

THIRD ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE 2013 - LONDON



உலகத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Global Tamil Forum

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Global Tamil Forum

*Third Anniversary Conference of the Global Tamil Forum
in Committee Room 14 at the UK Parliament*

on

Wednesday, 27 February 2013



Prof. Dr. S. J. Emmanuel
Sandweg 4
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Germany
Tel. 02545/919574
email: es.jay.raj.@hotmail.de

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all friends and well-wishers of the Global Tamil Forum (GTF) here present today and around the globe. I am delighted to welcome you all for our 3rd annual conference. I thank United Kingdom parliamentarians and officials for granting us permission to host GTF for the second time in three years. Our inaugural conference held in this very room three years ago formally kick-started the work of the GTF in the international arena.

Our gathering in London 2013 is taking place at a time when not only the Tamil nation and its people, but also the Sinhala nation and Sinhalese speaking people in Sri Lanka, are facing unprecedented challenges. This conference, our cry for accountability and justice, is not just about telling the world what happened to Tamils during the end of the war but to hear the views of Southern civil society, International Governments and organisations. We also wanted to give international participants the opportunity to hear ground realities in Sri Lanka, the continued oppression of Tamil people, even after almost four years since the end of the war. We owe this to hundreds of thousands of innocent Tamils who perished during the war and many more Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslim civilians, civil society leaders and journalists who continue to pay the ultimate price, with their lives, for freedom and democracy. The narrative is simple, if the Chief Justice has no protection from the judiciary and law enforcement authorities what will be the fate of ordinary citizens of the country. This is why we believe that only an international independent investigation can address truth and accountability in Sri Lanka, as recommended to the UN Secretary General by the appointed Panel of Experts, as a first step towards advancing reconciliation and sustainable peace.

We at GTF firmly believe that fundamental constitutional reform, that paves the way for Tamils to determine their own destiny, is the foundation for reconciliation, just peace and political settlement. In pursuit of our goal, we have chosen a path built on four pillars; international advocacy for justice and accountability, civil society engagement, facilitating common political ground and providing immediate humanitarian support.

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The work of GTF is driven forward taking into account of the post May 2009 political realities in our homeland, as well as internationally. Right from the inception of GTF, all of us who were involved in setting up GTF, knew that a response to the unprecedented loss and despair our people faced had to be met with revived approach underpinned by the principle of non-violence to establish Tamils as a credible partner of peace and mobilise support for our plight in the international arena to realise the legitimate political aspirations of our brethren in the island.

Although we are continuing our work with pragmatism, we have been persistent in arguing our case with consistency in what we say and also do. Our road map for peace is a vehicle towards our goals but the protection of our people's identity and rights remains our core conviction. We will only be judged by how we contribute to a permanent political settlement for Tamils in their homeland. I am proud of the progress GTF is beginning to make on that front in becoming a trusted partner for the democratically elected Tamil political parties and non-elected representatives on the ground. We are also exploring common political ground with all political parties in which fundamental constitutional reform takes centre stage, which we hope will pave the way for all communities in Sri Lanka to realise their legitimate political aspirations, and live in true democracy in their homelands whilst benefitting from economic prosperity. Today's conference, will give us, all communities from Sri Lanka, the opportunity to share our views and how we can work towards achieving this. I wish to thank all, particularly those who have braved the journey to London, despite intimidation and threat.

Achieving our goal requires a truly global effort, backed by people of all colour, creed and continents. Voices of support have already emerged from Tamil Nadu to Africa, and Europe to the American continent. We, Tamils, are delighted with the unified voices in Tamil Nadu. We welcome India's increasing interest in the Tamil issue and we firmly believe India's involvement is important to ensure justice and a permanent political settlement for the Tamil people. The mounting international pressure and scrutiny on Sri Lanka led by the United States, United Kingdom, European Union and others and calls for independent international investigation are clear evidence that the international community is simply losing faith in the political will of the Government of Sri Lanka and President Rajapaksa. We are also continuing our tireless efforts to mobilise support from influential Governments in the African continent.

Our conviction to play our part in helping to realise the legitimate aspirations of Tamil people remains resolute as ever. Our work will continue until the day our kith and kin in Sri Lanka are free to determine their own destiny without fear or threat.

Ends

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TNA

TAMIL NATIONAL ALLIANCE

I consider it a privilege to extend my best wishes to all participants at the 3rd Anniversary Conference of the Global Tamil Forum. The GTF has been actively engaged in activities that have endeavored to bring to the knowledge of the International Community the numerous injustices and violations that have been continuously perpetrated on the Tamil People of Sri Lanka. I wish to extend to the GTF my best wishes for their continuous involvement in such efforts.

The conflict in Sri Lanka has been long drawn out. Efforts to bring about a resolution to the conflict have not been successful as a result of successive governments in the country pursuing a policy of majoritarian rule without endeavouring to adequately accommodate the legitimate political, social, economic and cultural aspirations of the distinct Tamil People in the country.

Consequent to the failure on the part of the State to resolve this issue democratically and peacefully and consequent to violence being unleashed against the Tamil People who pursued their agitation non-violently over several decades, an armed struggle which ensued has now come to an end and the opportunity for an acceptable peaceful resolution of the conflict has dawned once more. Most regrettably, though the war came to an end almost four years ago the Sri Lankan State has failed to demonstrate an unequivocal commitment to reconciliation based on justice. The situation in the Northeastern part of the country, historically inhabited by the Tamil Speaking People, has worsened since the end of the war and the actions of the Sri Lankan State are clearly aimed at denying the existence of the Tamils as a distinct People by taking steps that would radically change both the demographic composition of the Northeast and the linguistic and cultural identity of the said areas. Such action on the part of the Sri Lankan State would not merely be greatly detrimental to genuine reconciliation but would also promote further instability both within the country and the region and also be a threat to international peace. The Sri Lankan State has also defaulted in honouring its commitments to the International Community to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Based upon our own experiences, such a resolution as of now, despite our best efforts, seems remote. It is a matter of great concern that the Sri Lankan state has defaulted in utilizing the opportunity that came about after the conclusion of hostilities to achieve an honourable peace through a reasonable and acceptable political solution despite the Tamil People and the Tamil National Alliance extending their co-operation to unreservedly support the achievement of such a solution.

The International Community through its actions has endeavoured to persuade the Sri Lankan government to address questions of accountability and reconciliation in keeping with the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission appointed by the government of Sri Lanka, the Report of the UN Panel of Experts and the Resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in March 2012. If the Sri Lankan state continues to be intransigent in not fulfilling its commitments and complying with its international obligations, we would strongly urge the need for such further action as would ensure that a permanent honourable peace is brought about in Sri Lanka so as to enable all the Sri Lankan Peoples to live with self-respect and dignity in their own country.

R Sampanthan MP

Leader, Tamil National Alliance

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Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party

Global Tamil Forum's 3rd Anniversary Conference

I am very pleased to send my best wishes to today's event, the Global Tamil Forum's 3rd Anniversary Conference.

The Tamil Diaspora has made an important contribution to our national life here in the UK, which I warmly welcome. As long-standing friends of Sri Lanka, the UK Government shares your commitment to a lasting peace in the country.

For it to succeed, any peace must be based on justice and the rule of law, an inclusive political settlement and reconciliation between all those affected by the war. In particular, it is important that Sri Lanka properly investigates alleged breaches of humanitarian and international law and that those responsible are held to account.

After Sri Lanka's very difficult recent history, all parties must work together to heal their country. I hope those gathered together at the conference can play a positive role in ensuring we achieve that goal, and I wish them every success.

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THE ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR TAMILS



HOUSE OF COMMONS
Westminster London SW1A 0AA

Chair: Lee Scott MP

On behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils (APPGT), we wish to send our congratulations and best wishes to the Global Tamil Forum for your 3rd Anniversary Conference.

This event comes at an important time for Sri Lanka, given that the issues of accountability and reconciliation on the island will be a focus of discussions at the 22nd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Therefore, we are sure this Conference will provide an excellent forum to highlight both the ground realities on the island, particularly the on-going plight of Tamils, and the need to build a sustainable peace, following the end of the armed conflict in 2009.

Truth and justice for the conduct of the war is a prerequisite of achieving lasting peace. That is why we support the establishment of an independent, international investigation into the conflict. The tens of thousands of Tamils who died, with many more unaccounted for, deserve nothing less.

In order for reconciliation to take root, the socio-cultural and human rights of Tamils, and all communities on the island, must be respected. A negotiated political settlement, which addresses the root causes of the conflict is also essential.

The APPGT is committed to working with all Members of Parliament, and organisations such as the Global Tamil Forum, to ensure these objectives are realised.

We hope your Conference is a success.

Best wishes,

LEE SCOTT MP
VIRENDRA SHARMA MP

SIOBHAIN MCDONAGH MP
ROBERT HALFON MP

SIMON HUGHES MP

Vice Chairs:

Virenda Sharma MP; Siobhain McDonagh MP; Simon Hughes MP

Secretary and Treasurer:

Robert Halfon MP

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NICK CLEGG
LEADER OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS HEAD QUARTERS | 8-10 GREAT GEORGE STREET | LONDON | SW1P 3AE



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

I want to wish Global Tamil Forum's 3rd Anniversary conference every success. The Tamil Diaspora has contributed greatly to our country, and today's event reaffirms the vital role the Tamil community around the world can play, in working with others to ensure lasting peace in Sri Lanka.

Sustainable peace on the island can only be built on the foundations of accountability and reconciliation. However, since the end of the armed conflict in 2009, there remains a distinct lack of protection for the human rights and the cultural and political rights of many people in the country, particularly for Tamils. The UK was right to co-sponsor the UN Human Rights Council resolution in March 2012 which called for accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka, and we must continue to insist on these key objectives.

I am sure this Conference will provide an important opportunity to raise awareness of the situation in Sri Lanka and will highlight the support for securing an enduring political solution and peace in the country.

Yours,

Nick Clegg MP

Leader of the Liberal Democrats and Deputy Prime Minister





HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

GLOBAL TAMIL FORUM - THIRD ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

I extend my best wishes to Global Tamil Forum's 3rd Anniversary Conference and congratulate Tamils from around the globe on taking this initiative. I want to extend a special welcome to the Tamil parliamentarians from Sri Lanka and the Sinhala civil society representatives who have assembled in London for this event. You all have an important role to play in achieving sustainable peace in Sri Lanka and your continued courage and dedication to uphold democracy and freedom, under often very difficult circumstances, is much admired. We uphold these core values of democracy and freedom and will continue to bring the plight of your people to international attention.

Sadly the end of the armed conflict has not brought openness and accountability about the conduct of the war. The tens of thousands of victims, who died, and their loved ones who remain, deserve the truth. The recent impeachment of the Chief Justice, the on-going human right abuses, which include attacks on journalists and the freedom of expression have all raised continuing international concern. Reconciliation and sustainable peace is what is needed.

It is for these reasons that Labour was the first UK political party to call for a full, independent, international investigation into the allegations of war crimes committed by all parties during the armed conflict. We have continued to prevail upon the British Prime Minister and Government the need to establish such an inquiry and we are now urging the British Government to raise these continuing concerns directly with the Sri Lankan authorities, before reviewing the UK's representation ahead of the 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting scheduled for Sri Lanka.

I thank Global Tamil Forum for providing the opportunity to meet many delegates from a cross section of the Sri Lankan community and international experts on the conflict in Sri Lanka. I look forward to meeting all on the 27th.

Best wishes,

Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP
Shadow Foreign Secretary

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Rt. Hon. Edward Davey MP



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA**

Vanaakam,

I am delighted to send my best wishes for Global Tamil Forum's 3rd Anniversary Conference and am privileged to be able to address this meeting, today.

It is now almost four years since the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. Following the terrible events of those last months of the war, we all hoped that credible accountability and reconciliation processes would be put in place to enable long-lasting peace to take root on the island. These hopes have not been fulfilled.

United Nations institutions - including bodies mandated by the Secretary-General, international human rights groups and Channel 4 News have all revealed, and continue to expose, evidence that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed by both sides during the war. However, there has been no credible, domestic investigation into the conflict and the victims and their families - many of whom are Tamils - deserve justice. It is for these reasons that I support the establishment of an independent, international inquiry into the conduct of the war.

I am deeply concerned for the prospects of reconciliation and democracy, too. Constitutional amendments have concentrated powers in the hands of the President. The recent impeachment and dismissal of the Chief Justice bodes ill for the rule of law in Sri Lanka. The Tamil speaking areas of the North and East of the country have been militarised. Freedom of expression has been repressed and cases of human rights violations are commonplace. Significantly there has been little attempt to address adequately the origins of the armed conflict - namely the institutionalised discrimination against Tamils and the need to ensure a comprehensive political settlement.

It is because of the fact the Government of Sri Lanka has failed in its domestic and international obligations to its people, that I supported the European Union's withdrawal of GSP+ trade concessions with Sri Lanka. It is why I backed the UN Human Rights Council resolution in 2012, which called for accountability and reconciliation on the island.

GTF has played and continues to play an important role in bringing to the attention of the international community the plight of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. I assure you that I will continue to work with the Tamil community in the UK and with all organisations who seek justice, reconciliation and peace on the island.

I hope you have a successful Conference.

Nandri

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Please forward any replies to my constituency office: 21 Berryland Road, Surbiton, KT5 8QX
For casework enquiries, please 020 8288 0296 (to fax - please call first)
For diary engagements or general enquiries please call 020 8288 0161



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The Labour Party

Ed Miliband MP
Leader of the Labour Party

One Brewer's Green, London SW1H 0RH
0845 092 2299 | labour.org.uk/contact

February 2013

Message to the Global Tamil Forum

I would like to congratulate Father Emmanuel and Global Tamil Forum members for the important work that you undertake in pursuit of justice for the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

In Government, my Party and I witnessed at first hand the pain and suffering of British Tamils as the events of 2009 unfolded, where many innocent civilians lost their lives. I am very mindful of your long wait for accountability and justice for war crimes committed during the armed conflict in Sri Lanka.

This is why the Labour Party has called for a full independent international investigation into the acts of unconscionable violence committed by all parties during the armed conflict in Sri Lanka.

I will continue to call for justice and constitutional reform to address the political grievances of Tamils and other communities in Sri Lanka. A permanent political settlement, that is acceptable to all communities, is needed to bring permanent peace.

I wish Global Tamil Forum a successful conference and I look forward to meeting with you later this week.

Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP
Leader of the Labour Party





THE RT HON DAVID MILIBAND MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

I am happy to send my best wishes to all delegates at the Global Tamil Forum's (GTF) 3rd Anniversary Conference. I am sorry I cannot be with you in person. I had the pleasure of addressing your inaugural event in 2010, and applauded the commitment of the GTF to represent on a democratic and non-violent basis the concerns, past and present, of the Tamil people. Since that time, the need for that representation has been clear and evident.

The report of the UN Panel, the failure of the Sri Lankan government to follow through on its recommendations, and the ongoing work in the UN Human Rights Council, as well as the evidence and testimony gathered by independent journalists about the last months of the armed conflict speak to the needs of all Sri Lankans to come to terms with the past and build a better future. They also speak to the wider international community, which has a vital interest in upholding both the standards of UN Conventions and the authority of the UN.

It is welcome that the GTF meeting welcomes people from across the UK political spectrum. This is important in conveying strength of feeling to the UK government, but also important in sending a wider message that the concerns being raised cross political boundaries. They are about the human rights and obligations that all in democratic politics should share.

The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution in March 2012, which called on Sri Lanka to address accountability and reconciliation, was an important first step in holding the Government of Sri Lanka to account. However, as the UN Human Rights Commissioner, Navi Pillay, has reaffirmed recently, there needs to be a credible, independent, international inquiry into the allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity arising from the armed conflict.

Now is the time for international bodies, such as the UN and Commonwealth, to demonstrate their relevance by promoting and upholding core values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Therefore, I support further action on Sri Lanka at the forthcoming 22nd Session of the UNHRC in Geneva and urge the UK, and all Commonwealth members, to call for a change of venue for the 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, currently scheduled for Colombo, so that the principles of this institution are not undermined.

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Rt Hon David Miliband MP



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Human Rights Watch is pleased to participate in this broad discussion about human rights issues in Sri Lanka, and thanks the Global Tamil Forum for making such a discussion possible.

U.K. director David Mepham will be discussing the recent Human Rights Watch report, “‘We Will Teach You a Lesson’: Sexual Violence against Tamils by Sri Lankan Security Forces.” This report focuses on crimes of sexual violence committed by members of the Sri Lankan security forces between 2006 and 2012. This evidence was collected following in-depth interviews in Australia, the UK, Germany, India, Malaysia and Indonesia. The report documents egregious acts of sexual violence against the LTTE and civilians perceived to be LTTE supporters by members of the Sri Lankan security forces during and in the immediate aftermath of the civil war. But it also shows that sexual abuse by the security forces has continued since the end of the war. Given the failure of the Sri Lankan government to halt these abuses or hold past abusers to account for their crimes, Human Rights Watch urges the international community to take more effective and concerted action to protect and promote human rights in Sri Lanka.

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THIRD ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE 2013 - LONDON





24 February 2013

Global Tamil Forum - 3rd Anniversary Conference

It gives me great pleasure to address Global Tamil Forum's third anniversary conference in London on 27 February 2013.

Sri Lanka remains an issue close to my heart having been appointed by UN Secretary General to study the allegations of atrocities during the last stages of the war. In our report, we found credible evidence that as many as 40,000 people perished during this time. Sadly for the victims of this conflict and their loved ones the recommendations of our report have not been implemented, this more than two years since publication.

We highlighted the need to address accountability in order to pave the way for reconciliation between communities and bring peace. Regretfully the failure to address these issues have strengthened the triumphalism displayed by the state and has led to the ongoing violations and the further subjugation of the victims. The disturbing reports from Sri Lanka on the impeachment of Chief Justice signal a threat to the judiciary and highlight the breakdown of rule of law on the island.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights in her latest report on Sri Lanka points out :
"The steps taken to investigate further allegations of serious violations of human rights have also been inconclusive and lack the independence and impartiality required to inspire confidence. Meanwhile continuing reports of extrajudicial killings abductions and enforced disappearances in the past year highlight the urgency of action to combat impunity".

I feel encouraged that this initiative keeps Sri Lanka on the international agenda and hope that justice and peace will soon become a reality.

Yours sincerely

YASMIN SOOKA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY AND POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF THE ETHNIC CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA



The Sri Lankan State and the armed forces had demonstrated all the components of a strategy of final solution to end the ethnic question in Sri Lanka. In case of Sri Lanka and the impending Tamil question, it was not simply a 'war on terror' as it has been made out by the Sri Lankan government and its supporters from outside. It was a brutal military resolution of the ethnic conflict that evaded political solution for over six decades. The over simplification of military operations in an ethnic conflict situation as 'war on terror' has not only undermined humanitarian principles but also ignores the political question of the of the future of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The complete failure of domestic and regional mechanisms to find a peaceful political solution to the ethnic crisis are among other factors that have contributed to the present status of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The Tamil question, however remains and the demands are just the same. Sri Lanka is a failed and rogue State. If the international governments believed that the Sri Lankan government needed their political and military support against Tamil militancy, they not only have a moral responsibility to explain the conduct of Sri Lankan government in converting the 'war against terror' as war against the entire Tamil population but also they now have an opportunity to act responsibly towards political resolution of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. It is time to initiate an appropriate international legal and political mechanism to address the Tamil question in Sri Lanka.

Prof. Ramu Manivannan

Chair-Department of Politics & Public Administration
University of Madras





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Professor of international law
Director, Doctoral Institute

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Is there a court for Sri Lanka?

Over the past two decades, the world has become increasingly demanding with respect to how States deal with atrocities perpetrated at various stages in their history. This takes a variety of forms, including specialized tribunals and truth commissions. With the establishment of the International Criminal Court a decade ago, recent crimes can now be addressed without the need to establish new institutions.

The alleged atrocities perpetrated in Sri Lanka in early 2009, to the extent that they respond to the definitions of war crimes and crimes against humanity, may be investigated and punished by the Court. But for the Court to operate, its jurisdiction must be secured through one of three mechanisms: accession to the Rome Statute by Sri Lanka, a declaration accepting jurisdiction by Sri Lanka, and referral of the situation in Sri Lanka by the United Nations Security Council.

The current political profile of the Sri Lankan government makes the first two steps highly unlikely. But jurisdiction can also be established without the consent of the Sri Lankan government, provided the Security Council can agree upon a Resolution. Another possible option is prosecution before national courts under the principle of universal jurisdiction. But neither of these possibilities can be considered realistic in the absence of political will.

My remarks will focus on the challenges and difficulties in bringing those suspected of perpetrating atrocities to justice.

William Schabas OC MRIA
Professor of international law

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ORDER OF THE DAY

- 10.00-11.00 Welcome - Prayer, Minute Silence
Welcome Address - **Rev. Dr. S.J Emmanuel**, GTF President
Welcome Address - **Hon. Ms Siobhain McDonagh MP**, Chair of Event and Vice Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils (APPG-T)

SPEAKERS'

Hon. Mr Robert Halfon MP, Treasurer and Secretary, APPG-T
Ms Sandya Ekenligoda (wife of Prageeth Ekenligoda)*
Mr Sunanda Deshapriya, Exiled Journalist
Plenary Session

11.00-12.30

SPEAKERS'

Mr Peter Kellner, Chair RCS
Dr. Elvira Dominguez-Redondo, Senior Lecturer Middlesex University, speaking on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) initiative
Cde. Ribbon Mosholi,
African National Congress International Relations Manager
Mr Bawa Abdul Kader, former Deputy Chairman of the Sri Lanka's Teacher's Union
Mr Danny Srisandarajah, Director General of Civicus
Mr Gordon Weiss, former UN Spokesman in Sri Lanka
Plenary Session

12.30-14.00

SPEAKERS'

Rt. Hon Theresa Villiers MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Hon. Mr R. Sampanthan MP, Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA)
Video - **Director Callum Macrae** introduces excerpts 'No Fire Zone' film
Rt. Hon Mr Nick Clegg MP, UK Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party
Rt. Hon Mr Ed Davey MP, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change
Cde. Yasmin Sooka, Member of the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka
Hon. Mr MA Sumanthiran MP, Human Rights Lawyer and Member of Parliament
Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP, Leader of the Labour Party
Hon. Mr Lee Scott MP, Chair of APPG-T
Video - **Rt. Hon David Miliband MP**, former UK Foreign Secretary





Order of the Day continued.....

14.00-15.30 SPEAKERS'

Hon. Ms Kerry McCarthy MP, Shadow Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister with responsibility for Sri Lanka
Video - **Mr and Mrs MCM Iqbal**, Human Rights Activists - Introduce excerpts of film on plight of women in the Vanni
Mr David Mepham, UK Director Human Rights Watch (HRW)
on HRW's new report "'We Will Teach You a Lesson': Sexual Violence against Tamils by Sri Lankan Security Forces"
Professor Joshua Castellino,
Head of Law Department Middlesex University
Ms Yolanda Foster, Senior Researcher on
Sri Lanka for Amnesty International

15.30-17.00 SPEAKERS'

Rt. Hon Douglas Alexander MP, Shadow Foreign Secretary
Hon. Mr Erik Solheim, former peace negotiator in the Sri Lankan peace process and Norwegian Government Minister
Professor William Schabas,
International Law Expert Middlesex University
Rt. Hon Baroness Warsi, Senior Minister of State Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Rt. Hon Mr Simon Hughes MP, Liberal Democrat Deputy Leader
and Vice Chair of APPG-T
Speaker- **Rt. Hon Mr Keith Vaz MP**, Chair of UK's Home Affairs Select Committee and Member of APPG-T
Vote of thanks - **Rt. Hon Joan Ryan**, Policy Advisor, GTF
Closing remarks and end of Conference

**Subject to visa approval*

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19 October 2010 Last updated at 14:59



S Lanka rejects 'atrocities' photos

Sri Lanka's foreign minister has cast doubt on newly released photos that are said to show a massacre of Tamils during the country's civil war.

On an official UK visit, GL Peiris said images published by the **Global Tamil Forum** were a bid by rebel sympathisers to tarnish Sri Lanka's image.



Some of the images apparently show the bodies of blindfolded and bound young people

Some of the pictures apparently show the bloodstained bodies of bound and blindfolded young people.

Sri Lanka's long civil war ended in May 2009 with the T

The **Global Tamil Forum** (GTF), a group w the separatist insurgents, released the in minister visited London.

Many of the photos, whose veracity cann publish here.

One apparently shows a semi-naked young face and apparently dead, surrounded by blindfolded young men.

Other photos appear to show dead young m



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Warming ahead of Sri Lanka's UPR
'Address accountability issues or face the consequences'
Global Tamil Forum won't stop until war criminals punished
October 9, 2012, 10:57 AM

 **Platform for Freedom panel:** (from left) Attorney-at-law Senapathi Pushpakumara, attorney-at-law Sudarshana Gunawardena, Erlio Fernando, Dr. Nimalika Fernando and spokesperson Freddy Ganegoda.
PI: by Dhammika Seneviratna

A collective of Sri Lankan human rights organizations yesterday urged the government to address accountability issues or face the consequences at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UHRHC). Senior representatives of 32 organizations made representations to Human Rights Minister, Mahinda Samarasinghe yesterday at his ministry as regards their submissions to Sri Lanka's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Feb. 1, 2012.

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Sri Lanka's controversial president will travel to London for the Olympic Games in what could spark mass protests from Britain's Tamil community, The Independent has learned.

Mahinda Rajapaksa's spokesperson Bandula Jayasekara confirmed today that the 66-year-old president, whose government has been accused of committing war crimes, is planning to come to Britain shortly and may even attend the Games' opening ceremony on Friday evening.

Mr Rajapaksa's presence in the UK has often prompted large demonstrations from Britain's Tamil community who accuse his government of carrying out widespread atrocities against civilians and combatants during the 2009 war that finally wiped out the Tamil Tiger insurgency.

The United Nations says both sides committed war crimes during the conflict's brutal close which brought the Tamil Tiger's three decade campaign for an independent state crashing to the ground.

Investigators found evidence that Tamil Tigers used child soldiers and civilians as human shields whilst Sri Lankan government forces stand accused of deliberately shelling civilian areas, summarily executing both Tamil Tigers and civilians and committing widespread sexual violence.

The threat of Tamil protests will inevitably be of concern to the Metropolitan Police because of the community's ability to field huge numbers of demonstrators at such short notice. During the 2009 war, Tamil campaigners used mobile phones to launch a surprise occupation of Parliament Square that lasted more than sixty days.

During Mr Rajapaksa's last visit to Britain for the Queen jubilee, hundreds of protesters brought traffic to a halt when they gathered outside the Commonwealth and a hotel in Park Lane where the President was staying.

Historically Britain and Canada have been the two most popular destinations among Tamil refugees and critics of the Sri Lankan regime. As a result Britain's Tamil community often had close links to Tamil nationalists and the Tigers themselves.

The Sri Lankan government has long accused the British authorities of not doing enough to clamp down on Tamil Tiger support and fundraising. Despite the growing wealth of evidence – including videos showing summary executions and evidence of sexual violence committed by its soldiers – Colombo has vehemently denied committing war crimes and publicly criticises those human rights groups and journalists who suggest otherwise. It has yet to allow the UN to conduct an independent investigation of war crime allegations. An independent investigation commissioned by the Sri Lankan government, meanwhile, was widely criticised by human rights groups and foreign governments for being partial and partisan.

Tamil activists contacted by The Independent today said it was likely new protests would break out if Mr Rajapaksa came to Britain.

"It is wholly inappropriate for Mr Rajapaksa to be invited to Britain and particularly the Olympics," said Jan Jananayagam, from Tamils Against Genocide. "There is credible evidence that his government is releasing a report showing how government institutions such as the police and military other ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka. Just this week we released a report showing how government institutions such as the police and military under his command are involved in a systematic network of politically motivated disappearances as well as abduction for ransom."

Suren Surendran, from the [Global Tamil Forum](#), said they were looking at possible legal avenues they could pursue against the Sri Lankan delegation when they arrive in Britain.

"President Rajapaksa might be getting away from being arrested by hiding behind the cover of being a head of state, anyone else joining him with blood in their hands must know that we will deploy the full breadth of the legal instruments available to us upon them," he said.

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Sri Lankan government voices anger as UK MPs address Tamil group
 David Miliband and Gordon Brown meet delegates at London conference of [Global Tamil Forum](#)

Sam Jones
 guardian.co.uk, Thursday 25 February 2010 15:29 GMT



David Miliband addressed the inaugural conference of the [Global Tamil Forum](#)
 Photograph: Dave Gaddi/Alstar

The diplomatic rift between London and Colombo has widened after

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Case against Prasanna's immunity

A court case has been filed against the diplomatic immunity given to Major General Prasanna Silva, the defense attaché to the High Commission in London.

The [Global Tamil Forum](#) (GTF) filed the case today demanding that the British Foreign Office remove Silva's diplomatic immunity so he can face legal action in London.

The diplomatic immunity can only be removed by the sending state, in this case Sri Lanka. But the British Foreign Office can request for a waiver of the diplomatic immunity, lawyers appearing on behalf of GTF have said.

In the event the Sri Lankan government refuses to remove his

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CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation is an international movement with members in more than 100 countries worldwide. Established in 1993, CIVICUS nurtures the foundation, growth and protection of citizen action throughout the world, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizen's freedom of association are threatened.

CIVICUS is concerned about abductions and intimidation of civil society activists exposing human rights violations committed by Sri Lankan security forces, restrictions on freedom of expression and information, restrictions on freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and impediments to civil society activities in the northern areas of Sri Lanka.

The Constitution of Sri Lanka and the ICCPR to which Sri Lanka is a party guarantee the freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Nonetheless, abductions and other acts of intimidations are rife in Sri Lanka particularly against human rights defenders. It is a matter of deep concern that the human rights defenders engaged in the legitimate defence of human rights by highlighting concerns whether at home or at the UN are being subjected to reprisals by state officials who continue to evade calls to carry out credible investigations into allegations of war crimes committed during the civil war in the country.

Criticism of independent news outlets by government officials is commonplace which negatively impacts on the freedom of expression and information. In particular hate speech against journalists conveyed through the state media and a persistent failure by the Sri Lankan government to take action remains a serious matter of concern.

CIVICUS calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to do more to guarantee the minimum requirements in policy and practice for civil society to operate. This includes the freedom of association, freedom of expression, the right to operate free from unwarranted state interference, the right to communicate and cooperate and the right to seek and secure funding. A healthy, vibrant and safe civic space is a fundamental precondition for a sustainable democracy in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

Dr Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah
Secretary General, CIVICUS

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Impunity persists for crimes under international law as Sri Lanka escalates attacks on critics: Amnesty International's written statement to the 22nd session of the UN Human Rights Council (25 February- 22 March 2013)

ASA 37/004/2013
12 February 2013

Human rights defenders in Sri Lanka continue to face threats and physical violence for peacefully opposing government policies and practices. The government's intolerance of dissent - even from those using the country's judicial system, combined with its unwillingness to rein in abusive members of its security forces and political supporters or account for their actions, has led to violations of the right to freedom of expression, undermined rule of law and threatens to derail post-conflict reconciliation.

Sri Lanka's unwillingness to account for alleged crimes under international law committed by its armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the last stages of the armed conflict that ended in 2009, or indeed to investigate and prosecute other alleged serious violations of human rights, has fostered a climate of impunity where arbitrary detentions, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions continue unchecked. Almost four years after the armed conflict with the LTTE ended, these violations continue to be reported. Sri Lankans demanding human rights accountability have been treated with particular hostility by Sri Lankan officials, especially when their demands have been communicated outwards, to the international community.

Since October 2012, lawyers and judges have also been attacked for denouncing alleged attacks on the independence of Sri Lanka's judiciary - an issue that reached a climax in January with the Parliament of Sri Lanka's impeachment of Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake despite a Supreme Court ruling that found the impeachment process unconstitutional. On 7 October, less than three weeks after JSC Secretary Manjula Tilakarathne, a high court judge, released a statement on behalf of Sri Lanka's Judicial Services Commission (JSC) complaining of interference and intimidation, armed assailants attacked him, pistol whipped him and attempted to drag him from his car. In January, two Appeals Court judges received threatening phone calls warning them not to go to court the next day when they were scheduled to rule on the Chief Justice's impeachment; senior lawyers who opposed the impeachment have received anonymous death threats.

Sri Lanka continues to employ the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), which Amnesty International has long said should be abolished. The PTA restricts freedom of expression and association, permits extended administrative detention, and reverses the burden of proof where torture or other ill-treatment of detainees is alleged. Dissenting Sri Lankans have also been the victims of smear campaigns in the state-owned press, anonymous threats and acts of intimidation by unidentified assailants. Physical violence against the Sri Lankan government's detractors also happens with disturbing frequency: critics of the Sri Lankan government have been abducted, assaulted, and shot. Grenades have been thrown at their homes; they have been victims of enforced disappearances and murder. None of the incidents have been effectively investigated or prosecuted. In December 2012, Sri Lankan authorities arrested more than 50 people in northern Sri Lanka under the PTA in the wake of student protests demanding freedom of





expression after security forces broke up a lamp lighting ceremony at the women's hostel at Jaffna University held to commemorate "Heroes Day," a day of remembrance established by the LTTE that has been banned by the Sri Lankan army. Two student leaders were detained without charge until mid- February for "rehabilitation;" more than 40 others alleged by authorities to be former LTTE members, were detained for interrogation by the Terrorist Investigation Division of the police. These events illustrate how little progress Sri Lanka has made in implementing promises to improve respect for human rights and accountability, or achieve national reconciliation.

Resolution 19/2 adopted by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on 22 March 2012 welcomed recommendations made by Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) "including the need to credibly investigate widespread allegations of extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances, demilitarize the north of Sri Lanka, implement impartial land dispute resolution mechanisms, re-evaluate detention policies, strengthen formerly independent civil institutions, reach a political settlement on the devolution of power to the provinces, promote and protect the right of freedom of expression for all and enact rule of law reforms."ⁱⁱⁱ It urged Sri Lanka to formulate a "comprehensive action plan" to implement the recommendations. The resolution noted with concern that the final report of the LLRC did "not adequately address serious allegations of violations of international law"^{iv} and so called on Sri Lanka to go beyond the LLRC recommendations to "address alleged violations of international law."^v

Resolution 19/2 stressed the need for the "credible and independent"^{vi} action, but Sri Lanka's National Plan of Action (the Plan), unveiled in July 2012 failed to commit to new or independent investigations, relying instead on agencies associated with violations to investigate and police themselves. Amnesty International reiterates its severe criticism of this approach; the Ministry of Defence, armed forces and police cannot credibly investigate alleged violations by their own personnel possibly acting on the orders of senior commanders and government ministers.

A recent report by an Army Board charged with developing its own Action Plan on LLRC Recommendations perpetuates the same flawed logic -- proposing new military structures to investigate allegations against the military where the LLRC, UN Secretary-General Ban Kimoon's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka,^{vii} and a host of international and domestic human rights organizations have called for independent investigations of alleged violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

While Sri Lanka attempts to silence its critics at home, on the international front it continues make empty promises about protecting human rights and the rule of law.

The UN must not allow procrastination to continue when it comes to ending impunity for human rights violations in Sri Lanka or where accountability for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity are concerned. Since the Government of Sri Lanka has proved unwilling to end the cycle of impunity in Sri Lanka, the UN must act. The Human Rights Council should establish a Council mechanism devoted to monitoring and reporting to the Council on the current human rights situation in Sri Lanka. An independent international investigation is also necessary into allegations of crimes under international law committed by the Government and the LTTE in the country's armed conflict.



In addition, the Human Rights Council and UN member states should call on Sri Lanka to:

Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission

- Initiate prompt, effective and independent investigation of alleged violations of human rights or humanitarian law identified by the LLRC or otherwise. No amnesties should be considered or granted for perpetrators of such violations, regardless of their status or role in the government. Agencies associated with alleged violations must not be tasked with investigating their own personnel.

Freedom of Expression and Association

- Urge Sri Lankan security forces and armed groups acting in alliance with them to stop all attacks and acts of intimidation against people expressing dissenting views or suspected of holding dissenting views; and end practices such as censorship, closure of media outlets, and monitoring and surveillance of individuals that do not conform with Sri Lanka's international obligations.

Anti-Terrorism Legislation

- Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act and abolish Sri Lanka's system of administrative detention;
- Release all individuals arrested under emergency or anti-terrorism laws, including all persons held in "rehabilitation camps", unless they are charged with recognizable criminal offences and remanded in custody by an independent, regularly constituted civilian court. Any trials must be held promptly and in regularly constituted civilian courts with all internationally recognized safeguards provided and without recourse to the death penalty;
- Implement all court rulings (such as Supreme Court decisions in fundamental rights cases and writs of habeas corpus) ordering release of detainees without delay. Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances
- Further to HRC resolution 19/2, facilitate without delay the visit requested by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

ⁱ In the run up to and aftermath of the 19th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC or the Council) in March 2012 Sri Lankan politicians and government media labeled Sri Lankan lawyers, journalists and staff of human rights and policy organizations who spoke in favour of Resolution 19/2 or attempted to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms as "traitors" and threatened some with bodily harm. A similar campaign against critics began building before the 22nd Human Rights Council sessions.

ⁱⁱ JC Weliamuna, one of targets of recent death threats for protesting attacks on the independence of the judiciary was the former head of Transparency International in Sri Lanka. In 2010 he was the target of a smear campaign in the government media falsely alleging misuse of funds by his organization. On the night of 27 September 2008 two grenades were thrown at his residence. The motive for the attack was never determined although he believed that the attack was linked to his work as a human rights lawyer. The perpetrators were never identified.

ⁱⁱⁱ Promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka, A/HRC/RES/19/2, preamble.

^{iv} *ibid*

^v *ibid*, OP2.

^{vi} *ibid*, OP1.

^{vii} Report of the SecretaryGeneral's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka, 31 March 2011



OUR QUEST FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND POLITICAL RESOLUTION

Tamils, from all around the globe, came together to form Global Tamil Forum (GTF) at a time of unprecedented need and challenges faced by the Tamil people of Sri Lanka, following the end of the armed conflict in May 2009.

Our founding vision was to promote justice, peace and a permanent political settlement to the Tamil national question through non-violent democratic means, dialogue and negotiations.

Our mission was shaped by the needs and priorities of the immediate aftermath of the war and therefore driven by the need to:

- rebuild the lives of a community battered by war;
- hold those responsible for war crimes to account and serve justice for all the innocent victims of war; and
- facilitate international engagement for the Tamil political representatives from Sri Lanka to enhance the prospects of arriving at a just and lasting political settlement.

The work programme of GTF is led by the Board of Directors, all from different disciplines and professions but united in unwavering commitment to the founding vision and mission of the organisation.

Since inauguration we have strived hard to keep Sri Lanka firmly on the international agenda with activities focussed on raising awareness of the ongoing plight of Tamils and seeking accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the war.

Our road map to peace is built on a four-pillar programme, which we believe are fundamental to realising our objectives. These are:



1. Seeking Justice by calling for an international independent inquiry into the alleged breaches of international human rights and humanitarian laws;
2. Arriving at consensus among all Tamils and Tamil-speaking people, through their political and civil society representatives from Sri Lanka and in the Diaspora, in order to articulate their political aspirations through a “Common Declaration”;
3. Engaging without prejudice with the civil society in the island, representing all major communities, to facilitate better understanding of each other’s point of views and aspirations; and
4. Addressing the socio-economic needs of the people living in the war affected areas.

Engaging Indian establishment is an integral aspect of our strategy, being the regional super-power with increasing global influence and home to over 70 million Tamils. GTF will continue to engage with all stakeholders in India, including the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

Engagement with Sri Lankan, Indian and International mainstream media is key in raising awareness of the Tamil issue. Significant part of this program involves facilitating investigative journalism and exposing evidence of war crimes, despite the challenges arising from restrictions on access and threats to media freedom and journalists in Sri Lanka.

International advocacy and engagement has been crucial in countering misconceptions that the end of the war has brought just peace to the island and that the political grievances of Tamils, that were the root cause of the six decades long conflict, need no resolution. By adopting a well-defined role in international advocacy, GTF has become a credible Diaspora organisation, trusted as a partner for peace in the international arena by state actors and key NGOs. This is evident by the distinguished array of speakers and guests gracing the occasion today to mark our third year anniversary.

GTF will continue to engage with all Tamil stakeholders and different segments of civil society in Sri Lanka, the Tamil Diaspora, international governments, international institutions, diplomats, academics, decision-makers and opinion formers to mobilise support internationally, and to strengthen the hands of the elected and other Tamil representatives in Sri Lanka, with the objective of achieving justice, peace and political resolution.



THIRD ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE 2013 - LONDON

SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Rt. Hon Douglas Alexander MP is Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. An MP since 1997, his constituency is Paisley and Renfrewshire South. Mr Alexander Secretary is the former Secretary of State for Transport and for Scotland 2006-07, and for International Development 2007-10.

Prof Joshua Castellino was appointed Professor of Law & Head of Law Department, Middlesex University, UK in September 2007. He is also an Adjunct member of faculty at the Irish Centre for Human Rights National University of Ireland, Galway. Professor Castellino is a specialist in minority rights and is a former journalist for the Indian Express Group.

Rt. Hon Nick Clegg MP is the Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. MP for the constituency of Sheffield Hallam, since 2005, he has been leader of the Liberal Democrat Party since 2007.

Rt. Hon Ed Davey MP is the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. MP for Kingston and Surbiton since 1997, he is a former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, and was the Lib Dem's Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from 2007-10.

Mr Sunanda Deshapriya is a journalist, human rights and press freedom defender. He was head of the Free Media Movement before going into exile in 2009.

Mrs Sandya Ekneligoda is a committed human rights defender and the wife of the disappeared journalist/cartoonist Prageeth Ekneligoda.

Ms Yolanda Foster is Senior Researcher on Sri Lanka, for Amnesty International.

Hon. Robert Halfon MP is the Treasurer and Secretary of the Tamil All Party Parliamentary Group. The Conservative MP for Harlow since 2010, he is a member of the Public Administration Select Committee.

Rt. Hon Simon Hughes MP is the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party and a Vice Chair of the Tamil All Party Parliamentary Group. An MP since 1983, serving the Bermondsey and Old Southwark constituency, he has held a number of Shadow ministerial roles. In addition, He was the Liberal Democrats London mayoral candidate in 2004.

Mr and Mrs M C M Iqbal are human rights defenders from the Muslim community in Sri Lanka, who currently reside in the Netherlands. They will preview a documentary, at the Conference, on the plight of women in the Vanni, North Sri Lanka, since the end of the armed conflict in 2009.



Mr Bawa Abdul Kader was the former Deputy Chairman of the Sri Lanka's Teacher's Union and the ex-General Secretary of the Up Country Mass Movement.

Mr Peter Kellner is the current Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society. He is a journalist, leading political commentator and President of YouGov, the opinion polling organisation.

Hon. Kerry McCarthy MP is the Labour Shadow Minister for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with responsibility for Sri Lanka. She has been the MP for Bristol East, since 2005. She is also a former Assistant Government Whip, 2009-10; and Shadow Economic Secretary, between 2010-11.

Hon. Siobhain McDonagh MP is the Vice-Chair of the Tamil All Party Parliamentary Group. She has been the Labour MP for Mitcham and Morden since 1997 and currently serves on the Education Select Committee. Ms McDonagh was an assistant Government Whip in 2007-08.

Mr Callum Macrae is the Director of the 'Sri Lanka Killing Fields' series, including the latest film, 'No Fire Zone' (<http://nofirezone.org/>). These films reveal compelling new evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the Sri Lanka's armed conflict. Excerpts of 'No Fire Zone' will be shown during the Conference. He has been making films for twenty years and is a winner of a number of awards, including two Royal Television Society awards.

Mr David Mepham is the Human Rights Watch (HRW) UK Director, with responsibility for communications and advocacy. He will be presenting HRW's latest report on Sri Lanka at the event - "We Will Teach You a Lesson': Sexual Violence against Tamils by Sri Lankan Security Forces".

Rt. Hon David Miliband MP is the former UK Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs, 2007-2010. He visited Sri Lanka in the final months of the country's armed conflict in 2009, with his French counterpart, Hon. Dr Bernard Kouchner. He has been the MP for the South Shields constituency since 2001, and is a former Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2006-07.

Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP is the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition and Leader of the Labour Party. MP for Doncaster North, since 2005, he is a former Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Minister at the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Cde Ms Ribbon Mosholi is the African National Congress' International Relations Manager.

Dr Elvira Dominguez-Redondo is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Law at the University of Middlesex. She is also an Associate Lecturer of the Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University Ireland in Galway. Her expertise includes the fields of Human Rights, the United Nations, International Conflicts & International Law and she has written a number of articles and books on these subjects.

Hon. Rajavarothiam Sampanthan MP is the leader of the Tamil National Alliance. First entering the Sri Lanka Parliament in 1977, he is a representative for Trincomalee.

Prof. William Schabas is professor of international law at Middlesex University; and has academic appointments at the National University of Ireland in Galway; the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in Beijing, the Kellogg College of the University of Oxford, at the Université du Québec à Montréal. From 2002 to 2004 he served as one of three international members of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Professor Schabas was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2006.



Hon. Lee Scott MP is the Chair of the Tamil All Party Parliamentary Group. He has been the Conservative MP for Ilford North since 2005 and is Parliamentary Private Secretary to Rt. Hon Chris Grayling MP, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice.

Hon. Erik Solheim From 2007 to 2012 he held the combined portfolio of Norway's Minister of the Environment and International Development; he also served as Minister of International Development from 2005 to 2007. From 2000 to 2005, Mr. Solheim was the main negotiator in the peace process in Sri Lanka. He also served as a Special Adviser at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during this period. Hon. Mr Solheim has been OECD Development Assistance Committee Chair, since January 2013.

Cde Mrs Yasmin Sooka was a member of the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka and is the Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa. She was a member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, serving first for three years as Deputy Chair to the Human Rights Violations Committee and then as the chair of the committee. Between 2002 and 2004 she served as international commissioner for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone.

Mr Danny Sriskandarajah is the new Director General of Civicus and the former Director of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

Hon. Mathiapparanam Abraham Sumanthiran MP is a National List Member of the Sri Lankan Parliament for the TNA, and is a noted human rights lawyer.

Rt. Hon Keith Vaz MP is the Chair of the Home Office Select Committee. MP for Leicester East since 1987, he is a member of the Tamil All Party Parliamentary Group. A former Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Minister for Europe) 1999-2001, as well as being Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department in 1999.

Rt. Hon Theresa Villiers MP has been the representative for the Chipping Barnet constituency since 2005, and is the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Rt. Hon Baroness Sayeeda Warsi is the Senior Minister of State (Faith and Communities) and Government Spokesperson for the Department for Communities and Local Government and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. She leads on all FCO business in the House of Lords, including on policy areas such as Human Rights, the UN, International Organisations and the International Criminal Court.

Mr Gordon Weiss is a writer, speaker, consultant and analyst of international affairs. He worked for the United Nations for twelve years, and is a founding advisor and consultant expert to the International Crimes Evidence Project, currently investigating war crimes. He was the UN Spokesman in Sri Lanka during the war.





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It is with sincerity that I wish to extend my best wishes to every delegate participating at the 3rd Anniversary Conference of Global Tamil Forum.

Every opportunity presents itself but for a moment - to be welcomed, embraced and grasped before it is lost forever in the seamless ocean of time.

Upon the conclusion of a three-decade war almost four years ago, Sri Lanka was bestowed with one of those rare opportunities - to rebuild lives, invest in sustainable development, enhance the rights of every citizen, harness the fullest potential of every individual and take tangible steps towards true peace and reconciliation, only to find the opportunity wither into seemingly non-existent fragments. Yet, against all hope, there is always light at the end of every tunnel and we will pursue the light beyond this tunnel and not give up.

The steps taken by the Global Tamil Forum to seek out a sustainable solution through non-violence for the Tamil people of Sri Lanka is indeed commendable as it demonstrates a shunning of a victimised, defeatist mentality which will only result in further detriment. Challenging unlawfulness, abuse of power and violations of human rights in both domestic and international fora is indeed a step in the right direction. Creating awareness and empowering our people to take a stand in the face of injustice is another. We stand together as one people and raise one voice - a voice that will be heard, a voice that must be heard. We must and will exhaust every democratic and non-violent option in our quest for being recognised as individuals and a community with rights, being fully aware that violence and abuse will one day bow down before true justice.

Out of the wreck, we will rise.

Yours sincerely,
M A SUMANTHIRAN





Global Tamil Forum's 3rd Anniversary Conference

I am delighted to participate in Global Tamils Forum's 3rd Annual Conference.

I have been involved in Sri Lanka and the Tamil political struggle for legitimate rights in different capacities for the last fifteen years. I have seen numerous friends, Tamil and Sinhalese, being killed in the most brutal ways. The international community's involvement in Sri Lanka has been rooted in the support for a peaceful settlement of the conflict within one Sri Lanka, but based on the right of self-determination and equal treatment for the Tamil people.

I welcome the establishment of the Global Tamil Forum , this post armed conflict political force, rooted in the principle of non-violence. In the short time since it came into existence it has rapidly established itself as a credible international partner for peace and Tamil political aspirations.

As many members of the international community have pointed out, a lasting peace is yet to be won in Sri Lanka. I know all about the Tamil people's long wait for justice and accountability. Four years after the end of the most bloody and horrible war, time is ripe for reconciliation and honest search for a permanent political settlement. There is no excuse for further postponement of a lasting solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government should urgently start sincere talks with the TNA and other representatives of the Tamil community.

Adding to this a process of accountability as recommended by the UN Secretary Generals panel of experts should be established. The actions of President Rajapakshe including the most recent impeachment of the Chief Justice clearly raises question marks about Sri Lanka's current Government's ability to address issues about accountability, reconciliation and permanent political settlement for Tamils and other minorities in the island. International Community's confidence in Sri Lanka's readiness to investigate alleged crimes committed by both sides during the final face of the war is fading.

I am impressed that the Global Tamil Forum has reached out to the international community in new and innovative ways and has built alliances with key audiences. I hope GTF receives the international recognition it deserves for leading a fresh path for freedom to achieve the political aspirations of the Tamil people.

*Erik Solheim was the main negotiator in the Sri Lankan peace process from 1998 to 2005
Norway's former Minister for Environment and International Development
from 2005 to 2012*





Third Anniversary of Global Tamil Forum

I am glad to be at the House of Commons, joining those who have a sincere interest in a peaceful and fair Sri Lanka, and who think and talk of such. We ought applaud and support the foundational principles of the GTF, which place non-violence and democratic principles as foundational to current Sri Lankan Tamil advocacy.

It must be noted that in today's Sri Lanka, the claims and aims of GTF have an importance that exceeds their organizational mandate alone, for the matter of exclusion is far from just a Tamil grievance. It is of increasing concern for all those Sri Lankans who sense that they are being denied a fair share of the dividend brought by peace.

By insisting on a meaningful political role in their polity; on respect for their claim on Sri Lanka as their historic homeland too; on the sanctity of language, religion, and culture for respective minorities; on the right to equal legal redress for grievances; and on the basic civic right of equal access to education and the job market; the GTF speaks for all those Sri Lankans who feel that the democratic traditions of the nation are slipping from their grasp.

When the current government, more popular than ever in the wake of its victory, had a singular opportunity to invoke a magnanimous peace backed by meaningful political and social reconciliation, it turned its back. Sri Lanka's brother nations have waited patiently for passions to cool, and power to evolve, in the hope that her leaders might take a longer view of modern history.

Sadly, the substantial amendments to the constitution over the past few years are not promising signs of a government committed to extending security and a sense of equal belonging to all its people. Likewise, the damage wrought on the media and the judiciary, and armed attacks on oppositionists, show a disinterest in protecting dissent, so central to democratic discourse. So, wither Sri Lanka?

Nobody knows, but what seems certain is that Sri Lanka's government has spent valuable years narrowing its choices, when they might have been spent on real steps in the pursuit of lasting peace. Perhaps today's conference will devise new options that will expand opportunities for all of Sri Lanka's people, and open pathways for the dialogue and progress that to date have lacked meaningful substance.





NO FIRE ZONE

THE KILLING FIELD OF SRI LANKA
NOFIREZONE.ORG

Message from Callum Macrae: Director No Fire Zone

I am grateful to the Global Tamil Forum for giving me the opportunity to address your 3rd Anniversary Conference, as Director of the new feature documentary, 'No Fire Zone; The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka'.

As journalists and film-makers we are anxious to engage with as wide a range of organisations and individuals as possible. Indeed as many of you will be aware our small team was in India last week and were able to hold meetings with representatives of many political parties and NGOs in the hope of increasing awareness of the terrible events which reached their culmination in the first five months of 2009.

This is a process we hope to continue throughout this vital year for justice and accountability in Sri Lanka: An important period which begins this week with the UN Human Rights Council meeting and will continue through to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting scheduled to take place in Sri Lanka in November.

Our new film, excerpts from which will be shown today, contains further, important evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the final phases of Sri Lanka's armed conflict. The evidence of extra-judicial execution, torture and the widespread use of sexual violence is very important and is quite rightly making headlines. But I hope our film will also help bring home to people the terrible day to day suffering of the civilians trapped in the No Fire Zones.

Our job is to tell the truth and increase awareness of what happened. I hope that in doing so we help inform the debate about what needs to be done to ensure accountability and an end to impunity. Four years after the war the government is still responding to the ever mounting evidence of abuses by denying everything. With every such denial it makes it clearer that the only way to get to the truth is an independent, international inquiry into all the crimes that took place in the last months of the war.

Without truth, there can be no justice in Sri Lanka. And without justice there can be no peace. I hope our last two films were a part of that process of truth-telling. I hope our new one will help the process continue. This is not an academic process of historical accountability. The culture of impunity prevalent in Sri Lanka today - the enforced disappearances, the repression and Government sponsored Sinhalisation of Tamil areas, the impeachment of the Chief Justice - indicates clearly that whilst the war might be over, the suffering of Tamils is not and the repression of anyone seen as a critic of the government continues.

With best wishes

Callum Macrae

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Patrick Brown
Member of Parliament
Barrie

I send my warmest wishes to the Global Tamil Forum on the occasion of your 3rd Anniversary Conference. I regret that I am unable to be with you today however I hope that you will have very useful discussions.

I am shocked and saddened by the actions taken by the Rajapaksa Government, both during the armed conflict and since its conclusion. Promises made to the UN Secretary-General on accountability and reconciliation in May 2009 have been broken, and as such the prospects of a sustainable peace have been undermined.

It is time for the international community, through auspices such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth, to play a meaningful role in bringing a speedy resolution to the Tamil grievances in Sri Lanka. An important part of this would be the establishment of an independent, international investigation to address the allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the armed conflict.

Truth, justice and accountability will be an important component in fostering reconciliation and peace, and in challenging the authoritarianism of the current Sri Lankan Government.

Best Wishes,

Patrick Brown, MP
Barrie





African National Congress

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE
GLOBAL TAMIL FORUM - 27th February 2013

TOWARDS A VIABLE AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION IN SRI LANKA

Dear comrades,

Ladies and Gentlemen

We bring you greetings and best wishes from the African National Congress leadership, the entire membership and indeed the people of South Africa.

The ANC accepted the invitation to participate in this august international conference persuaded by our strong belief in the respect of human rights and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The Sri Lankan debacle is an example of the quest of a people to tirelessly fight for human rights, for a peaceful world as well as the opportunity to build and nurture democracy.

This past December, the ANC held its 53rd National Conference. Among other things the conference resolved to enhance global support for a political process which is characterised by integrity, fairness and empathy for the efforts Sri Lanka is engaged in to create lasting peace. Furthermore the ANC supports the fundamental approach of ensuring the creation of an environment conducive to fair and equitable participation of all credible representatives in genuine negotiations towards a lasting political solution in Sri Lanka, including the question of Tamil minority.

The flurry of activities that have emerged in addressing the Sri Lankan conflict, after the demise of the LTTE, is characterised by lack of clarity of common purpose and direction given the artificial commitment to reconciliation by the Government of Sri Lanka. The Government of Sri Lanka views the conflict as over but Tamils still view the situation in conflictual terms given what they experience on a daily basis as well as what they lost and not regained in the war especially in the northern and north eastern areas.

However the fragmentation and poor coordination identifiable within the key players amongst the Tamil organisations championing for change compromise the much desired unity. We would know because towards the end of apartheid, forces that had been supported by the regime were bent on reducing the conflict to black-on-black violence thereby exonerating the minority government. However, reason prevailed and the reactionary forces were exposed for what they really were.

Dithering of the international community in handling the Sri Lanka issue in a piece-meal and knee-jerk manner further compromises prospects of effectively resolving the conflict within record time unless political will amongst both the like-minded and warring parties is bolstered multi-fold. A glimmer of hope is seen in the process driven by the UNHRC although this process is fraught with risks of being derailed unless there is meaningful consensus on a common programme amongst key global players. Frankly prospects of successfully debating the Sri Lankan conflict at the UN Security Council appear remote for now.

For any genuine and meaningful engagement between the warring parties there has to be a levelling of playing fields in the real sense of it. At this stage the TNA is an extremely reluctant participant in the LLRC given what it views as subordinated status. The GTF and TGTE are regarded as pariahs by the Government of Sri Lanka. The risk is to fill this artificial "vacuum" with lame-duck organisations and leadership to engage with the Government of Sri Lanka.

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An accommodating and inclusive negotiation process once that stage is reached is vital. CODESA in South Africa taught us that confidence, in a peace building effort, can be built when even the smallest of the minorities are given the opportunity to articulate their views as well. Unity, cohesion and clarity of common vision amongst the like-minded with emphasis on the broadest form of consultation amongst the motive forces both within and outside Sri Lanka is an undoubted imperative that has to be addressed as well.

Recognition and accommodation of non-Tamils in the support networks especially from other religions and nationalities within Sri Lanka is just as fundamental. Day in day out there emerges Sinhalese who are patriotic and bold enough to openly express and even contribute to a genuine solution of the conflict. They too should be given space to reinforce the roadmap to better and prosperous Sri Lanka.

Preparedness for the resuming of negotiations is very important. How prepared are the motive forces for this eventuality? The extent to which there is preparation for such is crucial for those directly involved as well as the solidarity community. It is necessary to even prepare other minorities, women and the disabled as part of the plan for a lasting solution. This must not be an after-thought as it has been found in a number of struggles for freedom.

The role of the international bodies has to improve dramatically, be more genuine and assertive as it had been in other conflicts. The emphasis, amongst other things, is consistency in handling all conflicts globally including Sri Lanka.

There must be no interference and manipulation by entrenched global interests but rather creation of a conducive environment for genuine negotiations that will result in a lasting political solution should be a focus of strong campaigning. How wonderful it would if all of us in the solidarity community would hold hands towards creating a conducive environment for the Sri Lankans to resolve their conflict on their own void of interference and manipulation.

The role of the regional community especially the ASEAN has to be given the consideration it deserves. The ANC, as a matter of practice, always respects and takes cue from regional formations in any situation of political conflict.

The centrality of a united front for the self-determination of Tamils in Sri Lanka is almost non-negotiable. Nobody, no organisation - whether international, regional or otherwise - should temper or interfere with the centrality of widely recognised and publicly acclaimed organisations or leaders within the Tamils in this process.

The ANC aims to work towards achieving peace in the global sphere as well as forging and attaining relations with political organisations of like-mindedness to take a progressive agenda forward that would ensure that we move towards a better world, without hunger, disease and underdevelopment. The Sri Lanka we, in the ANC, wish for is the one without hunger, disease and underdevelopment of any minority irrespective of creed, religion, culture or colour.

This international faces a huge task providing leadership to address all the above challenges and the ANC wishes the GTF a resounding success in such a daunting undertaking.

AMANDLA!

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26 February 2013

THIRD ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE 2013 - LONDON





This statement was issued by Global Tamil Forum on 5 May 2012

Tribute to Comrade Minister Roy Padayachie

It is with unbearable shock and profound sadness that we learn of Comrade Minister Radhakrishna (Roy) Padayachie's passing away. He has been a champion of humanity and devoted his life to helping the poorest and most oppressed. His death is truly a great loss to his family, his people and those lives he has touched all over the world with his vision, dedication and compassion.

As President Zuma has said so eloquently, "It is sadly a great measure of his dedication and personality that he was to meet his destiny and fate in pursuance of a better Africa and a better world, a goal he dedicated his entire life for it to be realised and achieved".

Comrade Roy has been an ardent supporter of our own struggle for peace with justice and equality in Sri Lanka. He has pressed upon us his shared experiences and understanding of South Africa's struggle for freedom and the importance that truth, reconciliation and accountability have in building a better future.

We are truly grateful and honoured for the support Minister Padayachie has given to the Global Tamil Forum (GTF). It was a distinct honour for our organisation to be invited to participate in the African National Congress' centennial celebrations earlier this year.

We can only hope that his family will be able to console their grief knowing that Comrade Roy was not only a great man but a hardworking activist, selfless humanitarian, a freedom fighter and a defender of those less fortunate. As a valued friend of GTF, Tamils in Sri Lanka and Tamils all over world, he will be greatly missed.

As president of GTF and also as a personal friend, I pray for this gracious soul to rest in eternal peace.

Rev. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel
President
Global Tamil Forum



