

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2022

Secretary Antony Blinken  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

As the United Nations General Assembly meets for its 77th Session this month, we urge you to work with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to support efforts to investigate and hold accountable alleged perpetrators of war crimes during the Sri Lankan Civil War, including former Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his family. We also urge you to use all diplomatic tools available, including sanctions, for the State Department to hold accountable those who are credibly alleged to have been responsible for gross human rights violations and abuses in Sri Lanka and continue to push for robust investigations into alleged financial crimes committed by the Rajapaksa family.

Only by bringing justice and redress to victims of past human rights violations during the decades-long civil war will Sri Lanka be able to fully address its current economic crisis and political situation. As you are aware, more than 100,000 people were killed or disappeared in Sri Lanka's 27-year civil war between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tigers that ended in 2009. Thirteen years later, victims of human rights violations committed during the civil war—including by Sri Lankan officials—are still awaiting justice, according to the recent September 2022 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Report on Sri Lanka. As UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet highlighted in 2020, the “fundamental problem remains that Sri Lanka has still not addressed impunity for past violations,” and therefore, “victims remain denied justice and Sri Lankans from all communities have no guarantee that past patterns of human rights violations will not recur.”<sup>1</sup>

The United States has been a key leader in calling for accountability of past war crimes in Sri Lanka. In 2015, the United States led international efforts for the UN Human Rights Council to adopt Resolution 30/1, which was cosponsored by Sri Lanka. In 2021, the United States was a key player in the UNHRC's adoption of Resolution 46/2, which established investigations to collect evidence of war crimes and to provide recommendations for pursuing justice. Yet, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa withdrew Sri Lanka from its commitments after he was elected in 2019, and the Sri Lankan government since he stepped down has not yet produced an effective transitional justice process. The United States must remain committed to holding perpetrators accountable and work to establish an international justice mechanism for war crimes and crimes against humanity from the Sri Lankan Civil War.

We commend the State Department for sanctioning three Sri Lankan officials under Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriation Act in February 2020 and December 2021. Such steps are critical to ensuring justice and deterring future heinous acts. I urge you to

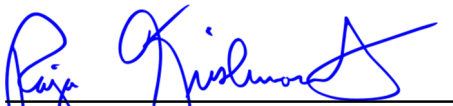
---

<sup>1</sup> “Oral Updates and Introduction to Country Reports of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner (Colombia, Cyprus, Eritrea, Guatemala, Honduras, Iran, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Yemen).” OHCHR, 28 Feb. 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2020/02/oral-updates-and-introduction-country-reports-secretary-general-and-high-0?LangID=E&NewsID=25624>.

continue to explore further targeted sanctions against credibly alleged perpetrators of gross human rights violations and abuses in Sri Lanka as part of a wider range of accountability measures.


We urge you to take these actions swiftly as the UN Human Rights Council discusses Sri Lanka this month. We appreciate your continued efforts to support the peaceful democratic and economic aspirations of the Sri Lankan people, and thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,




---

Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



---

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



---

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



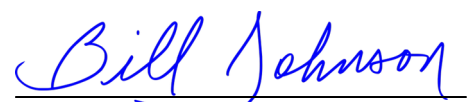
---

Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



---

Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress




---

Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress



---

Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress



---

David E. Price  
Member of Congress