



பிரித்தானிய தமிழர் பேரவை
British Tamils Forum



Canadian Tamil Congress
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Congrès Tamoul Canadien
"Voice of Tamil Canadians"



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1000 Days of Protest, No Action or New Information on War Disappeared in Sri Lanka

Geneva Nov 15, 2019: The families of Tamil civilians who are the victims of enforced disappearances and who remain missing during and after the war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Sri Lankan government have been holding awareness rally in public now for 1000 consecutive days. They have received no new information about the fate of their loved ones and no action has taken against the perpetrators in all that time. Since the start of the campaign, 53 mothers and fathers of the disappeared have passed away, two of them this week, without knowing the fate of their sons and daughters.

Sri Lanka has the 2nd highest number of unresolved cases of enforced disappearance held by the UN's Working Group on Enforced Disappearance, with 65,000 cases officially recorded by the government itself and many more unrecorded.

The families of the disappeared are demanding a special independent investigation of the circumstances of the disappearances and the fate of those who went missing because the Sri Lankan government has made no progress in the ten years since the end of the war. After co-sponsoring UN Human Rights Council resolution 30/1 in 2015 which committed the state to a transitional justice process, Sri Lanka's government finally set up an Office of Missing Persons (OMP) in September 2017. This Office has made little progress since incorporation and, significantly, has produced fewer results so far than the previous Paranagama Commission set up under President Rajapaksa under international pressure to investigate the same tragedies. The OMP has no mandate to refer its findings to judicial proceedings and little authority to call on international funds or expertise.

Since co-sponsoring the HRC resolution, both the president and prime minister, along with numerous other high officials have publically stated that no war heroes will be prosecuted for the war crimes and crimes against humanity detailed in 2015 report of the Office of the High Commissioner's Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL). It is credibly believed that the vast majority of the enforced disappearances were committed by the Sri Lankan armed forces and their associated paramilitaries.

The appointment in August of Shavendra Silva, who is named in the OISL report as being in command of forces which are credibly suspected of serious international crimes, as Commander of the Armed Forces is an indication of the government's reluctance to take concrete action toward its commitments on post-war transitional justice. The vast majority of other suspects named in the OISL report continue in their careers, receive medals and are promoted to high posts with complete impunity. A candidate for presidential election, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was Defense Secretary during and after the war, has committed to withdrawing from the HRC resolution if elected.

The Australian Tamil Congress (**ATC**), The British Tamils Forum (**BTF**), the Canadian Tamil Congress (**CTC**) and the United States Tamil Action Group (**USTAG**) express our solidarity with the relatives of the missing and forcibly disappeared in Sri Lanka in their long campaign for truth, justice and reparation. In the face of total inaction by Sri Lanka's authorities, we call on the international community to honor the urgent demands by the families of disappeared for justice in the form of a special court, the exercise of

universal jurisdiction, the imposition of sanctions, the banning of Sri Lankan troops from joining UN peacekeeping operations and all other means to demonstrate disapproval of the continued impunity for mass atrocity crimes against the Tamil people.

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