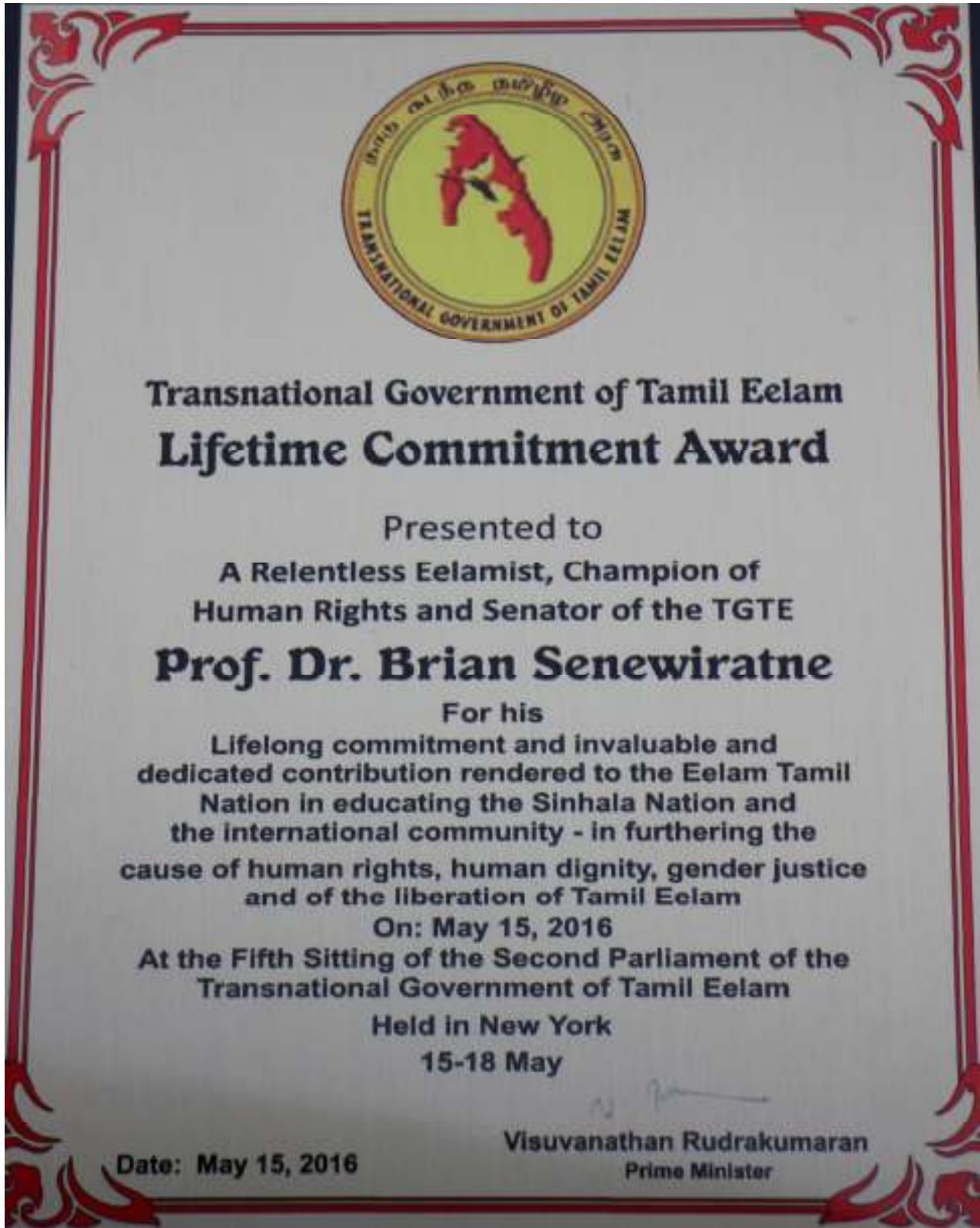


**Dr Brian Senewiratne honoured by the Transnational
Government of Tamil Eelam**





On May 15, 2016, the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) at the Fifth Sitting of the Second Parliament presented a

Lifetime Commitment Award

to a Sinhalese, **Dr Brian Senewiratne** – an 84 year old Senator in the TGTE - for his lifelong commitment to the Eelam Tamil nation in furthering the cause of human rights, human dignity, gender justice and the liberation of Tamil Eelam.

It was a remarkable commitment in the defence of human rights going back to 1948, when nearly a million Plantation ‘Indian’ Tamils (one seventh of the population of the country at that time), brought by the colonial British from South India as indentured labour in the mid-1850s to work on the tea plantations, were disenfranchised and decitizenised in two of the most outrageous Acts passed by the Parliament of the newly independent country, Ceylon, as it then was. Brian Senewiratne, then only a 16 year old schoolboy, saw the injustice done and lodged a protest in his school in Colombo, saying it was “*a bad start for democracy in the newly independent country*”. A week later, he was invited to speak at a public protest in Mt Lavinia, a suburb of Colombo..

68 years later, the Consultant Physician and veteran human rights activist, now in Brisbane, Australia, continues in the struggle to bring peace with justice to the Tamil people in the North and East of Si Lanka where the plight of the Tamils and Muslims is no better, despite a change in the government from the murderous Rajapaksa regime to that of Maitripala Sirisena (President) and Ranil Wickremasinghe (Prime Minister). Where the Tamils and Muslims in the North and East are concerned, 8 January 2005 has only been a name-change from Rajapaksa to Sirisena. Dr Senewiratne’s recently released book: ‘*Sri Lanka: Sexual Violence of Tamils by the Armed Forces*’, sets this out in full.

Usha Sri-Skandarajah, a fellow Senator and the former Head of the Senate of TGTE gave a comprehensive account of Dr Senewiratne’s lifelong work for the cause of the Tamil people and their right to live in equality, dignity, safety and now to live at all, in the Tamil homeland in the North and East of Sri Lanka. It was eloquently delivered and dealt with the work done over some 68 years by a Sinhalese from the majority community in Sri Lanka who had distanced himself from the ethnoreligious chauvinism of the majority Sinhalese (the community he comes from)

Here I what she said::

Thank you Prime Minister for giving me the high honour to introduce the recipient of the TGTE's **Lifetime Commitment Award, Prof. Dr Brian Senewiratne.**

“There was a time when I had only heard of him, read about him and, of course, admired everything about him from a far, for I had never met Dr Brian Senewiratne at that point. I couldn't believe that there even existed one such rare specimen of Sinhala origin, that I know of, who genuinely cared for the welfare of the Tamils as much as he cared for the wellbeing of his own Sinhala brethren; someone who could feel so passionately for the rights of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka the way he does.

There is no denying that Dr Brian Senewiratne is our Sinhala hero.”

Here is a summary of what she said. The full address is in the Appendix.

1. 1948 – a protest as a 16 year old schoolboy at the disenfranchisement and decitizenisation of nearly a million Plantation “Indian” Tamils in one of the first Acts of the newly independent country, Ceylon.
2. 1956 – as an undergraduate in Cambridge University, he refused to meet his uncle, Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in London who had changed the Official Language from English to Sinhala Only because he felt strongly that it was discriminatory, unjust and undemocratic.
3. 1971 – He also strongly opposed the so-called “Standardisation of university entrance marks” introduced for admissions to the universities, obviously directed against Tamil-medium students. Tamil students had to obtain a higher mark than the Sinhalese to enter the University. He stated that this was blatant discrimination in education.
4. 1972 – as a Senior Lecturer in Medicine at the Peradeniya University in Kandy, he took up the cause of the Plantation Tamils again when his aunt, Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike took no action when her Sinhalese goons hounded out Plantation Tamils from their miserable shacks and were dying on the streets of Kandy.
5. 1977 – then in Australia, he continued to challenge the Sri Lankan government under J.R.Jayawardena accusing him of devaluing Parliament and setting up a Presidential dictatorship and for circumventing the constitutional safeguards that had been designed to protect the Tamils against the “tyranny of the majority”.
6. 1983 – after the massacre of Tamils in the July 1983 pogrom, he published a book: “*The 1983 Massacre – Unanswered Questions*” in which he held that the Jayawardena government was responsible for this crime.
7. 1984 – His publication: “*Human Rights Violations in Sri Lanka*” was banned in Sri Lanka.
8. 1984 onwards, he has recorded and distributed a number of DVDs to draw attention to the humanitarian tragedy in Sri Lanka.
9. He has lobbied and addressed Parliamentarians and Human Rights groups in Australia, Canada, UK, US, France, Germany, India, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, South Africa, Switzerland and the European Members of Parliament.
10. 2008 – he met with Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu in Cape Town, and other ANC leaders in South Africa to present the deteriorating human rights situation in Sri Lanka.
11. 2008 – He addressed several Canadian universities, including the University of York and the University of Toronto to motivate the youth and take a courageous and determined stand against violation of human rights and the abuse of democracy.
12. Asylum seekers – He has addressed meetings and rallies organised by the Refugee Action Collective in support of asylum seekers.
13. Lectures, radio and TV interviews. He has delivered countless lectures, radio and TV interviews, and written numerous articles and some books – the most recent being a 210-

page comprehensive account of *“Sri Lanka: Sexual Violence of Tamils by the Armed Forces”*.

14. He has been invited by Peter Arndt, Head of the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane, *Peace and Justice Section*” to join a select group to campaign for peace and justice in Sri Lanka.
15. 2015 – He addressed members of his own community in a much need publication; *“What the majority Sinhalese must know”*
16. As a Senator of the TGTE he has contributed to drafting the *“Road Map to Tamil Eelam”*.
17. Honoured – He has been honoured in the US, UK, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand and Australia.
18. March 2009 – Canadians for Genocide Education (an umbrella organisation of some 48 multiracial, multicultural and religious organisations) selected him to deliver the annual Genocide Education Lecture at the University of Toronto and receive the prestigious ‘Educators Award for 2009 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to genocide education and prevention. He spoke on: *“Peace with Justice in Sri Lanka. Genocide of Sri Lankan Tamils. Its causes and Solution”*.

Dr. Senewiratne’s international advocacy work and activism illustrates his dedicated and exemplary service to the cause of human rights, human dignity and social justice. His life’s work, both as a health professional caring for the sick and as a human rights advocate, championing the rights of the underdog, acting with the courage of his convictions, is a testament to what a true consummate humanitarian he is. Undoubtedly he is a living legend and we salute him.

Ladies and Gentleman it’s my absolute pleasure to call our Prime Minister up on stage to do the honours.

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Appendix: Usha Sri-Skandarajah’s full address in the TGTE Parliament

Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran, who is leading the TGTE most effectively towards Tamil Eelam, Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Ambalavaner Thavendran, Hon. Speaker Nagalingam Balachandran, Hon. Senators and Hon. Members of Parliament, distinguished guests and friends.

May I call upon Dr Brian Senewiratne to come up close to the rostrum please..

There was a time when I only heard of him, read about him and of course admired everything about him from a far for I had never met Dr Brian Senewiratne at that point. I couldn’t believe that there even existed one such rare specimen of Sinhala origin, that I know of, who genuinely cared for the welfare of the Tamils as much as he cared for the wellbeing of his own Sinhala brethren; someone who could feel so passionately for the rights of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka the way he does.

There is no denying Dr. Brian Senewiratne is our Sinhala hero.

Today I wish take some extracts from what my husband, Dr Sri Bavan Sri-Skanda-Rajah wrote about him and finish with the Ode I wrote to him years ago, both of which only scratch the surface of this larger than life personality that the TGTE is honouring:

Dr. Brian Senewiratne's steadfast commitment to defending human rights and promoting social justice is an inborn trait, a passion that is so visible in his demeanour and speech that it captures one's heart the minute you interact with him – that he has fought relentlessly and tirelessly for people who are marginalized and persecuted, based on ethnicity, race, religion, language and culture his whole life, makes one feel inadequate in front of him. Dr. Senewiratne has been indefatigable in his efforts to defending the rights of all oppressed communities in Sri Lanka as well as both displaced peoples in Sri Lanka and convention refugees seeking asylum in Australia. In this regard he has virtually devoted his life to raising awareness of the plight of these peoples through education, international advocacy, lobbying and engagement.

Dr. Senewiratne belonged to the ruling majority community in the island of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and is closely connected to the Bandaranaike family that has produced two Prime Ministers and a President. Despite his privileged background he chose to break ranks to wage a courageous and often lonely campaign against the inexorable atrocities committed against the Tamil community ever since the island was granted independence from British rule in 1948.

Dr. Senewiratne had a strong sense of right and wrong from an early age. In 1948 as a sixteen year old student at an exclusive private school in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) he chose to espouse the cause of nearly a million long time citizens of Ceylon of Indian Tamil origin who had their citizenship revoked and were disenfranchised by the majoritarian Sinhalese government solely with the objective of capturing in excess, two-thirds of the seats in parliament so as to enable Sinhalese majoritarian governments to approve legislation that would be inimical to the interests of the indigenous Tamils of the island. He spoke out publicly in support of the Tamils of Indian origin who were arbitrarily rendered stateless; the very people who had lived in the island since the 1840s and toiled for more than a century to develop the world-renowned 'Ceylon Tea' that became the mainstay of the island's economy.

When he saw the rights of the indigenous Tamils in the island were impinged upon by successive Sinhalese governments of Sri Lanka and peaceful democratic protests by the Tamil parliamentarians and other concerned citizens were put down by government-sponsored pogroms and by military force, Dr. Senewiratne made it his mission to defend the rights of these marginalised people to live with equality, dignity and security and without discrimination in the country of their birth, enjoying the same rights and privileges accorded to the Sinhalese community.

In 1956 as an undergraduate at Cambridge University he firmly opposed the Official Language Act which sought to establish the Sinhalese Language as the only official language to the exclusion of the Tamil language in Sri Lanka. He organized a series of protest marches in London to oppose this clearly racist move. And when his paternal uncle the then Prime Minister of Ceylon, Mr. SWRD Bandaranaike came to London, he declined an invitation to meet with him purely on principle that his uncle's actions were unjust and undemocratic.

In 1972, as Professor of Medicine at the University of Peradeniya he took up the cause of Plantation Tamils again, when they were hounded out of their miserable dwellings by Sinhalese goons during the term when his aunt Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike was Prime Minister. He did what he impishly referred to as, "my nocturnal ward-round" wherein he traversed the streets of Kandy picking up dying Plantation Tamils, so that they could be given immediate medical attention in hospital and if they could not be saved to die with dignity.

Dr. Senewiratne's outspoken ways, strong convictions and activism made it increasingly difficult for him to remain in the island and 1976 he chose to immigrate to Australia and hasn't been able to return since.

In Australia he continued to challenge the Sri Lankan Government of J.R Jayewardene accusing him of devaluing parliament and setting up a Presidential dictatorship intended to circumvent the constitutional safeguards that had been designed to protect the Tamils against the "tyranny of the majority".

Following the pogrom against Tamils in July 1983 Dr. Senewiratne published a book titled "*The 1983 Massacre – Unanswered questions*". In it Dr. Senewiratne held the Sri Lankan government responsible for the crime of genocide. Over 20,000 copies of the book were distributed round the world. As an expected reward for his efforts he was accused of treason and his next publication titled "*Human Rights Violations in Sri Lanka*" was banned in Sri Lanka.

Since then he has campaigned with greater vigor for the oppressed in Sri Lanka highlighting violations of human rights by documenting the incidents and distributing number of DVDs to draw attention to the humanitarian tragedy in Sri Lanka.

He has engaged, educated and lobbied parliamentarians and human rights groups in his own Australia as well as Canada, France, Germany, India, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA and the EU. He has addressed European Members of Parliament in the EU parliamentary complex chaired by Robert Evans EU MP, one time Britain's most senior MP to the EU. In July 2008, Dr Senewiratne met with Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu in Cape Town and other ANC leaders and politicians to discuss the deteriorating human rights situation in Sri Lanka.

His mission is to also inform and motivate the youth to take a courageous and determined stand against violation of human rights and the abuse of democracy. He has addressed students at several Canadian universities including the University of York and the University of Toronto (UFT).

He has been honored in the US, Canada, Malaysia and Australia. In March 2009, Canadians for Genocide Education – an umbrella organization comprising some 48 multiracial and multi-religious organizations selected Dr Senewiratne to receive their prestigious 'Educator Award' for 2009 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to genocide education and prevention and to deliver the annual 'Genocide Education Lecture' at the University of Toronto. Titled, "*Peace with Justice in Sri Lanka. Genocide of Sri Lankan Tamils. Its Causes and Solution*".

Dr Senewiratne has addressed meetings and rallies in Brisbane in support of asylum seekers organized by the Refugee Action Collective (RAC) and Amnesty International.

Dr Brian Senewiratne has delivered countless lectures, given many radio and TV interviews, written numerous articles and authored many books, his recent being the monumental book - an expose on the, "**Rape Of Tamil Women, Men And Children By Sri Lankan Armed Forces And Their Collaborators**", his latest article being "**What the majority Sinhalese must know**" - spending every moment of his waking hours with very little sleep, educating his own people and the international community of the atrocities perpetrated against the Tamils.

Despite his age (84) he has not slowed down in his mission to deliver justice, human rights and dignity to the voiceless and less privileged - in his pursuit for justice for victims massacred in May 2009 during the final phases of the war in Sri Lanka.

He was elected by Peter Arndt, Head of the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane, Peace and Justice Section, to join this select group to campaign for peace and justice in Sri Lanka. He has also acted as a lay preacher.

We are also proud to say he is a Senator of the TGTE and contributed to drafting the, "Road Map to Tamil Eelam," prepared by the Senate.

So here ladies and gentlemen is my Ode to Dr Brian Senewiratne composed on 23rd May, 2006

Dear Dr Senewiratne.

We hail you

As the voice of reason of the Sinhalese

May your tribe increase

And become the driving force

To bring real unity to the island of Sri Lanka

May your kinsmen heed your call

To bring Peace and Prosperity

Security and Safety

Equity and Equality

To all the people of the island

Sinhalese Tamil Muslim and Burgher

In your quest for Justice and Fairness

May not your critics stop you

For alas!

They do not understand the wisdom of your words

They may rant and rave

And call you names

For all they want is supremacy

Not equality

We laud you for your courage

And for your futuristic vision

You're not a traitor

For you love your people too much

And they must know

It's the racists and the religious extremists

Who send Sri Lanka

To the age of savagery and destruction

If people see

That all you want

Is for the Pearl of the Indian Ocean

To regain its lustre and beauty

And that freedom for the Tamil speaking

People of the NorthEast

To determine their own destiny

Does not mean doom for the Sinhalese

But rather the advent

Of a bright new horizon

Of hope and glory

Of progress and dynamism

For they would be free

Free from the shackles

Of enmity and intolerance

Of those who spread hate

And those who cannot lead

What's required
Are statesmen
Of the highest calibre
And of spiritual wisdom
Who are willing and able
Without procrastination
To accept the offer
Of peace and friendship
By Leader Velupillai Pirapaharan
Based on equality of status
And self determination

For both the Tamil speaking people
And the Sinhalese people
Muslim Christian Hindu and Buddhist

Free at last the people would be
Free to pursue their dreams in peace
Free to realize their full potential
Free truly to determine their destiny
And reap the rewards of freedom for all
With dignity and mutual respect
And you Sir shall become
The true emancipator of the people
And be honored as a hero
For your daring and foresight

Dr. Senewiratne's international advocacy work and activism illustrates his dedicated and exemplary service to the cause of human rights, human dignity and social justice. His life's work, both as a health professional caring for the sick and as a human rights advocate, championing the rights of the underdog, acting with the courage of his convictions, is a testament to what a true consummate humanitarian he is. Undoubtedly he is a living legend and we salute him.

Ladies and Gentleman it's my absolute pleasure to call our Prime Minister up on stage to do the honours.

Professor Nadarajah Sriskandarajah (Sweden)

After the presentation, others spoke. Of particular importance was a comment by **Professor Nadarajah Sriskandarajah (Sweden)** who was a student in the Peradeniya University. He was not a medical student. He referred to the work done by Dr Senewiratne trying to address the medical problems faced by the Plantation Tamils – people who seemed to be of no concern to the authorities (or anyone else).

He set up a clinic in the grounds of the Anglican Church in the Peradeniya campus which was in a remote corner of the Campus, right next door to where the Plantation Tamils in the Hantana tea estate lived.

Scores of patients attended the clinic which was run by medical students, students who did other subjects, volunteer doctors and, of course, Dr Senewiratne. With the clinic in full swing delivering a much needed service, the authorities ordered that the clinic be closed because they claimed that 'politics were being introduced into the Church'!

Never one to be intimidated, he suggested that that we cut the barbed-wire fence so that we could walk across to what was not University property and see the milling mob of patients. This was done for years – until he left the country.

That, in summary, is the man whom we are honouring today.