

**Sri Lanka:** Asian States and civil society must come together at the UN Human Right Council to ensure accountability and justice in Sri Lanka

**For Immediate Release**

(Colombo/Bangkok, 17 February 2015) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and the Asia Democracy Network (ADN) called on Asian governments and civil society to work together to ensure accountability and justice in Sri Lanka.

Earlier this month, about 60 human rights defenders and civil society activists from 17 countries across Asia congregated in Bangkok to discuss and express their solidarity with the peoples of Sri Lanka. The country is just reeling from a violent civil war where all warring factions have been accused of serious violations of human rights and humanitarian laws. The civil society in Sri Lanka as well as the international community have consistently called on the government to bring perpetrators to justice and end impunity.

Congratulating the peoples of Sri Lanka for the successful completion of a peaceful and democratically conducted Presidential elections in January this year, the participants expressed hope for change and progress in ensuring justice for the people.

The participants expressed serious concern over the continuing plights of the Tamils and Muslims living in heavily militarised Northern and Eastern areas of Sri Lanka, where peoples are deprived of basic human rights. Lands occupied by the security forces are yet to be returned. The families of the disappeared have no information about the whereabouts of their loved ones. Worse still, victims of sexual assault and other forms of abuse are forced to live with their perpetrators in an environment of fear and intimidation.

Despite several efforts by the domestic and international community, including the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the Government of Sri Lanka has forcefully resisted any attempts to ensure accountability and restore justice. The participants were particularly disappointed at the manner in which Asian member States at the UNHRC have responded to issues relating to accountability in Sri Lanka.

After deliberating on several issues over two days, the participants unanimously resolved to intensify advocacy efforts for accountability in Sri Lanka. They called on the international community and Asian States, particularly members of the UNHRC, to ensure full support for accountability for past and ongoing violations.

While taking note of the recent progress towards restoring democratic institutions, the participants called on the government to constructively engage with the UNHRC and other mechanisms, particularly the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL). As a start, the participants called on the government as well as the international community to take up the OISL report to be tabled at the 28<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UNHRC and ensure that the recommendations therein are fully implemented.

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**About ADN:**

*ADN is an international network of regional and sub-regional civil society organizations engaged in democracy promotion and advocacy in Asia in areas of human rights, election, press freedom, transparency, poverty eradication and research.*

**About FORUM-ASIA:**

*FORUM-ASIA is a Bangkok-based regional human rights group with 47 member organizations in 16 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta and Geneva. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expressions, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.*

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