

Interfaith International

Ecosoc accredited NGO, Geneva, Switzerland

Statement by Visuvalingam KIRUPAHARAN on behalf of 'Interfaith International' under interactive dialogue of agenda item two in the 4th session of the UN Human Rights Council – 22 March 2007

Mr President,

Interfaith International welcomes the report (A/HRC/4/41) submitted by Mr. Santiago Corcuera, the Chairperson of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

Since the WGIED was established in 1980, it has been doing valuable work in countries in conflicts, under dictatorship and in other situations. The urgent actions, reports, and visits by the WGEID have led either to the release of abducted, disappeared victims around the world or to their place of incommunicado being found, or at least to their relatives knowing the fate of the victims.

To quote a good example, the WGEID is undertaking an important task in Sri Lanka. In 1998 the WGEID found that Sri Lanka, even though it claims to be a small island, ranked as having the second highest number of disappearances in the world next to Iraq.

As a result of the excellent work of the WGEID and also of other mandate holders, there was a little improvement from 2002 to 2004. But according to today's report of the WGEID; 12,319 cases have been transmitted to the government of Sri Lanka and there are 5749 outstanding cases, including 41 cases under urgent action procedures at the beginning of the period under review.

This makes it clear that Sri Lanka has once again reached the position of second highest in rank, in numbers of disappearances, exceeded only by Iraq.

Interfaith International is sad to note that the request made by the WGEID in October 2006 to visit Sri Lanka in early 2007 was not agreed to, by the government of Sri Lanka.

For the information of the WGEID and all members of this august forum, the former Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka who was sacked by the President of Sri Lanka on 9 February 2007, said on 23 January 2007 that; (I quote), ".....*It has been reported by local and international human rights organisations that a person is abducted every five hours. Kidnapping, abductions, killings have now become common incidents. No matter who does it, as a government we are responsible for it.*"

Our question to the Chairperson of the WGEID is, what are the Immediate remedies that the WGEID is applying on Sri Lanka to stop the ongoing abductions and disappearances happening, even as we speak here.

Thank you, Mr President

Geneva 22 March 2007