

UN Human Rights Council Resolution 46/1 (2021)

The 2021 resolution that created — for the first time — a dedicated OHCHR capacity to collect, consolidate, analyse and preserve evidence on Sri Lanka for future accountability processes, after Sri Lanka withdrew its co-sponsorship of 30/1.

46/1 is the resolution that put accountability on a multilateral preservation footing after Sri Lanka walked away from Geneva co-sponsorship. It is structurally important because it survived the change of government: the evidence-preservation mandate continues regardless of which administration sits in Colombo.

§1 What the resolution does

Resolution 46/1, adopted 23 March 2021, requests the OHCHR to consolidate, analyse and preserve information and evidence and to develop possible strategies for future accountability processes for gross violations of human rights or serious violations of international humanitarian law in Sri Lanka. The mandate was renewed and reinforced in subsequent resolutions (51/1, 2022).

The Sri Lankan delegation rejected 46/1 and announced withdrawal from the consensus framework of 30/1. The accountability obligation did not lapse: it shifted from a consensual co-sponsorship architecture to a Council-mandated external preservation architecture.

§2 Why this is a narrowing step

Every prior resolution since 19/2 (2012) had relied on Sri Lankan engagement. 46/1 is the first that does not. The case file records 46/1 as the step where the international community formally concluded that domestic mechanisms alone would not deliver accountability and that external evidence preservation was therefore necessary.

Sources

- OHCHR OISL 2015 — predecessor investigation cited by 46/1.
- UNHRC 30/1 (2015) — co-sponsorship framework that 46/1 replaces.

What this is not

- This article does not predict the outcome of any future accountability process.
- This article does not name OHCHR staff or evidence-preservation team members.