



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "

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Agenda Item 4

**Sri Lanka:
ICJ Oral Intervention in the General Debate under Item 4 Concerning Human Rights
Situations that Require the Council's Attention**

13 March 2011

Check against delivery

Madam President,

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) welcomes the initiative of the United States of America to introduce a draft resolution on promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka. The time for assurances, commitments, plans and intentions has long passed. The time now is for action by the Government of Sri Lanka, and time for this Council to take responsibility in the face of a Government that is clearly unwilling to comply with its international obligations to undertake prompt, independent and effective investigations into serious and credible allegations of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law, including torture, unlawful killings and other crimes under international law.

The key to this initiative must be to treat it as a *first* step. The Council must remain actively seized of the matter to ensure action, not just words. It is almost three years now since President Rajapaksa undertook to ensure accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. The Government of Sri Lanka has a long history – since 1977 – of using national commissions of inquiry as a means of circumventing the criminal justice system and of not implementing commission of inquiry recommendations. This is compounded by the very recent examination of Sri Lanka by the Committee Against Torture, where the Committee referred to information from the Government of Sri Lanka that over 100 police and intelligence personnel had been indicted or were being investigated on allegations of torture. It transpires, however, that there have been only four convictions under Sri Lanka's Convention Against Torture Act since its inception in 1994.

It is therefore critical that this initiative receive wide support by Council members, and that it be treated as a first step. The credibility of the Human Rights Council depends on this. Words must be translated into action.

I thank you.

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