

UN Human Rights Council 61: Sri Lanka Core Group Statement

2.3.2026 - Eleanor Sanders | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Delivered by the UK's Human Rights Ambassador, Eleanor Sanders, at the 61st Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Thank you, Mr. President.

This statement is on behalf of the Sri Lanka Core Group: Canada, Malawi, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and the UK.

We extend condolences to Sri Lanka for the loss caused by Cyclone Ditwah in November.

We acknowledge the government's steps to allow communities of different backgrounds to commemorate losses from the conflict era. Memorialisation is vital to reconciliation, and we encourage continued progress.

We reiterate our call for the repeal, and non-use, of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The latest version of the proposed Protection of the State from Terrorism Bill raises even greater concerns than previously. Counter-terrorism legislation must comply with Sri Lanka's human rights obligations.

While some military-held land has been released, the pace of releases remains too slow. We note recent commitments by the President on transitional justice, anti-racism, and emblematic human rights cases; however, concrete results are still limited. Key institutions remain weak, and threats against witnesses, victims, and journalists associated with cases persist.

Strong, independent domestic institutions are vital to uphold human rights. The planned independent prosecutor's office must be translated into action.

Finally, we thank OHCHR for its report on conflict-related sexual violence and honour those who shared their experiences. We urge Sri Lanka to engage constructively, strengthen legal protections, and ensure justice for survivors.

Thank you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-61-sri-lanka-core-group-statement>