



For immediate release:

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**British Tamils Forum and USTPAC call upon UNHRC to intervene immediately to protect Tamils campaigning for the cause of missing persons in Sri Lanka, who are marking 100 days of peaceful protest**

The British Tamils Forum (BTF) and US Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC) express deep concern over reports of intimidation and disruption of the peaceful protests in NorthEast Sri Lanka by the Sri Lankan armed forces. The protest by the relatives of the missing persons has marked 100 days today and is continuing.

In its [Resolution 30/1](#) on Sri Lanka the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) requested the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to continue to assess progress in the implementation of its recommendations and other relevant processes related to reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, and to present an oral update to the Council at its thirty-second session and a comprehensive report at its thirty-fourth session.

At the 34<sup>th</sup> session of the HRC this March, the government of Sri Lanka reaffirmed its commitments to implement HRC/30/1 by cosponsoring Resolution 34/1. At this session, the High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called for a comprehensive strategy by the government of Sri Lanka that enables the government to pursue the different transitional justice processes in a coordinated, integrated and appropriately sequenced manner. He further stated that OHCHR continues to stand ready to provide further advice and technical assistance. The High Commissioner mentioned that the Human Rights Council will sustain its close engagement in Sri Lanka.

Despite all its promises made to the High Commissioner and the member states of the HRC, the government of Sri Lanka has made no progress in ascertaining the whereabouts of the tens of thousands of persons missing during the ethnic conflict. The kith and kin of the missing have been protesting for the past 100 days in Killinochchi, and their protest has attracted mass support in the NorthEast. We call upon the HRC to intervene promptly and push the Sri Lankan government to take immediate action to implement, at a minimum, what was promised through the resolutions they co-sponsored at the HRC.

As noted by the High Commissioner on previous occasions, promising and then not delivering still continues in Sri Lanka. Hence BTF and USTPAC request the HRC to send high level representatives immediately to talk to the protesters directly. We have been reliably informed that the government has deployed police and intelligence personnel to break up the protest. They have also mooted setting up yet another commission, despite the already legislated and funded "Office of Missing Persons (OMP)" remaining non-operational.

BTF and USTPAC call upon the UN Human Rights Council to,

- a) Request the High Commissioner or his high-level representatives to visit the protestors in Killinochchi to stop the intimidation of the people who are already traumatised not knowing the fate of their kith and kin.
- b) Immediately establish an OHCHR Office in the NorthEast.
- c) Oversee the setting up of a credible mechanism to trace the missing persons.
- d) Assist Sri Lanka to publicise a comprehensive list of people who surrendered during the last phase of the civil war in 2009 – listing the names of all who were detained or arrested, those who are still in custody (names, locations of detention centres), those who have been released, and, if released, to whom they were released.
- e) Obtain from Sri Lanka a comprehensive strategy with a “time-bound plan” to implement in full the government of Sri Lanka’s obligations per Resolution 30/1.

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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.

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