



பிரித்தானிய தமிழர் பேரவை
British Tamils Forum



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

No Time to Spare: Tamil Community Calls for Concrete Action on Accountability, Reconciliation and End to Human Rights Abuses in Sri Lanka

(Geneva – 23 March 2017) Today the Human Rights Council adopted a new resolution on Sri Lanka. The United States Political Action Council (USTPAC), British Tamils Forum (BTF), and Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) again call upon the government of Sri Lanka, with the engagement of the international community, to fully implement the commitments made in the October 2015 Council [resolution 30/1](#). These commitments, including for accountability and political reform, are reaffirmed in today's resolution.

"The new resolution keeps Sri Lanka on the international agenda. That is important, but it is not enough," said USTPAC's President Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham. "Member states, including the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, have invested substantial time and energy on Sri Lanka. It is their responsibility, after passing five resolutions since 2012, to demonstrate diplomatic determination and make clear to the government that the status quo is unacceptable. States should impel the government to fully implement its commitments under both resolutions and marshal financial and technical resources to help it to do so."

Today's resolution follows the [report](#) of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the government of Sri Lanka's implementation of resolution 30/1. In his report, High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein recommends the government present a comprehensive strategy and time-bound plan to implement its resolution 30/1 commitments. Many member states echoed this call. The High Commissioner also calls on the government to launch a communications campaign to inform all of Sri Lanka's communities about the objectives, timeframe, rationale, and benefits of the reconciliation agenda.

The High Commissioner reports that Sri Lanka's implementation of resolution 30/1 is 'worryingly slow.' "The government's [failure to deliver results](#) is eroding the trust of Tamil and other communities," said Ravi Kumar, General Secretary of BTF. "It's breeding disillusionment as to whether there will ever be accountability. The government of Sri Lanka, by cosponsoring the resolution, confirms once again its commitment to fully implement all obligations in resolution 30/1. The international community should not settle for anything less."

USTPAC, CTC and BTF continue to advocate for confidence building measures so that tangible benefits quickly reach victims, particularly those in the NorthEast. Due to the government's failures and delaying

tactics, victims have benefited very little. To demonstrate its bona fides, the government should immediately:

- Return land, including the release of *all* lands in Keppapulavu.
- Operationalize the Office of Missing Persons.
- Repeal the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act and replace it with legislation that accords to international standards.
- Release all political prisoners held under the Act.
- Issue public instructions to the security forces that torture, sexual violence and other human rights violations are prohibited and perpetrators will be punished.
- Order all security forces to end surveillance, harassment and reprisals against the Tamil community and human rights defenders.
- Invite OHCHR to establish offices in the NorthEast and Colombo.

“We call on the government to act upon the Consultation Task Force report. The government should not disrespect the views of thousands of victims by disregarding the report,” said Raj Thavaratnasingham, President of CTC. Furthermore, the government should continue consultations as it develops transitional justice mechanisms.”

“There can be no reconciliation without justice. The government must immediately criminalize war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, set up a special prosecutor’s office, and create an independent witness protection program as part of a hybrid court. By rejecting international judges, the government is going back on its word,” said Dr. Arulanantham. “Nor can there be reconciliation without security sector reform and demilitarization of the NorthEast.”

Transitional justice and constitutional reform go hand in hand to guarantee non-recurrence and move towards reconciliation. Deliberations to agree a new constitution by the year’s end are stalled. “It’s essential the government meaningfully advance constitutional reform and provide a federal system with permanently devolved power to the NorthEast,” said Mr. Thavaratnasingham.

Dr. Arulanantham concluded, “We must see tangible results. There is no time to spare if reconciliation is to occur.”

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About USTPAC: USTPAC is a US-based Tamil advocacy group advocating for a cessation of ongoing human rights abuses in Sri Lanka, accountability for crimes committed during and after the civil war, and a political settlement to address the root causes of the conflict. Since 2009, it has worked for these goals with the US Government and UN Human Rights Council.

About BTF: British Tamils Forum exists to harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and significant others including mainstream decision makers in the UK with the aim of alleviating the sufferings of the Tamils community in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self-determination within a democratic framework underpinned by international law, its covenants and conventions.

About CTC: The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) is a non-profit organization which serves as the voice of Tamil Canadians. Headquartered in Toronto, the CTC has members across the country and an elected board of directors. The non-partisan organization works as the community's spokesperson on the municipal, provincial, federal and international levels.

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