

UNHRC Resolution 30/1 (Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka)

Co-sponsored by Sri Lanka and adopted by consensus on 1 October 2015. Committed Sri Lanka to a transitional-justice architecture including a special court with international judges and prosecutors, an Office on Missing Persons, an Office for Reparations, and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Sri Lanka formally withdrew its co-sponsorship in February 2020.

Resolution 30/1 is the moment at which the international community, the Sri Lankan government of the day, and Tamil civil society briefly aligned on a single transitional-justice formula. Within five years the co-sponsoring state withdrew, the special court was never constituted, prosecutorial mandates were not granted to the established offices, and the framework collapsed back into the universal-jurisdiction-and-Geneva-pressure pattern that had preceded it.

§1 What it committed Sri Lanka to

Operative paragraph 6 of A/HRC/RES/30/1 affirmed the importance of a judicial mechanism with 'Commonwealth and other foreign judges, defence lawyers, and authorised prosecutors and investigators'. Operative paragraph 4 welcomed the proposed Office on Missing Persons, the Office for Reparations, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and a Judicial Mechanism with the special counsel.

These commitments were made by Sri Lanka in its own voice, as co-sponsor, not imposed by the Council. The OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL) report (A/HRC/30/CRP.2, 2015) had immediately preceded the resolution and provided its evidentiary basis.

§2 What was delivered, what was not

Delivered: the Office on Missing Persons (Act No. 14 of 2016), the Office for Reparations (Act No. 34 of 2018), and a Consultation Task Force report (2017). Not delivered: the special judicial mechanism with foreign judges, defence lawyers, and prosecutors; the prosecutorial mandate for any of the established offices; the constitutional reform package; the security-sector reform.

On 26 February 2020, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister informed the Human Rights Council that the government withdrew co-sponsorship of resolutions 30/1, 34/1 and 40/1. The subsequent OHCHR report (A/HRC/46/20, 2021) found that 'Sri Lanka's failure to address past violations has significantly heightened the risk of human rights violations being repeated' and recommended Member States consider universal-jurisdiction prosecutions.

§3 Why it sits at narrowing-step 17

30/1 closed the path of domestic transitional justice as a viable, sequenced, time-bound process under UN auspices. Resolutions 46/1 (2021) and 51/1 (2022) and 57/1 (2024) preserve the OHCHR's evidence-gathering mandate (the Sri Lanka Accountability Project) and the practical exhaustion of domestic remedy as the prerequisite for universal-jurisdiction action. From step 17 onward, the surviving pathways are external: universal-jurisdiction prosecutions, ICC referral by the Security Council (vetoed to date), the Sri Lanka Accountability Project's evidence repository, and remedial self-determination doctrine.

Sources

- A/HRC/RES/30/1, Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka (1 October 2015), OHCHR.

- OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL), A/HRC/30/CRP.2 (2015).
- A/HRC/46/20, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Sri Lanka (2021).
- Sri Lanka Accountability Project, OHCHR (ongoing — established under A/HRC/RES/46/1).

What this is not

- This article is not a call to withdraw the OHCHR evidence-gathering mandate. The Sri Lanka Accountability Project is a Tier-A preservation effort; criticism of the 2020 co-sponsorship withdrawal is criticism of the state, not of the UN process.
- This article does not name any individual co-sponsoring or withdrawing government official.
- This article does not aggregate violation counts in TLTE voice. All figures attributed to OISL, UN PoE, OHCHR, ITJP, PEARL, OMP, or successor mechanisms.