

**37th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review of Sri Lanka
Oral Statement Delivered by R. Iniyana Ilango on behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Monday, 19 March 2018

Mr. President, FORUM-ASIA notes that the government of Sri Lanka has accepted 177 out of 232 recommendations. While the government has committed to address outstanding issues such as implementing measures to combat all forms of discrimination¹; preventing torture² and arbitrary detention³; criminalising enforced disappearances⁴; and ensuring justice and accountability for such crimes⁵, its rejection of key inter-connected recommendations indicate an unwillingness to genuinely and comprehensively address concerns.

For instance the government has refused to accept recommendations to repeal or review the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act⁶ which has often been used arbitrarily against human rights defenders, civil society, and journalists.

Similarly while the government has seemingly accepted a number of recommendations⁷ to implement its commitments under resolution 30/1 of the Council on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka⁸ we regret that the government has rejected recommendations to develop a clear timeline and benchmarks⁹ to accelerate the implementation of these commitments – despite serious concerns about the lack of meaningful progress in transitional justice. Further, the rejection of the recommendation to take comprehensive measures to investigate and prosecute gross human rights violations during the civil war with the aim of ending impunity¹⁰ indicate its reluctance to honour commitments on transitional justice and resolution 30/1.

While we note the government's acceptance to take steps to combat hate speech and incitement to hatred¹¹, guarantee freedom of religion,¹² and prevent violence against religious minorities¹³. Recent outbreak of attacks against religious minorities; and the government's decision to respond outside the human rights framework by imposing a state of emergency and clamping down on social media are deeply concerning. In this context the government's decision to merely note the recommendation to end impunity for incitement to hatred and violence¹⁴ further raises questions on its commitment to genuinely address these concerns.

We call on the government to develop a concrete and time-bound implementation plan in consultation with national human rights institutions, civil society organisations, and all other stakeholders. Thank you.

1 Recommendations 116.13, 116.32, 116.34 to 116.39, 116.136, 116.137, 116.144, 116.156, 116.161, 116.163 and 116.164
2 Recommendations 116.2 to 116.10, and 116.55 to 116.57
3 Recommendation 116.10
4 Recommendations 116.61, 116.62, 116.65 and 116.66
5 Recommendations 116.58, and 116.63 to 116.68
6 Recommendations 117.27 and 117.45
7 Recommendations 116.76 to 116.91
8 A/HRC/RES/30/1 (1 October 2015)
9 Recommendations 117.39, 117.40, 117.41, and 117.43
10 Recommendation 117.36
11 Recommendations 116.40 to 116.43
12 Recommendations 116.97 to 116.101
13 Recommendations 116.94, and 116.101 to 116.103
14 Recommendation 117.26