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## ORAL STATEMENT

Item 2: Interactive Dialogue on the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights report on Sri Lanka

### SRI LANKA: HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL MUST TAKE PREVENTIVE ACTION IN RESPONSE TO EARLY WARNING INDICATORS HIGHLIGHTED IN OHCHR REPORT

UN Human Rights Council  
Forty-sixth session  
22 February – 23 March 2021

Madam President,

Amnesty International welcomes the important [OHCHR report on Sri Lanka](#), which provides a stark assessment of the situation and makes clear recommendations for “preventive action” by this Council.

We share deep concern over “clear early warning signs of a deteriorating human rights situation and a significantly heightened risk of future violations.” Last week, Amnesty International released a [report](#) detailing the significant crackdown on civil society and freedom of expression, and the resulting climate of fear; and share concerns over increased repression and marginalisation of minorities.

The report before us today, as well as a recent joint assessment by UN Special Procedures<sup>1</sup>, reinforces our own assessment that domestic accountability measures cannot be considered credible, given the repeated failure of such processes to yield results, recent backsliding on important emblematic cases, changes to the Constitution that seriously erode the independence of domestic justice processes and the National Human Rights Commission, and the real fear of reprisals against victims and witnesses. This Council must redouble its efforts to help end the cycle of impunity which continues to fuel violations and to deny victims’ and their families’ right to truth, justice and reparation.

Madam President,

It is critical that the UN learn from past failures – including in Sri Lanka – and ensure that the clear early warning signals indicated by the High Commissioner are responded to. In this context, we urge this Council to take the “preventive actions” recommended by the High Commissioner: specifically, to mandate enhanced monitoring and reporting on the situation; and the collection and preservation of evidence for future prosecutions.

Madam High Commissioner, perhaps you could elaborate further on your recommendations on how this Council should address this challenge and contribute to accountability, and why that is so important not only for the past, but also the future of the country?

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sri Lanka: Experts dismayed by regressive steps, call for renewed UN scrutiny and efforts to ensure accountability*, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (5 February 2021), available at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26725&LangID=E>.