



### **Truth, Justice, Accountability, and a Long Term Political Solution Needed at the UNHRC**

**Washington D.C.; March 24, 2022** – PEARL welcomes UN High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet’s Written Update on the implementation of the accountability-related aspects of Resolution 46/1 and notes that the High Commissioner’s findings are consistent with the Tamil community’s persistent observations on issues such as growing Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism and discrimination against Tamil and Muslim communities.

We share the High Commissioner’s concerns about the ongoing deterioration of the overall human rights situation in Sri Lanka, and further entrenchment of impunity, militarization and Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism. The Sri Lankan state’s ethnocentric nature continues to drive actions such as the protection and elevation of alleged war criminals, the rejection of any meaningful accountability and justice mechanisms, and the [Sinhalization](#) of Tamil-dominated areas. Any recent claims of “progress” and openness to dialogue from the Sri Lankan government must be scrutinized for authenticity, since ongoing demands for tangible and direct actions for accountability from Tamils and the international community have been openly rejected or ignored for over a decade.

We urge the Council to avoid further entrenching impunity in Sri Lanka by giving credence to already discredited domestic mechanisms such as the Office of Missing Persons (OMP). Victim-survivor communities have consistently questioned the efficacy of the OMP due to an inherent lack of consultation and appointments of individuals, who themselves have been accused of previously overseeing disappearances, to positions of responsibility in the OMP. Sri Lanka’s recent move to issue blanket death certificates and cash payments to close out enforced disappearance cases further highlights the Government’s blatant disregard for providing truth and justice for its crimes. The Tamil people remain resolute in their demands for internationalized truth and justice, which were reiterated during last week’s protests by mothers of the disappeared during Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa’s visit to Jaffna.

Whilst tens of thousands freely protested Sri Lanka’s economic crisis in the capital, Tamil families of the disappeared protesting the visit to Jaffna were treated as security threats, facing harassment and surveillance from Sri Lanka’s police and military. The reaction further lays clear the discriminatory application of the state’s security apparatus and its entrenchment through legislation like the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). The recent proposals to amend the PTA are insufficient and should not be seen as a reason to cease the demand to fully repeal the legislation.

Due to Sri Lanka’s consistent unwillingness to deliver justice and accountability domestically, the international community has a responsibility to support international accountability efforts, encompassing and going beyond the OHCHR’s mandate. Furthermore, the international community must ensure continued progress on the evidence-gathering mechanism towards helping victim-survivors obtain justice and accountability for the Sri Lankan government’s past atrocity crimes, including genocide, and ongoing human rights violations.

To ensure sustainable peace on the island, the international community must center the voices of those most affected, the Tamil people of the North-East, in supporting issues such as justice and accountability, the Tamil people’s right to memorialization, and the ongoing demand for a long-term political solution, called for since the island’s independence. The failure to hold the Sri Lankan state accountable for its crimes will add to a dangerous trend where more states will become fearless to the consequences of committing genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.