



British Tamils Forum United Kingdom

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Are They Alive?

We, the British Tamils Forum (BTF), initiated the campaign on the plight of over 18,000 Tamil people arrested by or surrendered to the Sri Lankan military in the last phase of the war, May 2009. Subsequently, the late Mannar Bishop Rev. Rayappu Joseph, based on the Sri Lankan government's statistics, affirmed 146,679 Tamil civilians remain unaccounted for from the time of the war.

The surrenders occurred at the request of world leaders and the international community, not knowing their dark destiny, walked into deathtraps, but only on the reliance that the international community would protect them.

There are several witnesses, who were present while those victims including children, women and elders of innocent Tamil civilians were either arrested by or handed over to the military at that time. Not a single person has returned alive or whereabouts is known since they disappeared to date.

The current president Ranil Wickremasinghe declared that those missing persons would be presumed dead at the time he was the prime minister, when Maithripala Sirisena was the president of Sri Lanka. The inference of Ranil Wickremasinghe's statement implied that all those missing persons would have been subjected to enforced disappearance by the Sri Lankan state. The actual plight of those missing persons is not known to date.

The protests of the mothers and family members are unceasingly continuing in Sri Lanka demanding for the release and/or justice for their loss. Regrettably, over 100 of the mothers and relatives had passed away without seeing an end to their demands. Very recently their protest has passed 2000 days since they started. Being the president of the country, Ranil Wickremasinghe must be fully aware of what had happened to those missing persons.

In spite of the above, bearing forthcoming UNHRC 51st Session in September 2022, Ranil Wickremasinghe play his usual ploy of lifting ban on a few diaspora Tamil organisations and individuals, and releasing a few political prisoners to deceive the international community to dilute the effect of the UNHRC 51st Session outcome.

By urging to be vigilant of Ranil Wickremasinghe's tactics, we request the international community to demand the Sri Lankan government to:

- **Publicise a comprehensive list of people who surrendered during the last phase of the war—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 so released, when, where how and to whom they were released / handed over to.**
- **Allow access to the UN team for those still in official and unofficial detention centres.**
- **Release all Political prisoners immediately.**

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

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