
Mr Mohan Pieris advises the Human Rights Council to weed out seeds of prejudice against Sri Lanka

Monday, 05 March 2012

Last Updated Tuesday, 06 March 2012

Following the clustered Interactive Dialogues with the Special Rapporteur on torture and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Senior Advisor to the cabinet of Ministers, Mr Mohan Pieris took the floor, informing the Council of constitutional and legislative measures against torture, effective in Sri Lanka and further pointed out the importance of knowing the difference between true Human Rights Defenders and those who masquerade behind the 'cloak of human rights defender' in their execution of collateral agendas. In conclusion Mr Pieris rightly pointed out that it was a vital necessity for the Council to take Sri Lanka into its confidence and weed out any seeds of prejudice against the country, which is well on its way to reconciliation. Full Text of Statement:

Madam President, Let me congratulate both Special Rapporteurs for dealing with a difficult mandate with prudence. Sri Lanka has had the benefit of the knowledge and experience of several of your predecessors who helped in a very constructive manner to fine tuning our criminal jurisprudence. We have taken on board several of the suggestions and have implemented them. Madam President, the expression human rights defender is a very amorphous term. We believe you have the competency to identify those of them whose heart and soul are genuinely with Human Rights. I would equally alert you not to fall prey to those who masquerade behind the readymade cloak of Human Rights defender creating political havoc wherever they are at the behest of their political masters in their execution of collateral agendas. The alert regarding Sri Lanka is pure conjecture and surmise and made with the singular purpose of causing prejudice to any constructive engagement between Sri Lanka and your office. You will be pleased to note that Sri Lanka has a Zero tolerance policy on torture. This is cogently reflected in the fact that we have a constitutional guarantee against torture. We have also adopted the provisions of the Convention Against Torture into our local legislation by the enactment of the Convention Against Torture Act. We have filed several prosecutions under this law against law enforcement officers. We are presently studying a major amendment to the Criminal Procedure to provide a Duty Attorney Scheme in every Police District on the lines of PACE in the UK providing legal services as a mandatory right at police stations to every suspect within a short time of arrest. We also have in place the National Police Commission exclusively mandated to hear public complaints. Madam President, We are sensitive to the urgent need to protect civil rights and particularly the protection against torture. We assure you that we will unconditionally support your work with which we share a common platform, a common objective. We are confident that we will succeed in our common stand against torture and uphold human rights as pledged in our National Action Plan and to this end we humbly ask that you take us into your confidence and weed out from your mind any seeds of prejudice against Sri Lanka which is well on the way to reconciliation.