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Key Campaign to Unlock Sri Lankan 'concentration camps'

Marking 100 days since the end of the bloody conflict in Sri Lanka and the imprisonment of over 280,000 Tamil civilians in deplorable 'concentration camps', British Tamils Forum launched an unprecedented "Key" campaign. The launch event, attended by UK Parliamentarians, human rights activists, councillors and members of community organisations, was held at the Boothroyd Suite, Portcullis House in Westminster on Thursday, 27 August from 4pm.

In an effort to raise awareness of the plight of the Tamil civilians who remain incarcerated in military-run camps, the UK Tamil Diaspora launched a "continuous campaign", vowing to take action until all the illegally detained people are freed and resettled in their own homeland.

The safety and security of these civilians guarded by military personnel has come in to grave questioning following Channel 4's airing of disturbing footage obtained from Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka, depicting the extrajudicial execution of Tamils by government forces, underscoring international probe calls.

"Unlock the Concentration Camps in Sri Lanka" campaign slideshow presentation was followed by Siobhain McDonagh MP chairing the proceedings. Joan Ryan MP, Virendra Sharma MP, Neil Gerrard MP, Andrew Pelling MP and Cllr Pete Pattison all participated in the launch event offering their continued support and joining international calls for an independent inquiry into all war crimes evidence.

Minister of State, Department for International Development, Gareth Thomas MP, said "there needs to be full access for UN, Media to the camps" and reiterated that the Government of Sri Lanka must "use this victory to deliver justice and perfectly legitimate aspirations of self determination to Tamils".

Steven Pound MP voiced his concerns for the missing, the disappeared, and the murdered, highlighting that the main priorities are an "investigation into war crimes" and for Tamils to have some form of dialogue with the Sri Lankan government.

Cllr James Allie from Brent expressed great resentment at the "double standards" towards the Sri Lanka crisis, "Camps need to be cleared. Of all other places Europe has history of concentration camps. Europe knows there is no justification."

The Shadow Foreign Secretary, William Hague MP, also voiced his concerns calling for the UN and relief organisations to be given "full and unrestricted access to provide shelter, food, water, and medicine, and to oversee the screening process", he said in a press release by the Conservative Party. He further warned that "continued confinement in camps will simply sow the seeds of discontent and may lead to renewed conflict in years to come".

A press release by Human Rights Watch (HRW) also strongly condemned UN's silence stating that "Ban should stop relying on the president's promises of domestic action and make it clear that an international commission is needed if the victims of Sri Lanka's bloody war are to find justice."

British Tamils Forum joins the calls by UK parliamentarians, human rights groups and international institutions to demand for an international commission of inquiry into war crimes and gross violations of international human rights laws.

British Tamils Forum



British Tamils Forum urgently appeals for international pressure to be exerted on the Sri Lankan government to free the imprisoned civilians in light of increasing evidence of ethnicity based violence and extrajudicial killings by government forces.

The "Unlock the concentration camps in Sri Lanka" campaign continues with a mass protest and street campaign.

- Ends -

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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 Tamil 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. For more information admin@tamilsforum.com and/or visit: www.tamilsforum.com