



**British Tamils Forum**  
பிரித்தானிய தமிழர் பேரவை



**Canadian Tamil Congress**  
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை  
**Congrès Tamoul Canadien**  
"Voice of Tamil Canadians"



## **Amidst COVID-19 Concerns, Sri Lanka's Self-isolation on Human Rights Goes Unnoticed Tamil Diaspora Organizations Call for International Remedy for Accountability**

**GENEVA March 23, 2020:** The Australian Tamil Congress (ATC), the British Tamils Forum (BTF), the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC), the Irish Tamils Forum and the United States Tamil Action Group (USTAG) express our concern on the global #COVID19 pandemic, and offer our unstinted support to worldwide measures to contain the spread, cure the afflicted, and provide relief for socioeconomic deprivations.

Concerning the 43<sup>rd</sup> UN Human Rights Council which ended so precipitously on March 13 where Sri Lanka was on the agenda, the international community is experiencing what the Tamil community is far too familiar with - Sri Lanka's callous disregard for negotiated agreements. On February 26, Sri Lanka made the ignominious announcement that it does not feel bound by the commitments made in 2015's UN Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1 and its two successor resolutions, 34/1 and 40/1, intended to encourage reform and transitional justice. The announcement did not, however, come as a surprise to the Tamil community which has attempted repeatedly to forewarn the world of Sri Lanka's deception and its delaying tactics.

Since independence from the British in 1948 the indigenous Tamils in the North and East of Sri Lanka have suffered grievously from broken pacts and agreements between the Tamil leadership and successive Sinhala Buddhist-dominated governments - agreements intended to assure basic human rights for Tamils and to protect the community in our traditional homelands.

The member states of the UNHRC cannot allow such an ignominy to sully the institution's credibility. States should also remember the "comprehensive review of action by the United Nations system during the war in Sri Lanka and the aftermath, regarding the implementation of its humanitarian and protection mandates" - Charles Petrie Report's detailing of the failure in 2009 of the Responsibility to Protect the Tamil community, who were victims of gross human rights violations (as confirmed by the OISL report of 2015) by the Sri Lankan state's security forces which acted with impunity.

As regards to the mass atrocity crimes committed by Sri Lanka during and after the war, our organizations urge action to be taken up by appropriate international jurisdictions such as an ad hoc international criminal tribunal on Sri Lanka. Pointing out "the failure of past domestic reconciliation and accountability mechanisms," eight international human rights groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights watch issued a joint statement in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Council meeting (February 20, 2020) calling on the Council "[to establish an International Accountability Mechanism on Sri Lanka.](#)" The International Commission of Jurists also issued a [statement at the Human Right Council on February 28, 2020](#) stating, "purely international processes, whether before the ICC or through creation of another international accountability mechanism by the Council, and the exercise of universal jurisdiction by other States, are the only remaining options for securing the justice required by international law and indispensable to any credible reconciliation process for Sri Lanka.

In recent times we have seen similar initiatives on Myanmar for its genocide against the Rohingya. Considering the track record of the Rajapaksas and their post-presidential election actions such as the rapid militarization of the state administration as a prelude to drive Sri Lanka towards an authoritarian police state, we request the international community to set up specific international mechanisms for the preservation of evidence as an urgent initial step.

The international community has delayed such action long enough in giving Sri Lanka more than ten years to fulfil its obligations, all to no avail. Sri Lanka's government and its courts have shown their lack of will to accept the seriousness of these crimes, and not only allow the continuing of impunity for perpetrators but also reward them with high profile positions within the current Government and civil administration, while Tamil victims, survivors and their loved ones suffer in agony.

The world cannot let them down again.

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