



22nd Session of the
UN Human Rights Council

**Adoption of the Report of the Working Group
on the Universal Periodic Review of Sri Lanka**

Thank you Mr. President,

CIVICUS welcomes the opportunity to address the council. Although we laud Sri Lanka's participation in the UPR process their rejection and delayed implementation of crucial recommendations has shown a lack of commitment to addressing serious human rights concerns. The long-term litmus test of Sri Lanka's ability to build an effective and peaceful democracy will be whether it can nurture a vibrant and independent civil society.

Several prominent human rights activists have been subject to slanderous campaigns instigated by the Sri Lankan government portraying them as traitors for raising concerns about human rights violations.

In 2012, following the adoption of the UN Human Rights Council Resolution calling on the Sri Lankan government to account for violations of international humanitarian law and to further consider implementing recommendations of an inquiry into the civil war in 2009, the Minister for Public Relations threatened to "break the limbs" of activists if they returned to Sri Lanka. In response, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated: "There has been an unprecedented and totally unacceptable level of threats, harassment and intimidation directed at Sri Lankan activists who had travelled to Geneva to engage in the debate."

Since its initial UPR examination, the Sri Lankan Government has made commitments to strengthen the National Human Rights Commission, which has been criticized for failing to investigate human rights abuses including persecution of civil society. In September 2010, the independence of the Commission was further undermined by the passing of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which allows the President to appoint the Commission's

members. Despite calls for reform, the Sri Lankan government has not fully accepted recommendations to ensure that the Commission is in line with international standards.

We hope that the Sri Lankan government will reconsider the recommendations to put in place a national action plan for the protection of human rights defenders, ensure impartial investigations into all threats and attacks on human rights defenders, strengthen the capacity and the independence of the National Human Rights Commission, and issue a standing invitation to all UN Special Procedures.

Thank you for your attention.