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Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Written statement* submitted by Action contre la faim, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 March 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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10 years Fight against Impunity: Justice needed in the Emblematic case of 17 ACF aid workers

Honourable Members of the Human Rights Council,

Action Contre la Faim welcomes the Report of the High Commissioner on Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka.

10 years ago, 17 humanitarian workers from ACF were lined up and assassinated a bullet to the head in the premises of the organization. They were clearly identified as aid workers, and for their origin, 1 was Muslim, and 16 were Tamil. This massacre sadly classifies as one of the most atrocious war crimes ever committed against humanitarian personnel.

As noted in the report, in 10 years, despite “no noticeable progress has been made in ensuring accountability” for this crime. We are concerned by the Sri Lankan government’s unwillingness to fully implement all aspects of resolution 30/1 pertaining in particular to the Muttur massacre as referenced in the report’s “emblematic cases” section.

Therefore, Action Contre la Faim strongly reiterates its support to previous recommendations made by the High Commissioner and demands that “an ad hoc hybrid special court” be quickly established.

For the credibility and independence of justice, this court must integrate international judges, prosecutors and investigators mandated to try war crimes and crimes against humanity. This is essential to fight the persistence of impunity, which still is a key impediment to reconciliation and peace in country.

We cannot postpone justice any longer. Families have been grieving for 10 years; most of them are ageing in the fear that they will never see justice for their children.

We commend Sri Lanka for commissioning the Consultation Task Force which recommendations support those of the High Commissioner and are concerned that the Government did not endorse them, thereby showing unwillingness to establish a credible accountability mechanism and prosecute perpetrators of grave crimes.

Our 17 colleagues killed in Muttur were there to help the populations recover from disasters. Their unpunished murder is sending a strong message to the international community: that aid workers can be killed in impunity.

You have the authority and immediate capacity to create a strong precedent, to deter such crimes. Action Contre la Faim calls on the Members of the Human Rights Council to delay no further the implementation of the recommendations of the High Commissioner and to act now for the expeditious establishment of a credible accountability mechanism that will finally bring justice to the families.

Supportive of the High Commissioner’s report, on behalf of the 17 families and Action Contre la Faim,

Yours respectfully,

Pauline Chetcuti
