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ORAL STATEMENT
Item 6:
Consideration of UPR reports: Sri Lanka

UN Human Rights Council
53rd session
19 June to 14 July 2023

Mr. President,

Swift implementation of supported recommendations is key to protect freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly in Sri Lanka. Amnesty International is concerned by the arsenal of laws¹ that are used to target and unjustly criminalize human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, comedians, social media commentators, opposition parliamentarians, trade unionists, student activists and even police criminal investigators.

Disappointingly, despite the government's support of a de facto moratorium on arrests under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), there were four [new arrests](#) carried out arbitrarily using the PTA in May 2023 and [3 arrests](#) in August 2022. While we welcome Sri Lanka's support for recommendations to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the new Anti-Terrorism bill does not meet international human rights law standards.

Equally vital is the implementation of the supported recommendation² that law enforcement officials resort to the use of force while policing protests is used as a last resort, proportionately and only when necessary and that any officials suspected of using unlawful force should be brought to justice.

We regret that Sri Lanka has only noted most recommendations on accountability for war-time serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law. We are concerned that, in some cases which implicated members of the military or government supporters, the suspects were either [acquitted](#), the cases were [withdrawn](#) by the Attorney General, or [pardoned](#). The proposed new Truth and Reconciliation Commission should not be an alternative to criminal prosecutions for grave human rights violations and must not be used as a means to avoid accountability and

¹ These ranging from the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Sri Lanka's draconian anti-terror law), the domestic ICCPR Act, the Penal Code, Emergency Regulations to the Computer Crimes Act.

² 65.138

justice.

Mr President,

The economic and political crisis in Sri Lanka directly affected the right to health, education, social security, adequate food, and an adequate standard of living. Sri Lanka must implement the supported recommendations³ on these issues to protect these rights, including an expanded and effective social protection system, as a priority.

Mr. President,

Finally, we encourage Sri Lanka to submit a mid-term report on progress towards implementation of supported recommendations and to use an Item 6 General Debate to bring this to the attention of UN Member States.

Thank you.

³ For e.g., 65.162, 65.167, 65.168, 65.169, 65.179, 65.187