



British Tamils Forum

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The Rt Hon Gordon Brown Prime Minister
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MEMORANDUM

To: The Prime Minister
From: British Tamil Forum on behalf of the Silenced Tamil People
Date: 20 June 2009

Background

On 19th May 2009 the Sri Lankan government announced that the war in the island had ended with the elimination of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have been fighting to reinstate the lost sovereignty of the Tamil people, through an armed struggle.

The British having unified the Tamil and the Sinhala nations for administrative convenience during their rule in 1833 left the shores of the island leaving the people of the Tamil Nation as a "minority" in a "unitary" Sri Lanka. No sooner the British left, the Sinhalese used their "majority" status to alter the constitution which had some protection to the Tamils as a "minority". This was a clear breach of trust under which the Tamils acceded, albeit reluctantly, to cohabit under a unitary constitution. Tamil people have been subjected to racist discrimination and persecution with genocidal intent since 1948 by the Sinhalese. Over the last sixty years Tamils, through their democratically elected representatives, having tried and failed to redress their grievances through peaceful means were forced to take up arms for their defence and liberation.

Every agreement to satisfy reasonable demands in order to co-exist with the Sinhalese was unilaterally abrogated by successive Sinhala leaderships. Democratic and non violent protests by the Tamils were met with violent suppression, using the Sinhala armed forces and through pogroms orchestrated by the Sinhala state. The sustained violent oppression of Tamils gave rise to an armed movement, the LTTE, which had been a deterrent that prevented major pogroms on Tamil people since July 1983.

However, following the 9/11 attack on the US soil, the LTTE fell foul of the blanket proscription, in the pretext of “war on terror” by the West, with disastrous consequences for the security and existence of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. The UK, the USA, and other European countries which had banned the LTTE, having played a major part in its demise, found themselves unable to protect the now defenceless Tamil civilians from the onslaught by the Sri Lankan state. The Sri Lankan government used its sovereignty as a shield to keep away these countries whilst it carried out its genocide with impunity. It is continuing to use the same argument to prevent the international community from investigating its war crimes against Tamils.

Tamil Nation

The International Community, branding the Tamil people as a “minority” and labelling their struggle as “separatist”, has failed to recognise the struggle for what it is.

This is a struggle to evict an alien occupying force from the Tamil homeland. The Tamil people refuse to be treated as less than equal partners in a “unitary” state, formed by the forced union of two independent nations. The Sinhala nation is using its “majority” status to persecute the Tamil people and to plunder the Tamil nation's resources. It has been systematically decimating the Tamil population to fulfil its vision of making the island an exclusive Sinhala state. The Tamil nation will continue its fight until a solution is reached where all its citizens feel free from oppression and persecution.

The Present Situation

Massacre of defenceless Tamil civilians by the Sri Lankan State

The Sri Lankan government used the code “human shield” to describe the people who had taken refuge in a sliver of land away from the advancing army. The political leaders of some nations around the world, who too were using this description, had anticipated the Sri Lankan government to behave in accordance with international norms by respecting the “human” element of this phrase.

Satellite photographic evidence and frantic phone calls received from people on the ground during the final moments of the onslaught; now confirm that the Sri Lankan government used all the fire power at its disposal, including internationally prohibited chemical weaponry, which resulted in over 53,000 defenceless Tamil civilians; men, women and children being killed or disappeared.

This was a premeditated act of Genocide of tens of thousands of innocent Tamils in the pretext of eliminating a ‘few’ LTTE combatants.

Innocent Tamils held against their will in Nazi style concentration camps

Over 270,000 Tamil people, who escaped death from the bombing campaign by the Sri Lankan government, are now held in barbed wire enclosures surrounded by heavily armed Sinhala soldiers. These people have homes of their own, in which they lived until recently and are now prevented from returning to their abode.

They have no freedom of movement and have no access to outside world. No friends, relatives or even the Tamil members of parliament are allowed to visit these people. Possession of a mobile phone is prohibited in these camps and people are held against their will in isolation from their kith and kin detained in other concentration camps.

The Sri Lankan government has imposed stringent restrictions on access by international aid agencies which are waiting to help these people. It has turned away the ship "Captain Ali" which was carrying humanitarian aid supplies donated by the British Tamil Diaspora and backed by British parliamentarians. Although the cargo of the vessel was thoroughly checked by Sri Lankan security forces, who confirmed that it was entirely of essential humanitarian supplies, the Sri Lankan government turned the ship away.

Persons taken away from camps by security forces, para-military groups and Buddhist monks

The youth who arrived in the concentration camps are being taken away for interrogation and are disappearing without trace. Rape and murder of young Tamil women are rampant in these camps. No lists are forthcoming of persons held in these camps and the people removed from these camps are not accounted for.

Very young Tamil, Hindu/Christian children are being taken away by Sinhala Buddhist monks to an alien environment in the south of the island for forced religious conversion.

The information being leaked from these camps indicate that a very large proportion of these people are suffering from trauma as a result of witnessing the massacre that took place around them. Even the UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-Moon, now concedes that the conditions in the camps in Vanni are the most appalling that he has ever seen. These are further corroborated by recent investigative news reports by Channel 4 journalists.

During the final weeks of the war, the UN and governments in the West were adamant that Tamil civilians flee into the government controlled areas, without any assurance as to their safety and wellbeing. These civilians are now detained behind barbed wire in death camps and at the mercy of the barbaric Sinhala state and their military.

Sri Lankan state refuses to release details of the innocent Tamil detainees to their relatives, the organisations of the Tamil Diaspora or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Instead the Sri Lankan state and the

military are preoccupied with destroying any evidence of their most horrific crimes against humanity.

We the British Tamils Forum urge that the British Government intervenes to demand:

1. Immediate registration and identification of all Tamils in the camps in the presence of international monitors in order to prevent disappearances.
2. Immediate release of details of the detainees to the ICRC and the organisations of the Tamils Diaspora.
3. Immediate and unfettered access to international aid agencies and media.
4. Immediate release of all the Tamils held in the Nazi style concentration camps so that they can return to their homes and a life of normalcy.
5. Sri Lanka, which is notorious for extra judicial killings, torture and rape, to adhere to the Geneva Convention and to treat all Tamil Prisoners of War (POWs) accordingly.
6. Facilitation of the prosecution of Mahinda Rajapakse (President of Sri Lanka), Gotabaya Rajapakse (Defence Secretary) and Lt. Gen Sarath Fonseka (Chief of Sri Lankan Army) for War Crimes against Tamils.

Yours sincerely

Mr Nathan Kumar
Chairman

cc.

Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Leader of the Conservative Party

Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP
Leader of the Liberal Democrats

Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP
Leader of the Scottish National Party

Rt Hon Leuan Wyn Jones AM
Plaid Cymru Leader & Deputy First Minister