

## **Universal Periodic Review, 2nd cycle, Sri Lanka - Stakeholder submission**

Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies and Institute of Human Rights

Date of submission - 23rd April,2012.

1. The submission is by the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies ,(CHA) and THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS(IHR) two institutions working directly with citizens seeking access to justice claims to entitlements including those affected by man made and/or natural disasters alongside contributions of Sajeeva Samaranayake LL.B, LL.M, Attorney at Law, in a personal, voluntary capacity and as well as an independent expert on the NHRAP. The principal contact person for the submission is Jeevan Thiagarajah, 86, Rosmead Place, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka, email-execdir@cha.lk.tel: 94-11.2695959.
2. The Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (GTE) Limited is registered as a NGO with the National Secretariat of Nongovernmental Organizations in the Ministry of Social Services and under the Companies Act No.31 of 1980. CHA's- prioritises human security for underserved regions and people. i.e. 'to secure dignity of life for all' by directly assisting, representing, advocating, educating and empowering national and local stakeholders and members of communities of concern on issues related to peace, development, and human rights. THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF SRI LANKA IHR is an independent, non-profit, non –governmental organization incorporated on the 7th of March 1994, under the provisions of the Companies Act No: 17 of 1982 and registered with the Department of Social Services. From their inception in 1994, they have been serving and educating the public at a national level, in an effort to achieve their vision of establishment of an environment in which human rights are secured and protected.
3. The submission refers to selected pledges, recommendations supported by the SUR and one rejected recommendation at the UPR in May, 2008 and the implementation of the accepted recommendations and the developments of the human rights situation in the State under review.

Assessment of the human rights situation in the country, including positive developments and challenges faced by the country

4. The SuR has after a three year effort, a National action Plan approved by the Cabinet of Ministers for a period ending 2016, for Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Country with eight thematic areas drafted by ten committees consisting of representatives from Government, civil society and experts in thematic areas. The Action Plan read with related issues form the core of interventions on human Rights with related reasons and represents contemporary concerns and serves introduce our submission. A summary of selected areas with related interventions include:

5 a. Civil and Political Rights

Responding to our international human rights obligations, a cabinet sub committee is mooted to review the draft Bill of Rights, enhance awareness, review syllabuses and monitor; amending standing orders of Parliament to allow public to comment on Bills through a website; establishing a standard procedure for civic and stakeholder consultation in developing national laws and policies; a complete revisit of the powers and functions of the Human Rights Commission to improve and strengthen it; a range of measures to safeguard right to life including of suspects in custody including bringing on

personal liability for OIC's; introduction of Duty Attorney scheme improving conditions of detention; reviewing official secrets act, establishment code and circulars in the context of Freedom Expression; ensuring proper attention and ethical response to those seeking access to Justice/legal assistance curbing exploitation and unethical conduct by legal profession.

#### 5b. Economic and Social Rights

Equal access to quality of education for children with disabilities; quality education in all schools; addressing inequitable access to quality health care; ensuring sustainable supply of water for all; employment and equal opportunities; safeguarding cultural rights; language rights; supporting single parenting households and persons with disabilities and submission of a National Anti Corruption Action Plan.

#### 5c. Prevention of Torture

Ensuring rules do not inadvertently promote torture such as section 27 of Evidence Ordinance; improving standards of medico legal work; implementation of zero tolerance policy; effective monitoring of torture investigations and preventive measures; addressing impunity and reduction of space for those who commit torture; special protection for women and children; rehabilitation and reparation; protection from torture of our nationals overseas.

#### 5d. Rights of Women

Improving their health; economic empowerment; enhancing access to employment; address violence against women by, among other measures, proper implementation of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act; targeting a 30% minimum representation of women in Parliament, Provincial Councils and local authorities; elimination of discriminatory laws including specifically the Land Development Ordinance and the Vagrants Ordinance; assisting those affected by conflict.

#### 5e. Labour Rights and Migrant workers

Occupational safety; enforcement and prohibition of underage employment; effective protection of persons in informal sector; ensuring equal pay for work of equal value; implementation of National Policy on Migration; migrant worker protection in receiving countries; ensure accountability of those found trafficking; rehabilitation and reintegration of returning migrant workers; right to vote of migrant workers; upgrading migrant worker skills; promoting participation and giving effect to UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families nationally.

#### 5f. Rights of Children

Ensuring Health and Nutrition; children in need of protection and care; protection from pornography and trafficking; adolescent health and wellbeing; early childhood care and development (ECCD); ensuring equality and accessible education for all; elimination of child labour; alternative care including foster care; ensuring best interest of children in

placements and adoptions; monitoring and review system for children in placement including individual care plans with follow up; ensuring equal rights for non marital children; right to leisure.

Best practices, enhancing cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights

6. The context of Human rights in Sri Lanka should be seen with the end of armed conflict in 2009 and the efforts to rebuild alongside these efforts to develop the country rapidly. A clear focus on human lives entails a fuller understanding of the coverage of human rights, including concern with food, health care, access to education, nutrition, livelihood, shelter, water, sanitation and other elementary ingredients of human lives providing equal rights and change for citizens. **Access to Justice for citizens is central in a focus on human rights.**

6a. Our laws are underpinned by hallowed notions of Dharma and Justice which provides the heart and an opportunity to mingle and spiritualise with the law We are driven by notions of human security which involves protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and empowering people to take charge of their own lives. Human security emphasizes that people must be protected when facing sudden and profound reversals in economic and social life. In addition to "growth with equity," human security is equally concerned with "down-turns with security." In the absence of safety nets, people face critical and pervasive in-securities in situations of sudden downturns. We recognize needs of persons in communities who lack and need freedom and choice due to their particular context of existence. These include single parenting, being economically active but poor or being extremely poor, facing discrimination on account of belonging to sections of ethnic communities who may have contested the state militarily or by virtue of caste distinctions or living within and among underserved regions and communities. Poor and disadvantaged people do not make use of laws, rights and government services because they simply do not know about them. Those who are subject to grievances cannot seek remedy unless they are aware that such a remedy exists. Needs when voiced and addressed empower people. Empowerment expands people's capabilities and choices. Co-operation, improves inter-communal interaction; enhances equity in terms of income, capabilities and opportunities; ensures sustainability meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to be free from poverty and deprivation; generates income security where citizens are free from threats such as disease, repression or sudden harmful dislocations in their daily lives. Within rural communities, those handicapped by classifications referred earlier are challenged in relations when attempting to communicate their needs for responsive actions by duty bearers. The concern thus for access to justice ought not to be, the exclusive concern of only judges and lawyers. Change requires auditing the system from- physical accessibility to differently enabled persons, the litigant's access to information about cases, language comprehensibility and cost efficiency. On the whole, going to the law is like going to Banaras or Mecca: a Will has to be written out because litigation often lasts beyond your life-time and Astrologers alone can hope to anticipate its fate. Access is negated where the system is expensive; and the poor are priced out of an archaic system whose doors open only to a select group. Our legal system is at times

beyond the common person. It remains alien and unintelligible without the aid of the Bar, which has a professional monopoly over jurisprudence. The economically and socially disadvantaged sections, therefore, do not in that sense "access" the legal system to seek redress. They are drawn into it unwittingly in situations of conflict with the law, as complainants, suspects or defendants. This is a hall mark of the current Poor law system in the country referred to in detail below. These situations accentuate the denial of access to justice, to basic legal services, resulting in grave violations of their liberty while occasionally consigning ethics of lawyering to ash.

6b. The approach to reform of the legal system must proceed on a premise of an engineering project and not mere tinkering. We need to examine the application of monetary bail bonds and sureties in relation to the economic status of the accused, the functioning of custodial institutions that hold vagrants, mentally ill, sex workers and women and children in prison-like conditions; open violation of Court orders, the illegal use and cynical disregard for the law.

6c. The Bar Association representative of the profession is a public institution committed to public justice and pro bono public service. A lawyer is thus a representative of clients, an officer of the legal system, and a public citizen having special responsibility for the quality of justice.

6d .Legal services could experiment working on the pattern of neighbourhood law offices located in the community, employing legal service providers belonging to different disciplines to coordinate with other agencies including government offices, police, the courts and the various commissions. They could depute such staff and paralegals or law students to visit these offices, police stations, prisons and other custodial institutions to ascertain the details of those in need of legal assistance and help set legal processes in motion and act as advice centres that could be accessed at any time of the day. Duty Attorneys would also play a role.

6e. The National Human Rights Commission to plays a crucial role in the enabling framework for access to justice. The statutory functions include to inquire into, and investigate, complaints regarding procedures, with a view to ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Constitution relating to fundamental rights and to promoting respect for, and observance of, fundamental rights; to inquire into and investigate, complaints regarding infringements or imminent infringements of fundamental rights, and to provide for resolution thereof by conciliation and mediation in accordance with the provisions hereinafter provided; to advise and assists the government in formulating legislation and administrative directives and procedures, in furtherance of, the promotion and protection of fundamental rights; to make recommendations to the Government regarding measures which should be taken to ensure that national laws and administrative practices are in accordance with international human rights norms and standards; to make recommendations to the Government on the need to subscribe or accede to treaties and other international instruments in the field of human rights; and to promote awareness of, and provide education in relation to, human rights.

The Commission has the following powers: investigate, appoint such number of sub-committees at Provincial level, as it considers necessary to exercise such powers of the Commission; intervene in any proceedings relating to the infringement or imminent infringement of fundamental rights, pending before any court, with the permission of such court; monitor the welfare of persons detained either by a judicial order or otherwise, by regular inspection of their places of detention, and to make such recommendations as may be necessary for improving their conditions of detention; take such steps as it may be directed to take by the Supreme Court, in respect of any matter referred to it by the Supreme Court; undertake research into, and promote awareness of, human rights, by conducting programs, seminars workshops and to disseminate and distribute the results of such research; award in its absolute discretion to an aggrieved person or a person acting on behalf of an aggrieved person, such sum of money as is sufficient to meet the expenses that may have been reasonably incurred by him in making a complaint to the Commission under section 14.

During the period of 40 years that commenced with the Republican Constitution of 1972 Sri Lanka has followed a policy of rapid economic development coupled with a guarantee of legal justice but minus a foundation of social justice. This has been akin to building a house without a foundation. It is to this foundation that we must now turn with full awareness that this society lacks a social policy that promotes equal opportunities to all its citizens. What is currently in place as a social policy is the colonial Poor Law system which adopts a three pronged approach to social problems composed of the criminal law; legal and administrative office based remedies provided by social services and probation and a massive voluntary residential care sector for institutionalizing the rejects of society.

The Human Rights Commission is called upon to react to the symptoms of such a society. Such reactions will not address the root causes of social injustice which are both social and political. Whilst accepting the universality of human rights standards as a member of a civilized community of nations the Commission cannot postpone the task of engaging the citizens of this country in creating the space for their natural and organic growth under Sri Lankan skies. The very language of human rights has to be liberated from legal and technical jargon of experts and replaced with the authentic experiences and voices of the displaced and suffering people. Rights will be determined by the health of human relationships at every level rather than by any abstract standard crafted at an international conference. As a young institution the Commission has to search for and find its roots within Sri Lankan soil and within the hearts and minds of Sri Lankans. The NHRI should not become another Police Station. The NHRI should in the performance of its functions become the representative of the poor, marginalized or vulnerable. International opinion and gradations will have their place within the global scheme of things but they are only reflective of local conditions and aspirations. The Commission has to revert to the source – the real thing and not be pre-occupied with commentaries and judgments given elsewhere. It must be present at grass roots level and in neighborhood law offices mediating and advising parties to conflicts and disputes.

6f. The quality Human Rights organisations provide as stakeholders to advocacy are knowledge of the law and precise grasp of institutional procedures accompanied by precise description of legal obligations. They cannot afford to stand on the edge of events or be seen give themselves up to the forces of polarization and put loyalty to the cause before accuracy.

#### Observations on Voluntary commitments and pledges made by Sri Lanka

Our observations should be read with salient aspects of the National Human Rights Action Plan highlighted in 4 above given reference as NHRAP below.

7a. Drafting a constitutional charter on human rights- NHRAP Activity – Review the Report of the Committee appointed to draft a Bill of Rights

7b. A Witness and Victim Protection Bill will be introduced in Parliament shortly-

NHRAP Activity – Expedite enactment of Witness and Victim Assistance and Protection Bill having incorporated amendments proposed by the Supreme Court, Inter-Ministerial Committee and the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on Justice and Law Reforms

7c. Improve and upgrade detention facilities-urgent action required to be read with observations below in 7.A19;NHRAP Activity –Amend Prison Regulations to ensure accused and convicted persons are housed separately; Review to identify changes necessary to upgrade prison facilities; make budgetary allocation; Formulate schemes for reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners; Related activities also contained in CPR chapter, see Focus Area 18 (Access to Justice)

7d. Improve the capacity of the police in carrying out investigations, with additional training in interrogation and prosecution- NHRAP Activity: Review syllabus of Police Dept and three Armed Forces; improve existing programmes to create awareness and attitudinal change regarding human rights; Continuously monitor training programmes to determine efficacy and recommend improvements; Capacity building of enforcement officials in HR standards, proper process for arrest and detention, modern interrogation techniques: Provide police facilities and technical assistance to conduct investigations in keeping with HR standards.

7e. Empowerment of women and women's rights and gender equality at national level through the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment as well as other national mechanisms. Consensus on solutions to - Discriminatory Laws against Women- e.g. property laws, The Vagranranc Ordinance is discriminatory in particular as women over 18 cannot leave remand homes without a guardian despite completing their sentence; Poor women and access to justice – There are many un convicted women remanded in state homes who are victims of crimes or are wrongfully convicted for their husbands' crimes. These poverty stricken women do not have adequate legal representation as they cannot afford it; Institutionalized women- Many women within state run remand homes are victims of crimes and are not offenders themselves. There are a number of cases where women in these remand homes are abused physically and mentally. There is also the pressing issue of children of remanded women being taken away at age 5 which goes against the child's

rights convention as every child has the right to be with his or her parent ; Enhance administration and coordination among key institutions .NHRAP Activity: Review existing legal regime and social issues to identify causes for violence against women; identify implementation gaps; introduce necessary changes ;Module on laws on VAW to be introduced in training for all involved in law enforcement – police officers, judicial officers, medical officers and health workers, social workers, and other relevant officials; Police Women and Children's Desks – strengthen with adequate resources and trained staff; establish coordination mechanism between MCDWA and WCDs which includes community outreach and psychosocial support; Implement Plan of Action on Prevention of DV Act; Introduce/implement Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy in government sector and private sector institutions, including a grievance mechanism; Legal reforms:a. Amend Third Schedule of Land Development Ordinance, b. Review Vagrants Ordinance and develop measures for social reintegration and upliftment of detained women,c. Implement Report of MoJ Committee on Family Law Reforms, Women affected my armed conflict –continue effective implementation of government plans for reintegration of ex-combatants to ensure proper reintegration of female ex-combatants, Formulate policy on war widows – mapping of geographical areas and needs assessment.

7f. Safeguard and advance the rights of children through national mechanisms. NHRAP Activity-Chapter on Rights of Children. )– We also note sterling recommendations in Supreme Court case number (SC FR 335/2010) to ensure that state run Remand Homes are able to ensure the "safe custody" of children placed there by courts and that they are organized to meet the educational/recreational and social needs of children. The scope of this inquiry is currently limited to the Girls Remand Home at Ranmuthugala and the Boys Remand Home at Makola .It requires - Establishment of a 24 hour hotline for linking hospitals, police stations, probation officers and places of safety within the WP, Providing information to Magistrates on the available places of safety within each Magistrate Division to ensure suitable placements of children, Appointment of 2 Coordinating Probation Officers to the two Remand Homes for implementation of legal and social services without delay, fixing a deadline after which the Western Province will stop receiving children from other Provinces. This was done by a Court order made on February 28, 2012. Accordingly other provinces have now been given a grace period of 12 months for setting up their own Remand Homes to accommodate children from their province. The deadline is now set at March 31, 2013. Already the Court has issued a broad direction to the Chief Secretary WP to "secure necessary human resources for the proper function of the Department". This has been interpreted by the provincial administration as extending to the development of a human resource development plan to move services in the direction of professional social work, effective for the purpose of mobilizing resources for children. This intervention by the Supreme Court must be considered one of the first indications of a readiness on the part of the judiciary and administration to work together and challenge structures of apathy and neglect within the decision making processes of the state. For too long the issues of child abuse and delinquency have been regarded as problems 'out there' in society for which the state can offer remedies. The new developments indicate recognition of secondary victimization as an issue for which the state is responsible

7g. Introduce changes in both formal and non-formal educational systems to introduce and/or further develop the human rights content within these programmes with a view to nurturing a culture of human rights in society-NHRAP Activity – Include HR education in school curriculum

Recommendations supported by SL

8.1. Continue to enhance the capacity building of its national human rights institutions with the support of the international community, including OHCHR, and seek the effective contribution of OHCHR to strengthen the NHRC-

NHRAP Activity: Amend HRC Act to require HRC to publish annual report within 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of each year to be posted on HRC website documenting: HR status in SL in preceding year; action taken in discharge of its duties; research findings; Amend HRC Act to provide for HRC to refer to AG to consider possibility of prosecution in High Court when HRC recommendation is not implemented without valid reason; Evaluate need for cadre expansion and do so if necessary; Provide for secondment of AG Dept. officers to function in legal/inquiry divisions of HRC; Establish mechanism of cooperation with civil society; Establish coordination mechanism between HRC and government agencies and other Commissions ;Establish regional advisory committees comprising of civil society members to assist regional HRC offices; Strengthen mandate and focus of HRC on torture to ensure it has necessary resources to function effectively and independently, conducts constant monitoring of investigations into allegations of torture and ill treatment committed by law enforcement officials, takes necessary preventive action, Establish 24 hour dedicated call centre to received HRC hotline complaints with quick and effective follow up 'Introduce surprise visits to places of detention out of office hours

8.2. That civil society organizations, including those from multi-ethnic communities and conflict affected areas in Sri Lanka's north and east, be involved in the follow-up to the UPR process- CHA stands ready to support such efforts.;

8.3. Implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture- this we believe requires focus;

8.4. Ensure a safe environment for human rights defenders' activities and that perpetrators of the murders, attacks, threats and harassment of human rights defenders be brought to justice-a combined view from HRC /IGP may assist.;

8.5. Increase its efforts to further prevent cases of kidnapping, forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings; ensure that all perpetrators are brought to justice; and enhance its capacity in the areas of crime investigations, the judiciary and the NHRC, with the assistance of the international community-same as above.; NHRAP Activity –Review of legislation regulating care and protection of different categories of persons in state custody/detention with view to more systematic ascribing of personal liability of perpetrators; Monitoring complaints including follow through of such complaints where personal liability has been found.

8.6. Increase its efforts to strengthen its legal safeguards for eliminating all forms of ill treatment or torture in the prisons and detention centres-Prison reforms are underfoot, we could also take note of recommendations such as - Rehabilitation and re-integration of prisoners and remandees - One method of assisting released prisoners is providing them with loan opportunities with the collaboration of banks. A support system for rehabilitation which introduces vocational training and counseling for prisoners as well as a mid-way house once they have left prison will assist ex-prisoners to reconnect with society and prevent them from engaging in further criminal activity. Provisions can be set in place for prisoners 3-6 months before they are released; Introducing a process of Accountability – Civil society could play a role as facilitator of this process. The gaps in prison authority, justice system can be addressed as sectors of relevant departments and ministries collaborate on a method of reporting and accountability. The Human Rights Commission (HRC) must scrutinize case management by the Correctional system and identify problems, issue recommendations with coordination between stakeholders and civil society. It is important that the Chief Justice and the Minister of Justice is informed on all reports received by HRC. Prison authorities must make note of the date of departure of all imprisoned or remanded to address the issue of no date cases and avoid indefinite remand. Daily record of this must to be sent to HRC; Improving Coordination between institutions and stakeholders –A suggestion has been made for the HRC to set up a new wing in regarding the 'Rights of Prisons and Prisoners' and engage in consultations with the Chief Justice, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Prison Reforms to work on structures for implementing prison reforms; Effective forums/Prison Working Groups– The HRC should call meetings with stakeholders and key institutions including the Attorney General, IGP and other Government and Judicial Departments. A People's Forum involving Civil Society can also be carried out; Facilitate a change in attitude-The current attitude of magistrates and police must be changed. A new focus on the productive use of prisoners must be implemented to build a new idea of 'reform and not retribution'. The current mentality of the prison system is guarding rather than the development and transformation of prisoners. A mechanism to increase the number of welfare officers and introducing effective counseling schemes will empower prisoners and remandees to become productive members of society. A Media campaign to start to promote issues can be used to change the attitude of the general public towards prisoners as write ups/articles on these issues can be published in various newspapers including Sinhalese and Tamil papers.

NHRAP Activity – Torture chapter 7.1.a – 7.1.b

8.7. Adopt measures to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible for serious human rights crimes such as enforced disappearances, in accordance with international norms and in a transparent manner- a combined view from HRC /IGP may assist;

NHRAP Activity – Torture chapter 7.1.c

8.8. Enter into further agreements with countries hosting its migrants workers-the National Human Rights Action Plan has very valuable interventions;

NHRAP Activity – Migrant Workers chapter 5.1.a (first activity)

8.9. Continue to strengthen its activities to ensure there is no discrimination against ethnic minorities in the enjoyment of the full range of human rights, in line with the comments of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (Mexico)-. The Draft National Policy on Reconciliation from the Office of the Advisor on Reconciliation to HE the President has a response.

Our observations- Discrimination against the Tamil population which is seen to lie at the root of the three-decade conflict has been attributed to the struggle between a majority community and a minority community, where the latter seeks space to operate within a larger polity. The notion of democracy dictates that a balance must be achieved for this in a manner that is not at the expense of any community.

The balance to be found would need to be premised upon the common need for integration. In negotiating such a balance, trust is a prerequisite. There currently exists a trust deficit which has contributed to the view that, as the minority moves towards advocating geographical separation, any concession by the State will be detrimental to the majority community. Conversely, the Tamil minority is labouring under a lack of confidence and trust as a result of failed aspirations and expectations.

Sri Lankans are subscribed in form to a democratic framework based on equality. But the reality is that the Sri Lankan polity has consciously reverted through both constitutional and legal changes to a competing feudal value system based on patronage. Patronage and loyalty was the organizing principle of both Sinhalese and Tamil social systems for centuries prior to the British led changes in the 19th century – notably the Colebrooke – Cameron Reforms of 1833. While caste has been deprived of its economic significance it remains the fundamental principle of belonging within families and communities at a social and psychological level. Not addressing this reality runs the risk of it remaining as a core value – latent and hidden but potent as ever. This relates to the root causes mentioned below – and the need for a new analysis of all forms of hidden forms of structural discrimination within society. True equality requires all forms of discrimination to be placed on the table to be dealt with through a new social vision and a social policy. It must be mentioned that the Indian Independence struggle placed the internal caste problem within society at the heart of its challenge to the status quo. The Sri Lankan independence movement by-passed this issue altogether. The late colonial leadership found it expedient to reject caste in public and use caste connections and loyalties in private. ). It must be acknowledged that Sri Lankans are searching for an alternative to force and violence which has dominated our political platform since the end of the irrigation civilization in 1215. It is important to honour this search and recognize its historical dimension.

NHRAP Activity – ESCR chapter, 6 and 7 (includes implementation of Official Languages Policy)

8.10. Take measures to safeguard freedom of expression and protect human rights defenders, and effectively investigate allegations of attacks on journalists, media personnel

and human rights defenders and prosecute those responsible (Ireland)- a combined view from HRC /IGP may assist;

8.11. Take measures to improve safeguards for freedom of the press (Denmark)-perhaps the Editors Guild could submit a view;

See NHRAP CPR chapter, 13 and 14, but these are more about access to information

Rejected recommendation

- "To adopt measures to shed light on a number of existing enforced disappearances and comply with the request to visit by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances"-Our interactions with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances have been poor lately, with several outstanding matters noted in their report to the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the HRC. This requires urgent rectification.