



25th session of the
Human Rights Council
Item2

OHCHR Report on Sri Lanka
26 March 2014
Delivered by Mozynah Nofal

Thank you Mr. President

CIVICUS is deeply concerned about the ongoing intimidation targeting citizens and human rights defenders wishing to communicate with or speaking up at this current session of the Human Rights Council. We refer to Ruki Fernando, of the civil society group INFORM and Father Praveen, a catholic priest, who were detained on March 16 under Sri Lanka's draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) after attempting to meet 13-year-old Balendran Vithushaini who was placed on probationary supervision following the arrest of her mother, Balendran Jeyakumari, a prominent rights activist, days before.

Jeyakumari, a longstanding campaigner against enforced disappearances, remains in prison following her arrest on 13 March for allegedly harbouring an ex-LTTE member. She is being detained at the Boosa Prison Camp under the broadly worded PTA, which allows for detention without charge for up to 18 months. Several other activists are currently held under the PTA and the number increased due to a spate of recent arrests across the north and east of Sri Lanka.

The arrests represent a continuing escalation of the government's ongoing attempt to silence independent reporting on human rights abuses in Sri Lanka. A recent report by CIVICUS, [*Sri Lanka's Harassed Civil Society*](#), highlights the government's sustained campaign against active citizen participation and its overly sensitive stance on international scrutiny of its record on human rights, including the routine persecution of civil society activists who cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms.

We therefore reiterate the call from our joint open letter last week, equally supporting the High Commissioner's recommendation that **the Human Rights Council establish an international inquiry mechanism to further investigate the alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and monitor any domestic accountability processes.** If states do not fully heed this call it will amount to lowering a threshold the body has set for itself. We fear that such a signal from the Council will only bolster ongoing human rights abuses and encourage further break down of democracy in Sri Lanka. Given this context, we call upon Southern states to play a prominent role in supporting the establishment of an independent, international investigative mechanism.

Thank you for your attention