

British Tamils Forum United Kingdom

February 03, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

69th Sri Lankan Independence day and the plight of Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka.

Today Sri Lankan state celebrates its 69th year of Independence from the British colonial rule, but it is not a day celebrated by the Tamil people in the island. The Tamil people who constitute a Nation had their own independent sovereignty before the colonial era. When the colonial rule ended in 1948, a system of governance thrust upon the Tamil nation by the departing British rulers at the time, made the Tamil people a permanent “minority” in a combined entity then known as Ceylon. The Sinhalese who had numerical superiority in the combined entity had become the new colonial masters of the Tamil people and continue to exercise domination over the Tamil nation. Giving supremacy to Sinhalese and Buddhism they had continued to deny equality and freedom to the non-Sinhalese.

Right throughout its post independent history, the Tamil people have been subjected to pogroms, massacres and genocide. Not a single person has been held accountable for these grave injustices inflicted on the Tamil nation under the Sinhala colonial rule.

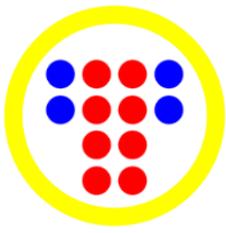
For the first three decades since “Independence”, the Tamil people have been clamouring through non-violent, democratic means for equal status and freedom from Sinhala domination and aggression. These demands were met with violence by the Sinhala dominated state which unleashed pogroms against Tamils repeatedly. This resulted in emergence of armed resistance to this Sinhala colonial aggression. This armed resistance and liberation movement which set to reinstate the independent sovereignty of the Tamil people was brutally crushed by committing genocide against the entire Tamil Nation, in a war that ended in May 2009. The international community which had supported this war on the false pretext of combating “terrorism” had belatedly acknowledged its failure to protect the Tamil people.

Since then the Sinhala state has accelerated its colonial programme in which the Tamil Nations Homeland in the North East of the Island is being systematically decimated. The Tamil people’s Homeland is being colonised by Sinhala settlers from the south. It is heavily militarised with 15 of the 20 Sri Lankan military battalions deployed in the Tamil Homeland. The Sinhala military is occupying Tamil people’s land refusing their right to return to their own private lands.

As the Sri Lankan state celebrates “Independence” day, the Tamil people of Keppapulavu and Puthukkudiyiruppu, two of the many villages where the Sri Lankan military is occupying Tamil people’s land, are on a hunger strike, demanding return of their own land. These people who traditionally live off their land are denied their livelihoods.

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The new Sri Lankan government which came into power in January 2015 promising to address the violations against the Tamil people is trying to hoodwink the international community, by empty promises to address the issues of land grab, militarisation, security sector reform and a solution to the national conflict. Unfortunately even the easiest deliverables like the release of political prisoners, release of private land, release of a comprehensive list of the missing persons and repeal of the draconian PTA remain undelivered. This is an age old ploy by the Sri Lankan state which is very familiar to Tamil people. The Sri Lankan state will continue to delay and distract delivery of any form of justice to the Tamils in the island since it believes that prolonging the delivery would eventually tire the international community and the UN, as the focus moves away from Sri Lanka.

British Tamils Forum stand in solidarity with the people of Keppapulavu and Puthukudiyiruppu, who are on a hunger strike in front of the Sri Lankan military, fighting for their own land and livelihood to be returned to them. We call upon the Tamil leadership in Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu and the Diaspora to rally around these dispossessed people, so that land grabbed by the Sri Lankan state through its military, Sinhala Settlements and construction of Buddhist structures, are returned to their original inhabitants immediately. We call upon the international community to remain focused on Sri Lanka which continues with its violations against the Tamil people, with impunity.

BTF wish to reiterate that an accountability process strengthened by the international community is essential to curtail the continuing injustices of the kind which denies people their basic right to earn a living and live in their own land in peace. Failure to ensure justice will eventually lead to struggles of the people on the ground which has the potential to destabilise the region, and renew the conflict.

BTF calls upon the governments of the UK, India, other European Union countries and the UNHRC to take immediate and sustained action to ensure the Sri Lankan government delivers on the promises it made through the UNHRC resolution (30/1 – 01 Oct 2015) it co-sponsored.

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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