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October 19, 2018

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe
Prime Minister's Office
No: 58, Sir Ernest De Silva Mawatha,
Colombo 07
Sri Lanka

CC: President Maithripala Sirisena
Parliament of Sri Lanka
Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte,
Sri Lanka

Subject: Draft Counter Terrorism Act of 2018

Dear Prime Minister Wickremesinghe,

Human Rights Watch welcomes Sri Lanka's renewed efforts to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979 (PTA) with a law that meets its reform commitments to the United Nations Human Rights Council and comports with international human rights standards. Enacting and implementing a counterterrorism law that upholds human rights protections would be an important advance for the rule of law in Sri Lanka.

Attached below are Human Rights Watch's comments on the Counter Terrorism Act of 2018 (CTA), the bill intended to replace the PTA. The draft law received conditional approval from the Cabinet of Ministers on September 11, 2018 and was submitted to the Sri Lankan Parliament on October 9, where it may undergo further revisions.

This draft represents a significant improvement over previous proposals, but it should be strengthened by removing several problematic provisions. Human Rights Watch is concerned by media reports that Parliament may consider amendments that reduce rather than enhance the CTA's human rights protections in a process that excludes meaningful public scrutiny.

Human Rights Watch has monitored human rights in Sri Lanka for three decades. We documented violations of the laws of war and child recruitment by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the mistreatment of Sri Lankan migrant workers in the Gulf, and serious abuses, including torture, by state security forces during and since

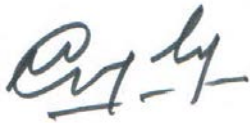


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the conflict that ended in 2009. Throughout we have worked closely with Sri Lanka's human rights organizations and advocates.

We look forward to continuing a constructive dialogue with your government to ensure that the proposed CTA does not incorporate any of the unlawful and counterproductive elements that were the hallmark of the globally discredited PTA.

Sincerely yours,



Meenakshi Ganguly
South Asia Director
Asia Division
Human Rights Watch



Nadim Houry
Director
Terrorism/Counterterrorism Division
Human Rights Watch