

34th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

High-Commissioner on Sri Lanka

Geneva - 22th March 2017

Mr. President,

Dominicans for Justice and Peace and Franciscans International welcome the recent report of the Office of the High Commissioner as well as the increasing engagement of the Government of Sri Lanka with the United Nations system since 2015. However, based on our own observations on the ground, we concur with many of the concerns of the report, especially about the slowness and inadequacy in implementing commitments made in resolution 30/1 as well as continuing surveillance, intimidation and threats to human rights defenders.

Many victims feel that the grievances giving rise to the conflict and the immediate problems they face have not been addressed since the unity government came into power in 2015. Hopes they had are fading and confidence is eroding. This is evident in long and widespread protests by families of the disappeared, by the landless, workers, unemployed, etc. The Government can no longer delay to release political prisoners and land occupied by the military, to operationalise the Office of Missing Persons (OMP) and to enact legislation for other transitional justice mechanisms.

We believe that this process must be victim-centered, prioritising their rights, needs and interests. We therefore call on the Government to ensure that victims can actively participate in each stage of the process, from the design to the implementation of the transitional justice mechanisms.

Mr. President,

The creation of a coalition government by two major parties supported by key smaller parties and the international community offers a unique opportunity for peace in Sri Lanka. However, we are concerned that this may be lost, unless the Government acts promptly to address urgent concerns on the ground and ensures independent transitional justice mechanisms and a new constitution that will address the grievances and aspirations of survivors, victims' families and all communities in Sri Lanka.

Thank you Mr. President.

Joint Oral Statement submitted by

Dominicans for Justice and Peace : Order of Preachers

Franciscans International