

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch

Joint oral statement on the outcome on Sri Lanka under the UPR

13 June 2008

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Mr. President,

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch welcome the recommendations to Sri Lanka, in particular, to “investigate and prosecute all allegations of extra judicial, summary or arbitrary killings, and bring the perpetrators to justice”. Their prompt and effective implementation is of crucial importance.

The rate at which such killings continue is alarming; on 22 May, five persons were shot dead in the Batticaloa area. In May, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions informed this Council that the government appeared to rely on paramilitary groups to maintain control in the east and that there was evidence that these groups were responsible for extrajudicial executions.¹

We welcome the recommendation to cooperate actively with the Special Procedures. Given the pattern of disappearances, and the increase in disappearances in May, noted by the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances, we urge the government to set an early date for the visit requested by the Working Group.

Against the backdrop of the longstanding and steady deterioration of the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, we are deeply disappointed that Sri Lanka does not support the recommendation, made by at least 12 states, to establish an international human rights monitoring mechanism under UN auspices. The urgent deployment of such a mechanism, in both government and LTTE controlled areas, is essential to protect human rights, because effective domestic mechanisms to monitor and investigate abuses by all sides are ineffective.² In December 2007, the status of the national Human Rights Commission was downgraded by the International Coordination Committee to non-compliant with the Paris Principles, because of concerns in the appointment of its commissioners and because it had expressed its inability to investigate disappearances.

The government of Sri Lanka must end the current climate of impunity for human rights violations. None of those responsible for the most serious atrocities in the past two years, such as the killing of five students in Trincomalee or the 17 aid workers in Mutur have been prosecuted. We therefore welcome the government’s voluntary commitment to continue a constructive dialogue with the High Commissioner to strengthen national mechanisms in all aspects.

Thank you, Mr President.

¹ Report of Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Phillip Alston, A/HRC 8/3/Add.3, point 48.

² Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, A/HRC/8/46