

**United Nations Human Rights Council**

**57th Regular Session**

**Item 2**

**Oral Statement of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) in the Interactive Dialogue on the Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on** **Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka**

09 September 2024

Mr. President,

The ICJ welcomes and concurs with the assessment by the OHCHR in its report on Sri Lanka that there is no enabling environment for transitional justice measures due to longstanding impunity. We fully support the recommendations made by the High Commissioner.

As highlighted in the report, domestic transitional justice initiatives suffer from paltry engagement with victim communities, political interference, and a lack of outcomes with any real consequence toward achieving accountability. Intimidation, surveillance, and harassment of journalists, human rights defenders, activists, families of the disappeared, and political opponents persist. Some of those responsible for abuses not only retain their positions but are often promoted.

Core Rule of Law principles continue to be undermined, with the introduction of new legislation that undermines human rights and fundamental freedoms, the disregard of Supreme Court recommendations, and pervasive corruption across all levels of government. The repressive Prevention of Terrorism Act remains in force and has been used to target mainly Tamils engaged in memorialization activities related to the conflict. There has been a marked increase of undue military involvement in civilian affairs and law enforcement.

The ongoing impunity and the lack of accountability for past abuses, including crimes under international law, underscore Sri Lanka’s unwillingness to meet its obligations at the domestic level. The ICJ therefore calls on the Council to act to renew the mandates of the OHCHR and its Sri Lanka Accountability Project for at least two more years, to evaluate and promote Sri Lanka’s compliance with its human rights obligations and to build on the progress achieved by the Project thus far.

I thank you.

Statement delivered by: Sandra EPAL-RATJEN, International Advocacy Director

For more information, contact: Sandra EPAL-RATJEN, Sandra.epal@icj.org