



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

USTPAC welcomes High Commissioner Zeid's call for sustained international engagement on Sri Lanka

WASHINGTON, DC (June 30, 2016) – United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) member states responded yesterday in Geneva to High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein's [midterm report](#) on the government of Sri Lanka's implementation of Resolution 30/1. USTPAC welcomes High Commissioner Zeid's report and statements from member states and other countries for more concerted government action.

"High Commissioner Zeid's constructive oral report confirms USTPAC's observations that the government has not moved fast enough on confidence building measures or transitional justice," said Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham, USTPAC's President. "Sri Lanka's security forces must return all land to its rightful owners, demilitarize from the Tamil-dominated North and East and undergo serious reform if Sri Lanka is to achieve reconciliation. USTPAC also reiterates High Commissioner Zeid's conclusion that the government must execute a comprehensive plan for transitional justice and launch a concerted public information campaign to explain its efforts to all communities."

"Despite Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Samaraweera's statements in Geneva, USTPAC has concerns about the government's determination to fully implement Resolution 30/1. Failure to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, rejections of international judges, denial without a probe that cluster bombs were used against civilians, and the refusal by military to obey a court order to release the names of those who surrendered at the end of the war are just a few causes for concern. The government must immediately criminalize war crimes and crimes against humanity. This powerful action would reduce fears that the government aims to sideline justice."

USTPAC is pleased by the tenor set by the UNHRC at this June session.

"The UNHRC sent a clear message that it expects to see more tangible and transparent action from the government of Sri Lanka in the run-up to March 2017." Dr. Arulanantham concluded, "Especially on the 10th anniversary of the Council, Sri Lanka serves as a test of the UNHRC's own ability to maintain attention and translate its pronouncements into real and transformational change. This is a tremendous opportunity to prove the Council's global leadership on human rights and drive sustainable peace in Sri Lanka."

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Notes for Editors

- USTPAC is a US-based Tamil advocacy group advocating for a cessation of ongoing human rights abuses in Sri Lanka, accountability for crimes committed during and after the civil war by parties to the conflict, and a political settlement to address the root causes of the conflict. It has worked for these goals at the UNHRC since 2012.
- In September 2015, the report of the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL) identified that widespread and systematic war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed against civilians. The government's conduct during the final period of the civil war was particularly heinous.
- In October 2016 the government of Sri Lanka co-sponsored UNHRC Resolution 30/1. The Resolution, along with the OISL Report, established a framework for transitional justice and political settlement in Sri Lanka. The UNHRC requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights provide an oral report on Sri Lanka's implementation of the Resolution in June 2016 and a written report in March 2017.

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