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Pace of progress is too slow - Zeid

By Dharisha Bastians (FT.LK) - Sri Lanka has shown little commitment to setting up a special judicial mechanism to prosecute alleged war crimes, the United Nations said in a new report released in Geneva yesterday that criticises the Government for its "slow pace of progress" on post-war reconciliation and justice. In a hard-hitting report to the 34th Session of the UN Human Rights Council currently meeting in Geneva, UN Human Rights Chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said the Government had prioritised only truth and reparations aspects of the transitional justice process it committed to in the 2015 resolution. "While acknowledging the complexity of establishing such a judicial mechanism, the High Commissioner considers that preparatory work for judicial mechanisms should already be at an advanced stage," the report observed. The High Commissioner's report also makes the astute observation that party politics and the balance of power in the ruling coalition in Sri Lanka had contributed to a reluctance to address "difficult issues" relating to accountability for

grave crimes committed during the war in the run up to constitutional reforms. While noting the positive advances on human rights and constitutional reform, and symbolic gestures of reconciliation, Zeid told the Council that "the fulfilment of transitional justice commitments has, however, been worryingly slow." High Commissioner Zeid, who is reviewing progress made by the Government of Sri Lanka on the implementation of the 2015 UNHRC resolution, said measures taken during the

period under review were inadequate to ensure real progress. "Eighteen months after the adoption of resolution 30/1, Sri Lanka has made some measure of elementary progress in reconciliation, in addressing the root causes of the conflict, and in truth-seeking," the report said, calling for "stronger, tangible results" to prevent a further erosion of trust. His report urges Sri Lanka to operationalise the Office of Missing Persons (OMP) enacted in late 2016. "A

credible, trustworthy and accessible OMP will serve as a litmus test for any future transitional justice mechanism," the High Commissioner notes. Noting Government failures on communicating its policies on reconciliation and justice, the High Commissioner calls for the launch of a communications campaign to inform the public about the objectives, time frame and rationale of the reconciliation agenda. The report also makes scathing references...SEE P10



UN Human Rights Chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

What a great night.....
See next weeks paper for full report

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Global Tamil Forum (GTF) to work with Government
 (ColomboGazette.com) - The Government and the Global Tamil Forum (GTF), a powerful Tamil diaspora group based in London, are to work together to address the Tamil issue. Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera had talks with the President of the Global Tamil Forum Father S. J. Emmanuel in Geneva last week. Father Emmanuel told the Colombo Gazette he met Samaraweera and a Sri Lankan delegation for about 45 minutes behind closed doors. "In all my meetings I have openly said that I do it as an act of critical and constructive collaboration by a moderate diaspora organization and from me as one of the oldest victim and witness of this conflict right from June 1956. Hence our exchanges are about helping one another," he said. Father Emmanuel also said that while expressing some dissatisfaction and disappointment at the ongoing accountability process, he will not lose hope and will remain on the path of truth and justice with the help of the UNHRC.

President of the Global Tamil Forum - Father S. J. Emmanuel

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