



British Tamils Forum United Kingdom

20 November 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

17th Anniversary of Mullivaikkal Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day

Trafalgar Square, London – 18 May 2026

A solemn and well attended commemorative event marking the 17th anniversary of Mullivaikkal Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day was held at Trafalgar Square on Monday, 18 May 2026. Organised by the British Tamils Forum, the event brought together thousands from the Tamil diaspora, predominantly youth, women, civil society representatives, professionals, elected dignitaries, victims, witnesses and members of the wider public. The gathering paid tribute to the tens of thousands of Tamil civilians who were killed before and during the final stages of the Sri Lankan armed conflict in May 2009.

This purpose of this strategic initiative sought to bring the issue of Tamil genocide to the forefront of the international community by mobilising and empowering the Tamil community across the United Kingdom. By uniting youth, women, grassroots activists, professionals, and a wide range of Tamil community institutions, the initiative aimed to deliver a clear and powerful appeal to influential global institutions, calling for justice, accountability, and international recognition of the Tamil genocide.

The remembrance commenced with a solemn tribute to the victims of the genocide, including civilians, humanitarian workers, and those heroes sacrificed their life for the freedom of Tamil nation. Floral tributes were laid, while attendees observed moments of silence in memory of those who lost their lives during the massacres at Mullivaikkal. Traditional kanji (porridge), symbolising the enforced starvation endured by Tamil civilians trapped in the war zone during the final phases of the war, was distributed to attendees as part of the vigil.

Throughout the event, the audience and onlookers enthusiastically engaged themselves with Exhibition and Advocacy side-stalls presented by the BTF volunteers, while watching the main stage event. The Exhibition depicted the entrenched pernicious ethnicised cycles of atrocity crimes committed against the Tamil people, in the form of massacres, enforced disappearances, displacement, concentrated militarisation, land appropriation, economic embargo and cultural & structural destruction since Sri Lanka's independence in 1948. Viewers were guided through



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displays containing photographs, historical documentation, and statistical records outlining the root causes of the conflict and the continuation of declining Tamil population in the island due to the state sponsored land grab and policies perpetuating weakening Tamil population and mass exodus. Among other things, the name list of the 18 high rank military personnel, who were identified in the OHCHR's Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL) published in 2015 was also displayed with their pictures, some of whom are still in service. These contents showcased the economic crisis emanating from the eternalisation of the conflict against Tamils and unnecessary spending to feed the militarisation process and the state has no political will to resolve the fundamental ethnic issue in the island.

BTF General Secretary Ravi Kumar emphasised ***the urgent need to empower the Tamil nation by implementing projects to facilitate resettlement, reconstruction, and other strategic investments to strengthen the war-devastated traditional Tamil homeland while strengthening the ongoing global engagements for justice and political rights more strategically.***

A prominently displayed 2.4m x 1.2m digital model village illustrated as part of BTF's proposed repatriation, reconstruction, and resettlement initiative aimed at rebuilding the Tamil homeland and facilitating the return of displaced Tamils, including refugees currently living in India and internally displaced in the South of Sri Lanka.

Advocacy volunteers also briefed attendees on the importance of political engagement with Members of Parliament. BTF encouraged the attendees to join its grassroots advocacy initiative and support its efforts to engage effectively with respective MPs and the political parties in their constituency.

BTF's Human Rights Team explained the role of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Sri Lanka Accountability Project (OSLAP) and the necessity of preserving evidence for future international prosecutions. The war-victim attendees were encouraged to register their contact details and contribute to the OSLAP evidence collection mechanism through documents, photographs, videos, witness accounts, and victims' testimonies, in order to strengthen the call for the establishment of an international criminal justice mechanism.

During the event, BTF officially launched its new publication titled ***"Endless Cycles of Commissions of Inquiry in Sri Lanka"***, highlighting decades of failed domestic accountability mechanisms and the continued impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of atrocity crimes. Copies of



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this publication were shared with the participants to help raise awareness among their local political representatives and communities.

Following an extensive process of documentation and verification, the British Tamils Forum displayed a preliminary list of approximately 3,000 Tamil victims who were killed by the Sri Lankan state and affiliated paramilitary groups. The BTF will continue its efforts to review, update, and expand the list as further information becomes available.

This marks the first time that such a substantial body of documented, source-verified information identifying **Tamil victims killed by the Sri Lankan state and its paramilitary forces** has been made publicly available. The publication forms part of the BTF's evidence-based global advocacy efforts to advance justice, accountability, and international recognition for the atrocities committed against the Tamil people.

The event featured speeches and solidarity messages from UK parliamentarians, councillors, INGOs, party support organisations, civil society organisations representatives, and Tamil activists, all of whom reiterated strong calls for justice, accountability, demilitarisation, rebuilding the north east, and the recognition of legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people. Speakers stressed the urgent need for international accountability mechanisms, including referrals to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Criminal Court (ICC) or the establishment of an ad-hoc international tribunal. Repeated calls were also made for targeted sanctions, travel bans, and asset freezes against Sri Lankan military and political officials perpetrating the war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

The Rt Hon Dame Theresa Villiers DBE described Mullivaikkal as **“one of the worst acts of mass killings since the Second World War,”** condemning the shelling of civilians in so-called “No Fire Zones,” attacks on hospitals, and the deliberate targeting of civilians during the final stages of the war. Ms Villiers stressed that seventeen years after the atrocities, the continued absence of accountability remains a “disgrace,” and called on the international community to transform repeated UN Human Rights Council commitments into concrete action through targeted sanctions, travel bans, asset freezes, demilitarisation of the North-East, repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and the establishment of a meaningful political settlement guaranteeing Tamil equality, rights, and participation in governance.

Luke Taylor MP stressed that the United Kingdom must pursue a **“values-based foreign policy”** rather than remain silent in the face of injustice. He condemned the indiscriminate killing of Tamil civilians and warned against the rise of ethnic nationalism and authoritarianism globally,



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drawing parallels with the continued treatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka. He called for the urgent implementation of UN Human Rights Council Resolutions 46/1, 51/1, and 57/1, accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity, the demilitarisation of the North and East, and the development of a federal constitutional framework recognising the Tamil people's right to self-determination.

Seamus Logan MP of the Scottish National Party (SNP) reaffirmed his support for the ***Tamil people's right to self-determination and highlighted the long-term impact of war, state-sponsored colonisation, unequal economic development, and displacement on Tamil communities. He noted that over 200,000 Tamils remain internally displaced while more than one million Tamils were forced to flee abroad, including approximately 100,000 refugees in India who continue to live without secure status. Logan called for the establishment of an international criminal justice mechanism for Sri Lanka, legal action under universal jurisdiction principles, sanctions against perpetrators of war crimes and genocide, and economic assistance packages to support displaced Tamil communities.***

MP Jo White and Lord John Mann ***reaffirmed their commitment to continuing advocacy efforts at the United Nations Human Rights Council and pledged to maintain pressure on the British government to ensure the Tamil issue remains on the international agenda.*** They also announced plans ***to visit Tamil Nadu and Delhi later this year to strengthen engagement with the Indian government and Tamil communities in India, with a focus on developing stronger economic and social links between Tamil communities across borders.***

Martyn Day Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) emphasised that the suffering of the Tamil people "must never be forgotten, denied, or erased," while ***urging the international community to recognise the Tamil genocide and pursue meaningful accountability through international legal mechanisms. He stressed the importance of ending impunity, recognising the Tamil people's right to self-determination, and ensuring that displaced Tamils are able to return safely to their traditional homeland with full political and human rights protections.***

Emily Darlington MP acknowledged the ongoing grief carried by Tamil families seventeen years after Mullivaikkal and stressed the importance of continuing political pressure to ensure the atrocities are never forgotten. ***She highlighted the resilience and vibrancy of Tamil communities in the United Kingdom, particularly through Tamil schools, cultural organisations, and youth engagement initiatives, while reaffirming continued parliamentary efforts to advocate for justice, accountability, and peace for affected Tamil families.***



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Councillor Mohana Manohoran described Mullivaikkal genocidal pogrom is an enduring psychological trauma suffered by the Tamil community and ***urged young Tamils to actively participate in politics, advocacy, legal work, and public service not only to establish justice and accountability for the victims but to establish a permanent political solution for Tamil people to live in peace and harmony with equal rights.*** She welcomed the UK government's sanctions against four Sri Lankan perpetrators as an important first step, while stressing that many more individuals remain unaccountable. ***She further highlighted the importance of the UN OHCHR's Sri Lanka Accountability Project (OSLAP) in preserving evidence for future prosecutions and encouraged younger generations to continue advancing the struggle for justice and remembrance through political engagement and activism.***

BTF Human Rights Deputy Coordinator Sarmila Varatharaj delivered a powerful speech describing Mullivaikkal as a psychotrauma suffered by every Tamil family still waiting for answers regarding loved ones who were killed or disappeared. ***She argued that the international community's failure to act in 2009 contributed to the continued global culture of impunity surrounding atrocity crimes. Varatharaj called for immediate demilitarisation of the North-East, international prosecutions, targeted sanctions against perpetrators, and the resettlement of displaced Tamil refugees and internally displaced persons. Addressing younger generations directly, she urged Tamil youth to transform remembrance into sustained political action and advocacy.***

Yvonne Schofield of the **Sri Lanka Campaign** said Mullivaikkal was not simply a tragedy of war, but the result of decades of anti-Tamil racism, impunity, militarisation, and the denial of Tamil political aspirations. Despite this, the Tamil people have not been silenced. Across the North and East of Sri Lanka and throughout the diaspora, they continue to demand truth, justice, accountability, and the right to live with freedom and dignity. Families of the disappeared continue their protests. Survivors continue to speak out, and young people continue to organise. Memory itself has become an act of resistance.

Ms Schofield added that **the international community, including the UK government, has failed to deliver meaningful accountability, while successive Sri Lankan governments have protected alleged perpetrators and intensified repression. There can be no reconciliation without accountability, and no lasting peace built on denial and impunity. She assured to stand with families of the disappeared and survivors, and reaffirm our commitment to justice, demilitarisation, and self-determination. Mullivaikkal lives on in memory.**



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Pregasen Padayachee of the South Africa based Solidarity Group for Peace and Justice in Sri Lanka (**SGPJ**) reflected on the limited progress achieved for Tamils in Eelam, noting that while international attention has focused on the UNHRC, war crimes, and genocide, urgent issues such as poverty, land dispossession, and unemployment continue to affect the community. He said ***geopolitical challenges have also hindered peace, justice, and prosperity for the Tamil people. He said unity would be central to SGPJ's work in the years ahead and emphasised the importance of working closely with Tamil political parties in the North and East of Sri Lanka and adopting a united approach. He also called for global solidarity in the pursuit of freedom, peace, and justice for Eelam, while paying tribute to those who gave their lives for the cause.***

Anuradha Mittal, Oakland Institute (USA) condemned the continued lack of accountability in Sri Lanka, stating that the government continues to act with impunity in the Tamil homeland while families of the disappeared endure years of unanswered grief. By underscoring the ***ongoing use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, militarisation in the North and East, and the systematic erasure of Tamil heritage through land appropriation, renaming of villages, and the destruction of places of worship and cultural traditions, Ms Mittal called for immediate demilitarisation, accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, and the safe return and resettlement of Tamil refugees and internally displaced families.***

While urging ***the international community to make aid and diplomatic support to Sri Lanka conditional on concrete human rights commitments and a political settlement*** Anuradha Mittal said that justice for Tamils is also a test of the international community's commitment to human rights and international law, and expressed her solidarity with Tamil victims, stressing that there can be no peace without justice.

In general, the speakers and organisers throughout the event reiterated **a series of immediate, interim, and long-term actions necessary to achieve justice, accountability, peace, and political stability for the Tamil people in the North-East of the island.** Calls were made to strengthen ongoing United Nations accountability processes through the establishment of an international criminal justice mechanism for Sri Lanka, including referral to the ICJ, ICC, or an ad-hoc international tribunal. Speakers further urged governments to initiate legal proceedings through universal jurisdiction frameworks, including Magnitsky-style sanctions regimes, and to impose targeted sanctions, travel bans, and asset freezes against civilian and military officials responsible for atrocity crimes.



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The event also highlighted the need for stronger economic and diplomatic pressure on Sri Lanka, including the use of trade mechanisms such as GSP+, development assistance, and international aid conditionality to ensure meaningful accountability, political reform, and demilitarisation. Speakers stressed that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without ending the longstanding culture of impunity surrounding crimes committed against the Tamil people.

A recurring theme throughout the event was the **call for an internationally arbitrated political settlement based on federal principles and the Tamil people's right to self-determination. Organisers urged the United Kingdom, India, the European Union, and a core group of international actors to facilitate a structured political process capable of delivering long-term peace, stability, accountability, and prosperity on the island.**

Several speakers also stressed the **urgent need for interim humanitarian and reconstruction mechanisms in the North-East of the island, which remains the region most devastated by the civil war. Calls were made for the establishment of an interim institutional framework to oversee reconstruction, rehabilitation, comprehensive needs assessments, and the resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees.** Organisers highlighted that over 200,000 Tamils remain internally displaced, while approximately 100,000 Tamil refugees in India continue to live without secure status. Speakers reaffirmed that displaced Tamil people must be given the freedom, support, and security necessary to return to their homes and rebuild their lives with dignity in their traditional homeland.

Some of the features of the event evoking the call for justice and equality were powerful cultural performances, including poetry, songs (Voice art), dramatic presentations, and the highlight of the event was the Bharathanatyam dance performance of the troupe more than 200 young girls paying tribute to the victims while expressing the resilience and collective memory of the Tamil nation. The coordination of proficiency the dance-performers could not have been achieved without the devotion and collaboration of the teachers and parents of the performers from several parts of the United Kingdom.

A candlelight vigil and ceremonial flame lighting took place at 18:18:18, symbolising global remembrance for those who perished at Mullivaikkal. The event concluded with a renewed call for unity amongst Tamils worldwide and a commitment to continue pursuing international justice, accountability, and political recognition for the Tamil nation.

Unlike yesteryears, the youth and women have been the driving force behind organising this commemoration, and they urged the international community to ensure that the atrocities



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committed against the Tamil people are neither forgotten nor repeated and reaffirmed the importance of continued engagement with international institutions, parliamentarians, civil society organisations, and legal mechanisms. They will be at the forefront in forthcoming years too.

Women and youth leadership also took on significant responsibilities in organising this event and coordinating activities throughout the day, playing a central role in ensuring its smooth delivery.

The resilience of Tamil peoples' aspiration will never die and will rise as phoenix rising from ashes.

List of guests

Lord Mann

Current Members of Parliament

Jo White MP
Emily Darlington MP
Seamus Logan MP
Luke Taylor MP
Gareth Thomas MP

Previous Members of Parliament

Rt. Hon Dame Teresa Villiers

Current Councillors

Councillor Kuha Kumaran
Councillor Mohana Manoharan
Councillor Eili Ponnuthurai
Councillor Ellie Sandover
Councillor Appu Srinivasan
Councillor Joicy Thomas
Councillor Kalpana Bose
Councillor Paul White
Councillor Krishna Suresh

Previous Councillors



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Sarmila Varatharaja
Mrs Kamala Kuhan
Aliya Sheikh
Sakina Sheikh

“நாங்கள் பயத்தை கடந்தவர்கள்” MAY 18 Remembrance Day 200 + students performing genocidal history (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhcV0m85O7Y>)

“ENDLESS CYCLES OF COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRIES IN SRI LANKA” book release (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zrqki_z-bUI)

A preliminary list of approximately 3,000 Tamil victims who were killed by the Sri Lankan state and affiliated paramilitary groups (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEvZfsWWViY>)

“Where Is the System” - Voice Art Students (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_U3XIS5YE8)

The Drama of The Reality (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LUHRki4JpQ>)

Founder and Executive Director, Oakland Institute
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCSKQBLvq2M>)

General Secretary, Solidarity Group for Peace and Justice in Sri Lanka SGPJ (South Africa)
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaR2H2K_Zm4)

Campaign Director, Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace & Justice
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7d3Xhwx-ZA>)

BTF General Secretary (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9CTxcQWf5I&t=18s>)

The RT Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP, Minister for Social Security and Disability
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQQeE9Xjwao>)

Lord Mann and Joe White MP (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nHa-pduXC4&t=6s>)

Luke Taylor MP (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eGU_Cu-W3Q)

Seamus Logan MP (SNP) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHNIbHliX2Q&t=35s>)

The Rt Hon Dame Theresa Villiers DBE ([youtube.com/watch?v=KPU9qXPrMjo&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPU9qXPrMjo&feature=youtu.be))

Gareth Thomas MP (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edzc4n9BYnc>)



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Martyn Day, Member of Scottish Parliament (MSP)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9pK1fCi3uQ>)

BTF Deputy Coordinator Human Rights Team & Former Wandsworth Councillor Sarmila Varatharaj
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21lR5Y2JuRs>)

Councillors Kalpana Bose, Joicy Joseph, Mohana Manoharan
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KNaGkmLWlw>)

Councillor Mohana Manoharan of Croydon
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhMo_-LuVtQ&t=53s)

Former Councillor Aliya Sheikh (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=recOOq5kYRc>)

Shiyanu, Conservative Friends of Tamils (CFT) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JmMbWxt_wU)

Tamil Friends of Liberal Democrats
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP92k_fppOw&feature=youtu.be)

Mr Senathiraja Muthaiya, Milton Keynes Tamil School
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NcJp03OO1E>)

Special thanks to Dance teachers and women leaders
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tF80Ki2Ato>)

***Councillors (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c372TXsGxtU>)

Conclusion (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_jsoduFblQ)

Photos are available at:

[17 th Anniversary of Mullivaikkal Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day MAY-2026 – British Tamils Forum](#)

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Notes to Editors:

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 frame work under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. For more information info@britishtamilsforum.org and/or visit: www.britishtamilsforum.org