



Human Rights Council – 30<sup>th</sup> Regular Session  
Geneva, 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Speaker: Mr. Glenn Payot.

Thank you Mr. President, Mr. High Commissioner.

Minority Rights Group International welcomes the OISL report and, in particular, its crucial drawing of attention to the impact of the war on minorities in the country. As the report duly underlines, minority women were uniquely affected by the conflict, which included widespread sexual violence inseparable from a broader systemic pattern of gender-based violence against Tamil women.

MRG is also encouraged by attention directed to atrocities suffered specifically by the Muslim population at the hands of the Sri Lankan military and the LTTE, such as unlawful killings, expulsion and displacement.

However, MRG would like to stress that this is not only a matter of past atrocities.

Years after the formal end of the conflict impunity persists, and the situation remains grave for minority women. Amidst pervasive military presence in the north and east, many face chronic insecurity, protracted displacement, land grabbing, and the threat of sexual violence. Thousands of women who have lost family members to death and disappearance are sole breadwinners and, faced with limited livelihood opportunities, are vulnerable to exploitation.

Meanwhile, the Muslim community in particular, but also Christians, have faced violent attacks and hate speech fuelled by mounting religious extremism among sections of the Buddhist majority.

Considering this context, MRG endorses the call for the establishment of a hybrid special court to investigate war crimes, as well as the new government's expressed commitment to address war-time and ongoing abuses. However, despite growing debate and discussion on reconciliation in Sri Lanka, Tamil women, including Christians, Hindus and Muslims, continue to be sidelined. Without a clear framework of protection or inclusion in place for minority women and other marginalized groups, the prospects of reconciliation and a lasting peace will remain elusive.

MRG therefore recommends that the Government of Sri Lanka:

- Establish a hybrid special court which, heeding the calls of survivors, ensures robust and meaningful international involvement
- Establish strong witness and victim protection mechanisms to provide survivors with confidence to engage in the reconciliation process
- Ensure relevant Special Representatives of the Secretary General and other UN Special Procedures have access to the country
- Finally and crucially, establish a platform for minority women affected by the conflict to share their experiences and engage in meaningful dialogue on transitional justice in Sri Lanka.

I thank you.