced disappearances remain a defining feature of Sri Lanka's longstanding and entrenched impunity. 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.[92] Despite its mandate to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared, the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) has yet to establish the fates of the disappeared, and trust in domestic truth and accountability mechanisms remains low.[93] Many elderly parents or spouses of those who disappeared are dying without knowing what happened to their family members[94] and human rights groups have emphasized

[89] https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/09/hc-turk-sri-lanka-needs-clear-roadmap-accountability-and-reform

[90] https://www.dailynews.lk/2025/04/09/lawnorder/759216/pillayan-arrested/

[91] He was indicted on 17 August 2026 by the Attorney General.

[92] See OHCHR, *Accountability for Enforced Disappearances in Sri Lanka*, May 2024.

[93] Ibid; A/HRC/60/21, paras. 31-33; A/HRC/57/19, paras. 39-40; and A/HRC/54/20, para. 44.

[94] https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/families-disappeared-vavuniya-demand-justice-their-deaths

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the urgency of establishing a legally protected and independent body for voluntary family DNA collection and analysis to identify remains already uncovered and those that may be found in future investigations.[95]

48. In September 2025, the Government approved a special project to accelerate investigations into complaints received by the OMP, including 25 sub-committees of retired judges and senior officials to address the backlog.[96] In January 2026, the Minister of Justice stated that of the 11,000 complaints received, investigations into 5,000 cases would conclude this year, with the remainder completed within two years.[97] Under international law and the OMP Act itself, the OMP's mandate 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-tracked 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 OMP's independence, capacity, investigative powers, and witness protection, and to ensure full cooperation from state agencies and security forces, so it 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 finding any human remains or artifacts, but the court ordered investigations to continue nearby. Exhumations at the Chemmani-Sithuppaththi mass grave site in Jaffna had, as of late July 2026, yielded skeletal remains corresponding to more than 477 individuals, including children.[98] In September 2025, the HRCSL published its fact-finding report into the Chemmani Mass Grave Site investigation and issued recommendations to ensure a credible, transparent, and scientifically guided process in line with international human rights standards.[99] Following a seven-month suspension of the excavation works due to rains and pending the allocation of additional funds, the Jaffna Magistrate's Court ordered the recommencement of the works in April 2026 and granted permission for diplomatic representatives to observe the proceedings. While welcome, the Office urges the Government to build on this progress by seeking international forensic and technical support to ensure exhumations meet international standards, including the Minnesota Protocol, and that they are accompanied by impartial criminal investigations, including into possible command responsibility.[100] The Office further recommends 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 longstanding accountability gaps linked to the armed conflict, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) remains particularly under-acknowledged and insufficiently addressed, despite years of documentation by the United Nations.[101] 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.[102] Against this backdrop, on 13 January 2026, the Office published a Brief on accountability for conflict-

[95] https://srilankacampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/DNA-Bank-Concept-Paper-External.pdf
[96] https://ceylontoday.lk/2025/09/05/govt-approves-omp-fast-track-project
[97] https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/11-000-complaints-regarding-disappearances-investigations-to-be-completed-in-two-years/108-331147
[98] https://www.ucanews.com/news/families-seek-global-probe-into-sri-lankan-mass-grave/114426
[99] Fact Finding and Inquiry Reports – HRCSL; HRCSL's response to OHCHR's questions.
[100] A/HRC/60/21, para. 33.
[101] See, OHCHR, *Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sri Lanka: "We Lost Everything – Even Hope for Justice"*, 13 January 2026. See also *inter alia*, A/HRC/30/CRP.2, 16 September 2015, paras. 1132- 1136; S/2016/361/Rev.1, 22 June 2016, para. 82; CAT/C/LKA/CO/5, 27 January 2017 (concluding observations). See also A/79/750-S/2025/263, 4 April 2025.
[102] Ibid.

Advance unedited version

related sexual violence in Sri Lanka[103], based on consultations with 27 survivors and their representatives, highlighting the continuing barriers victims have faced in seeking recognition and accountability, as well as their ongoing trauma and harassment. The Government rejected the brief [104] and has not to date taken up OHCHR'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.

E. Accountability for the Easter Sunday Attacks

51. The Office notes substantial investigative and judicial activity surrounding the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, including appointment of a four-member committee to study the report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, removal of senior security and police officials, implementation of the 2023 Supreme Court orders for personal compensation by the former President, 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.[105] 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.[106] 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.[107] The Government stated that payments to beneficiaries from the Victim Fund were 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 imposition of the death penalty. Concerns include periods of ineffective or absent legal representation due to withdrawal of the counsels representing 22 accused, inadequate access and restrictions on family, and lack of public access to court proceedings.[108]

F. Further options for advancing accountability

53. For several years, OHCHR has advocated for 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 (GSF) 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 of involvement 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 in Human Rights Council resolution 46/1, OHCHR established its Sri Lanka accountability project. In resolution 60/1, the Council decided to extend this capacity. However, to date, the Government of Sri Lanka has declined to engage with OHCHR on this

[103] OHCHR, *Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sri Lanka: "We Lost Everything – Even Hope for Justice"*, 13 January 2026

[104] Note Verbale of OHCHR to the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 1 May 2026, on file with OHCHR

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

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

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

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

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project and has continued to reject accountability-related resolutions of the Human Rights Council. In April 2026, OHCHR published an update on the achievements of its accountability project during 2025 and the project's priorities for 2026-2027, including activities aimed at supporting future accountability and transitional justice processes.[109]

55. The OHCHR Sri Lanka accountability project's repository 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.[110] The project has continued accountability-related investigations in priority crime areas, including unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment, and CRSV, 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 where 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 NPP-led Government came to power with commitments to implement transformative reforms, including constitutional change, repeal of the PTA, release of all political prisoners, advance accountability, and address 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 recognising 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 war. Longstanding structural barriers to accountability efforts, including surveillance and intimidation of victims and witnesses, and deeply entrenched impunity continue to erode public confidence in domestic institutions.**

59. **The Office remains deeply concerned by 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 United Nations Human Rights Council, remains essential to advancing accountability, long-term reconciliation, and sustainable peace. While the primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting**

[109] OHCHR, *2026–2027 Update on OHCHR Sri Lanka Accountability Project*, April 2026.
[110] OHCHR, *Preserving Evidence Advancing Accountability for Sri Lanka: A Snapshot of OHCHR Sri Lanka Accountability Project's Repository*, 1 September 2025.

Advance unedited version

crimes under international law and ensuring accountability rests with the State, international mechanisms can play a complementary and supportive role. The Council and individual United Nations Member States should continue to support OHCHR and utilize strengthened capacities established under Human Rights 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 his previous reports,[111] the High Commissioner 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 north and east; releasing long-term detainees held under the PTA; supporting victims' memorialization initiatives; and strengthening the independence and credibility of the OMP through international expertise and independent monitoring;**

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

(c) **Impose a moratorium on the Prevention of Terrorism Act, expedite its repeal, and ensure that any replacement legislation complies with international human rights law and the benchmarks set out by United Nations human rights experts;[112]**

(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 ICCPR Act and the draft NGO (Registration and Supervision) Act.**

(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, individuals credibly alleged to have committed human rights violations to senior positions in government, the security sector, or diplomatic service;**

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

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

(i) **Consider the creation of 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 as well as 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 adopt a health-centred response to drug use;**

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

[112] OL/LKA,7/2021

Advance unedited version

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

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

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

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

63. **The High Commissioner recommends that the Human Rights Council and Member 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 by any party, 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; and**

(d) **Support to Sri Lanka in post-Ditwah reconstruction with particular focus on population groups most at risk, in line with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.**

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