



British Tamils Forum United Kingdom

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

"On this international day, I urge all Member States to ratify or accede to the Convention without delay, and I call on the States parties to the Convention to implement it. It is time for an end to all enforced disappearances." *Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon*

Enforced disappearance is a major issue in Sri Lanka. Thousands of people who surrendered to the Sri Lankan government during the war have disappeared. The Sri Lankan government continues to refuse the publication of a **comprehensive list of people who surrendered during the last phase of the civil war – listing the names of all who were surrendered 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 to.**

The **Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC)** was set up by the previous government. One of the recommendations of the LLRC was to release the list of detainees. To this day, the Sri Lankan government has not released this report.

Setting up of Office of Missing Persons (OMP) is a step in the right direction. However, history tells us that Sri Lankan government sets up commission after commission with little or no ultimate result. One has to be sceptical as to how effective the OMP is going to be bearing in mind that Sri Lankan government continues to refuse the publication of list of detainees. Loved ones of the victims see this as an excuse to drag this issue forever.

In his submission to LLRC, Bishop of Mannar Rayappu Joseph said the number of people unaccounted for in Vanni, Sri Lanka during the last phase of the war was 146,679.

When the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Mr Ranil Wickramasingha was asked about the detainees, his reply was that they are all presumed dead.

The United Nations Secretary General was criticised for removing his staff from Northern Sri Lanka during the war. If they had stayed, it would have reduced the number of people who were killed by the Sri Lankan government and also number of people who disappeared. Subsequently, Ban Ki-moon admitted and apologised "UN failed during final days of Lankan ethnic war".

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated that the disappearances are still continuing. International community has to take concrete measures for non-recurrence of the heinous crimes committed in the past by the Sri Lankan State and to bring out the truth behind the enforced disappearances by setting up an international independent investigation mechanism in Sri Lanka.

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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 framework under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. For more information

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