



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST  
REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE, GENEVA**

29 May 2019

Ms. Leigh Toomey  
Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Ms. Karima Bennouna  
Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

Mr. Dainius Puras  
Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable  
standard of physical and mental health

Ms. Leilani Farha  
Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate  
standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context

Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary  
Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons

Mr. Felipe González Morales  
Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants

Dr. Fernand de Varennes  
Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Ms. E. Tendayi Achiume  
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination,  
xenophobia and related intolerance

Dr. Ahmed Shaheed  
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Ms. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin  
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental  
freedoms while countering terrorism

**Joint Urgent Appeal from Special Procedures Mandate Holders**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledges receipt of the Joint Urgent Appeal (UA  
LKA3/2019) of 27 May 2019 by 10 Special Procedures Mandate Holders on "increasing

communal violence targeting religious minorities in Sri Lanka, in particular Muslims" and the status of "displaced refugees and asylum seekers".

Having carefully perused the claims and allegations in your appeal, in keeping with Sri Lanka's continued engagement with the Special Procedures Mandate Holders, the Ministry wishes to convey this interim response, pending a comprehensive submission that requires stakeholder input, and therefore more time.

At the outset, we note that the "new information" you refer to in your appeal contains a number of factual inaccuracies, which we fear have led to misconceived assertions.

In keeping with the letter and spirit of the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate Holders, we envisage that, through "principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue" <sup>1</sup>, you would support Member States to "build capacities to comply with their human rights obligations". You are aware that the Government of Sri Lanka has been maintaining a transparent and constructive engagement with all Special Procedures Mandate Holders. As a result, three of you visited Sri Lanka in the last three years alone, and one of you is scheduled to visit this year. Therefore, we earnestly request you to engage with the government of Sri Lanka in the same spirit and candour that we have afforded to you, and to assess the merits of the allegations contained under "new information", prior to issuing a public statement, which will not help Sri Lanka at this critical moment.

It is widely acknowledged that the Easter Sunday Attacks were instigated by a small group of radical elements inspired by and associated with the Islamist ideologies of ISIS. The deadly attacks targeted innocent Christians at prayer and patrons of three luxury hotels in Colombo who were mostly foreigners. As the people of Sri Lanka try to come to terms with their losses, it is regretted that your communication has made no effort to recognize the prompt steps taken by the Government to prevent an immediate backlash and contain unruly mobs. Notwithstanding such measures, events that unfolded three weeks after the Easter Sunday attacks in a few places indiscriminately targeted Muslims and others as well. It is due to the professional approach of the military and law enforcement agencies, as well as the prompt calls by the political and religious leaderships, [REDACTED] that the spread of any further violence was prevented.

With regard to the issue of the asylum seekers and refugees who have been displaced following the Easter Sunday attacks, the Government in collaboration with the UNHCR has guaranteed them security. It is envisaged that all individuals housed temporarily at the Negombo Police station will be moved into a secured camp in Poonthottam-Vavuniya by end of this week. In the case of failed asylum seekers, a government has the sovereign prerogative to take steps according to its immigration and emigration laws. It is however noteworthy that while Sri Lanka is not party to the 1951 Refugees Convention, the government has been facilitating the work of the UNHCR for several years on humanitarian grounds and has been providing shelter to refugees and asylum seekers.

In consultation with stakeholders, we intend to submit detailed responses to your questions at the earliest. Therefore, we request that you continue direct engagement with the government. Public pronouncements and judgments at this juncture will only


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<sup>1</sup> Article (e) Code of Conduct -  
[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/SP/CodeofConduct\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/SP/CodeofConduct_EN.pdf)

serve the ulterior motives of those who wish to see Sri Lanka veering into a vicious cycle of violent extremism, away from the hard-won path of peace, reconciliation and development.

In critical situations such as the one Sri Lanka is presently experiencing, where ground realities are nuanced and sensitive, engaging in candid conversations and direct consultations out of the public sphere can yield the desired results and serve our common objective – to ensure the human rights and freedoms of all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'P' followed by a horizontal line with a small upward flick at the end.

Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN.

