



# British Tamils Forum United Kingdom

22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2022

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **It is time to act**

Sri Lanka is burning yet again. History is known to repeat itself. The players may change, but the scenario does not. The recent uprising of the Sinhala youth against the ruling class brings back memories of the freedom struggle of the Tamil nation for over three decades. The grievances of the Sinhala nation pales into insignificance when one considers the draconian acts perpetrated against the Tamil nation, which was only seeking to express itself politically and socially as a nation.

The arm-struggle for the freedom of the Tamil nation ended in 2009 in the face of the overwhelming military might of the Sinhala nation, whose military might could directly be attributed to the supply of arms by a few nations friendly to the Sri Lankan state, who began to equate the legitimate freedom struggle of long-oppressed nations to the acts of terrorism of individuals and groups. The bombing of the twin towers in the United States fuelled the concept that any arms struggle is a wanton act of terrorism. The international community very often did not pause to distinguish between the legitimate aspirations of long-suffering nations and acts of individuals for whom the goals are different.

The Tamil nation within the island of Sri Lanka has a long historical claim to a nationhood. When deprived of its rights, the Tamil nation initially attempted to regain the lost political rights through political dialogue and, when pushed to the wall with the state terrorism used to suppress the political dissent, took to arms as the last legitimate resort as recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1949, which is the right to defend.

The Tamil diaspora world over and the Tamil brethren still remaining in the troubled island of Sri Lanka are the living witnesses to the human rights abuses, war crimes, crimes against Humanity and acts of genocide let loose against the Tamil nation with total impunity by the Sinhala nation.

The Tamil nation might have been forced to temporarily end its struggle for independence in May 2009, but the quest for independence burns deep in the hearts and minds of every Tamil belonging to Tamil Eelam. Due to the state terrorism practised in various forms in the island of Sri Lanka, the Tamil nation is unable to find its voice within the island as the reprisal has always been swift. The theatre of conflict has inevitably moved out of the Tamil nation to be waged from countries where the Tamil diaspora has found refuge.

The struggle itself has gone through a metamorphosis. Now it is more political and legal, waged within the international framework.

Since the voice of the Tamil nation was throttled to silence in May 2009, the Tamil diaspora has begun to canvass the international fora, including the UN bodies, to secure their backing to force the Sri Lankan state to account for their breaches of various international conventions and covenants.



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Due to the untiring efforts of the enlightened section of the Tamil diaspora, the UN Human Rights Council, under its mandate, has moved to consider the atrocities committed against the Tamil nation. Resolutions have been successfully carried through with the support of nations including the UK, the US and the European Union. The resolution passed in March 2021 mandated the UNHRC to collate the evidence in regard to the human rights abuses and the war crimes, crimes against Humanity and acts of genocide committed by the Sri Lankan state since it gained independence. This process will appear to be quite time-consuming, but it is inevitable, as securing the support of the member states is a tedious task. We have had an appreciable success.

The recent events in Sri Lanka have given us a window of opportunity to ensure that the momentum of this process is hastened. It requires legal research to understand what is possible and what is feasible. The politics is an art of possibilities, after all.

The persons who stood accused of perpetrating human rights violations before the UNHRC were able to take cover under various immunities as applicable to diplomats and state functionaries. The silver lining in the protest of the Sinhala youth, as far as the Tamil nation is concerned, is that those perpetrators of heinous crimes have now almost lost their immunity from prosecution. In this context, the Tamil diaspora is researching the possibilities of bringing those offending individuals before the international courts such as the ICJ, ICC and the special adhoc international tribunal for Sri Lanka under the international jurisdictions. It is not a mean task. The Tamil nation and diaspora will almost certainly face obstacles from known and unknown quarters. To overcome the obstacles, whatever moves to be taken by the Tamil nation and the Tamil diaspora ought to be underpinned by legal and political research, with a profound understanding of the geopolitical realities.

Fortunately, a group of law graduates have grouped themselves voluntarily to undertake research into this area for the benefit of those activists who can then translate the research findings into action plans.

It is essential that the Tamil diaspora and the Tamil politicians who represent the Tamil nation within the island of Sri Lanka act responsibly to ensure that we succeed in our attempt to bring the Sri Lankan state and its agents who perpetrated war crimes, crimes against Humanity and acts of genocide to justice. We seek your kind co-operation.

## British Tamils Forum

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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 [info@britishtamilsforum.org](mailto:info@britishtamilsforum.org) and/or visit: [www.britishtamilsforum.org](http://www.britishtamilsforum.org)