



Mandate renewal is not enough:

PEARL calls for decisive international action to end Sri Lanka's impunity

Washington, D.C.; October 7, 2025 – The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has passed a new resolution on Sri Lanka by consensus during its 60th session. This resolution extends the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Sri Lanka Accountability Project (OSLap) for two years, allowing continued monitoring and reporting on the current human rights situation in Sri Lanka. It also enables the collection, consolidation, analysis, and preservation of evidence that may be used in future proceedings on mass atrocity crimes, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and [genocide](#), committed by the Sri Lankan state against the Tamil people. The Sri Lankan state has once again rejected the resolution.

While PEARL welcomes the extension of the UN's evidence-gathering mandate, we remain deeply alarmed by the UN Human Rights Council member states' overly cautious approach toward the Sri Lankan government. The resolution fails to reflect the gravity of Sri Lanka's mass atrocity crimes and ongoing human rights violations, nor does it acknowledge the immense loss suffered by the Tamil people, or the state's non-cooperation with OSLap.

Sixteen years after the genocide in Mullivaikkal, no perpetrator has been held accountable for mass atrocity crimes or other international crimes committed against Tamils. Instead, the government continues systemic abuses, including the heavy militarization, continued occupation, and construction of Buddhist viharas on Tamil lands in the North-East, reinforcing Sri Lanka's entrenched Sinhala-Buddhist majoritarianism in its state structures. Harassment, intimidation, and violence carried out by security forces against Tamils, including journalists such as Kumanan Kanapathipillai, persist with impunity. PEARL notes with concern that a high-level Sri Lankan official was permitted to make unsubstantiated allegations of terrorism against Mr. Kanapathipillai during a recent UN session without challenge. These actions lay bare the hollowness of the government's claims to reconciliation, especially as it continues to uphold the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), a key instrument of state repression.

Despite this, the international community continues to support and promote domestic mechanisms such as the Office on Missing Persons, though these mechanisms have never delivered justice and have a long history of being manipulated or abandoned to shield perpetrators from accountability. Strong and repeated calls from Tamil victims and the diaspora for an international justice mechanism have been completely ignored.

Since the beginning of the UNHRC process on Sri Lanka, Tamils have been the primary advocates for international scrutiny of the situation in Sri Lanka, despite their catastrophic experience with the international community in 2009 and the UN's failure to protect the Tamil people from mass atrocity crimes. Despite this broken trust, Tamils have continuously invested time and effort to ensure that Sri Lanka remains on the agenda in Geneva—correctly anticipating that the Sri Lankan state would persist in its politics of impunity. Consequently, Sri Lanka remains a prime example of how the international



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community struggles to identify specific and time-bound mechanisms to deliver justice and accountability for mass atrocity crimes when the perpetrating state persistently fails to investigate and prosecute its own violations and to uphold its obligations under international law.

PEARL stresses that there can be no genuine reconciliation without justice, accountability, and a political solution acceptable to the Tamil people. Previous resolutions (UNHRC Resolutions 46/1 and 51/1) requested the High Commissioner to present further options to advance accountability. Despite the High Commissioner's recommendations, the Council has taken no steps to move forward on developing a comprehensive roadmap to ensure timely implementation of internationalized accountability mechanisms.

Member states should actively engage with OSLap and heed the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' call to investigate and prosecute perpetrators through universal jurisdiction and other international legal avenues, including the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Bilateral engagement must be conditional on specific actions, such as repealing the PTA and the ratification of the Rome Statute. The international community should dedicate resources for investigating and prosecuting alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. UN member states should continue to push for a victim-centered approach and also meaningfully address the demands of Tamil victims and civil society themselves.

The time for action has long passed. The Tamil Families of the Disappeared have been protesting for over 3,150 days, and more than 350 family members have died without answers about the fate of those taken. With the entire Tamil nation, from the North-East to the diaspora, united in its call for justice, accountability, and self-determination, it is now imperative for the international community to act decisively.