

Celebration of Neelan



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Selected Tributes

**International Leaders
and**

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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR ETHNIC STUDIES

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International Leaders and Representatives

...Dr. Tiruchelvam had won the affection and respect of not only the Tamil-speaking peoples but also all the communities in our country. He was a distinguished academic who had earned the plaudits of a broad spectrum of the international community.

Knowing full well the threats and dangers to his life, he carried on an untiring and inestimable effort through many years to find solutions to the ethnic crisis that we continue to face. Dr.Tiruchelvam has been tragically lost to our country and society at a decisive period in our political life, when his services would be most needed. *Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka*

I was deeply shocked to hear of the death, at the hands of an assassin, of Dr.Neelan Tiruchelvam. The goal which is sought to be achieved by thus assassinating intelligent citizens, politicians, academics and ordinary people, is difficult to perceive... *Sirimavo R.D.Bandaranaike, Prime Minister*

... a powerful voice for reconciliation in Sri Lanka has been silenced. [We] hope that this tragedy will spur efforts to find an end to the fighting and to build a lasting peace in Sri Lanka *U.S. President William Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton*

...The Secretary-General condemns this act of terrorism in the strongest terms. There could be no better tribute to Dr.Tiruchelvam's memory than to bring an end to the senseless violence in that long-suffering country. *Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations*

...the murder of Dr.Tiruchelvam is a direct attack on efforts to bring about reconciliation and build a culture of peace and respect for fundamental rights in [Sri Lanka]... The greatest homage we can pay Mr.Tiruchelvam is to continue his work to build a strong civil society where all the people of Sri Lanka can live in peace and enjoy all their human rights. *Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

...[I] strongly condemn the political murder of this highly respected, democratically elected member of parliament...it is all the more regrettable in view of the dedicated work in which Dr.Tiruchelvam had been engaged to achieve a political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict... *Alexander Downer, Australian Foreign Minister*

....this crime has silenced the voice of a man who was committed to the path of peace, but it must not silence those in Sri Lanka who have the courage to follow Dr.Tiruchelvam's lead...*Lloyd Axworthy, Canadian Foreign Minister*

...This was an act of wanton terrorism... he had dedicated his life to finding peaceful, constitutional and democratic solutions to difficult issues. *Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka*

...Dr.Tiruchelvam paid the supreme price for the values he defended...*Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Sri Lanka*

....[He] was a man of outstanding human qualities and his talent, academic achievements and deep knowledge of constitutional law are profoundly valued. *Embassy of Sweden in Sri Lanka*

...we strongly condemn this terrorist act which can only make it difficult to find a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict in this country. *The European Commission in Sri Lanka*

...[Dr. Tiruchelvam was] a great promoter and defender of human rights. *Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection on Minorities (PDPM)*

...His constant endeavour to bring peace to Sri Lanka and promote the cause of the vulnerable and oppressed will long be remembered. *Francois Fouinat, United Nations, High Commissioner for Refugees*

...Dr. Tiruchelvam was an outspoken human rights activist and a well known parliamentarian...[and] head of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Sri Lanka. This assassination constitutes a setback to the entire peace process. *International Commission of Jurists*

Neelan, in his life time, was a rarity - a politician of principle, honour and integrity. His was also one of the very few voices of moderation and reasonableness in the world of Sri Lankan politics. His death is a grievous blow to the country. *R.C.A. Vandergert, Ambassador, Embassy of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Beijing*

How sad, and what a loss not only for Sri Lanka but for the international community...[Neelan's] warm, unassuming personality was a great draw to many brilliant young people who opted to work with him in Sri Lanka instead of pursuing lucrative careers in the USA or UK...Neelan's death is a great blow to all those in South Asia who care about social, political and economic justice, for human rights, and for constitutional government respecting human rights, based on principles of pluralism, respect for rights of minorities, and tolerance. ***Rekha Thapa, UNDP***

Through years of co-operation we have experienced Neelan's untiring and valuable work on human rights and reconciliation both in Sri Lanka and on the international level. We see it as our common duty to follow up and support his work towards an end to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. ***Leiv Lunde, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway***

...USIS' association with ICES dates back to its beginnings as Dr.Tiruchelvam's brainchild. Since then, USIS has been in regular contact with the ICES and Dr.Tiruchelvam in areas of common concern, especially constitutional reform and conflict resolution. ***Peter R. Claussen, Director & Public Affairs Officer, United States Information Service, Colombo***

Dr. Tiruchelvam had many friends and colleagues in the United States. He freely shared his knowledge and conviction of the possibility for a peaceful resolution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.. . So, we in the United States also share the terrible sense of loss of his family and country... ***Philip T. Decker, U.S. State Department***

...I was fortunate to meet him several times during my visits to Colombo. Each time after talking to him, I felt Sri Lanka with people like Neelan, could find a way to resolve its ethnic difficulties peacefully... Neelan had a long association with the United States, as a Fulbright student, law student and teacher. We too are diminished by his death... *Karl F. Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs in the U.S. State Department*

...It is indeed a perverse paradox that a life of valour should be cut short by a craven act of cowardice. It is also an obscene irony that such an act of savage violence be directed against Neelan Tiruchelam - a peace loving, non violent, gentle man, who never raised a hand in anger and indeed never even raised his voice in anger. As Neelan's son Mithran said after the tragic event, "I don't think he would be angry about what has happened. He would be sad"....Thank you for demonstrating that "in the fell clutch of circumstance" one need neither "wince nor cry aloud" and for proving, beyond any doubt that "under the bludgeonings of chance", one can indeed keep one's head "bloodied but unbowed". .. Neelan, you have indeed made your life sublime and the footprints you have left on the sands of time, are much more than footprints. They are a trail, blazed proudly: with courage, conviction, commitment, compassion and above all with humanness. It is a trail we can only humbly hope to follow.... *Clarence J. Dias, New York (Tribute presented at the meeting to commemorate the life and work of Neelan Tiruchelvam, convened by Barce Waly Ndiaye, Director, New York Office of the UN High Commissioner)*

Civil Society

...We are determined that Neelan, his work for peace and your work for human rights will not be forgotten or diminished...*Alan Phillips, Director, Minority Rights Group, London*

...Throughout his life he impressed me with his quiet dedication to tolerance, to the scientific search for rational solutions to problems and to his own personal vision of what a multi-ethnic Sri Lanka would look like...*Kevin P Clements, Secretary General, International Alert, London*

....His gentle, unassuming brilliance and courage will continue to be an inspiration to Oxfam in our efforts to contribute in some small way to Dr.Tiruchelvam's vision of a just and sustainable peace...*Simon Haris, Acting Country Representative, OXFAM, Great Britain*

...As noted by the National Peace Council, Dr.Tiruchelvam was "unique in combining political, academic and civil society activism with humanism and distinction." Like the deaths of other human rights champions caught in the crossfire as they strive to build a world that transcends narrow political and ethnic rivalries, Dr.Tiruchelvam's sudden death is a tragic reminder of the challenges that remain before us...*Geeta Rao Gupta, President, International Centre for Research on Women*

...It seems that the bomb was not only targeted against Neelan, but against peace. We have lost in Neelan a fine intellect, a jurist, a politician, and a leader...and a great friend

and a comrade, who was a source of great inspiration and support... *M. Amir-Ul Islam, Vice Chairman, Bangladesh Bar Council*

...He was an outstanding scholar and a valiant campaigner for democracy, justice and human rights. Not only Sri Lanka but all of South Asia and Asia as a whole was proud of him and will remain so. At the moment we can only condemn the dastardly manner in which Dr. Neelan has been snatched from our midst....
I. A. Rehman, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

...He was a towering intellectual unmatched for his humility and modesty who fought extremely courageously and actively until his last breath to create a social and political space in Sri Lanka where peoples of varying identities could live in democracy, peace and harmony. He fought through the power of his pen and scholarship; through the strength of his political sagacity, maturity and acumen; through his firm commitment to constitutionalism; and in the end, through his life. He was a great institution builder, a powerful social engineer and a true human being.

Everyone who met him even for a moment or knew him through his work became his friend and admirer. The only exceptions, as his killing has proven, are enemies of humanity and morality. No words of condemnation can match this cowardly act of killing...*Iftekhar Zaman, Executive Director, Bangladesh Freedom Foundation*

...Dr. Tiruchelvam, in his intellectual political and activist life, gave expression to a range of key values and ideals that are essential for the re-building of Sri Lankan society torn asunder by a multiplicity of crises of which the ethnic conflict is the most intractable manifestation. He was uncompromising in his commitment to ethnic reconciliation, inter-ethnic peace,

pluralist democracy, human rights, social justice and decency in public affairs. He was a mind of considerable intellectual energy and perseverance which shone under conditions of darkness and barbarism. It is no exaggeration to say that the terms of Sri Lanka's contemporary discourse of democratic political reform were largely germinated in his creative mind and his tireless interaction with all those who shared with him the ideals of a decent, peaceful world...
Jayadeva Uyangoda, Kumari Jayawardena, Social Scientists' Association, Colombo

Among Neelan Tiruchelvam's rare characteristics was his extraordinary generosity of mind and spirit. Where others would be indignant, Neelan would be sad. Where another would react with anger, Neelan's response would be pain. Deeply sensitive, and never one to hold forth about himself and his feelings, his pain was all the more acute for being borne in private... It would take a whole book to attempt to do justice to Neelan's contribution to the cause of human rights. This was exceptional as regards its quality, its quantity and its range... Neelan gave voice to his anguish at what was his main preoccupation, the terrible consequences of war on ordinary people, and the need "to bring an end to the human suffering, the displacement, the destruction and the senseless loss of lives both of combatants and of civilians". He went on to say:

"We cannot glorify death, whether in the battlefield or otherwise, we on the other hand, must celebrate life and are fiercely committed to protecting and securing the sanctity of life, which is the most fundamental value without which all other rights and freedoms become meaningless." ...*Suriya Wickremasinghe, Secretary, Civil Rights Movement, Colombo*

...I hope that you can share with Neelan's family and other friends -- and perhaps adversaries -- that Neelan was instrumental in informing many American scholars, advocates of human rights and conflict resolution, and policy reformers, about the challenges and promise of Sri Lanka... Neelan's determination to understand the imperatives of ethnic pluralism and his delicate crafting of practical steps to de-escalate conflict have inspired countless students, analysts, and practitioners across not only this country, but the globe.

This violent reaction to seekers of moderation is, alas, not unprecedented. We know he was acutely aware of the risks. But I write to assure you that your collective efforts are recognized and respected. And for those of us who have the luxury to advocate without threat to our lives, we will continue to do so. And we will keep Neelan in mind. Always. *Melanie Beth Oliviero, MacArthur Foundation*

...We are shocked and dismayed at the terrible news of Neelan's death. Neelan was a centre-piece in the CODESRIA-ICES link and in the two years or so of workshops, meetings and regular ICES-CODESRIA correspondence, we had come to know, like and appreciate the personal commitment and professionalism with which he handled matters. His untimely death has robbed us of a dear colleague and friend, and robbed the international community of a great scholar and an extremely precious advocate for justice. *Ebrima Sall, Program Officer, CODESRIA*

...Dr.Tiruchelvam's many attributes included expertise in constitutional law, experience in teaching at Harvard University, and acting as Director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies. His significant contributions

towards humanity and a peaceful resolution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict will truly be missed...*Congressman Frank Pallone, Chairman of the Congressional Caucus of Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan Americans*

...The killing of Neelan Tiruchelvam is yet another disturbing installment in the long and unhappy history of the conflict in Sri Lanka. That conflict has left tens of thousands dead, hundreds of thousands affected by the loss of a loved one, and millions uprooted from their homes or forced to live in the midst of danger. The stubbornness and intransigence of the political leadership on both sides threaten to continue inflicting this misery on ordinary Sri Lankans for the foreseeable future...*Hiram A. Ruiz, U.S. Committee for Refugees*

...He played the role of a bridge-builder between the two communities and won the respect of the decent and right-minded of both groups. He used his diplomacy, tact and rare erudition with total commitment to see his vision of a people living united in peace and brotherhood realized some day. *Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka*

...Neelan was a sincere advocate of human rights believing firmly in their universality and indivisibility. He worked at a national, regional and international level to protect and project human democratic rights. In his capacity as a representative of the people. Neelan used parliament as a special forum many a time to raise issues of human rights violations...**INFORM**

... He was deeply committed to establishing ethnic peace and worked resolutely for the resolution of the ethnic conflict. His assassination clearly demonstrates the forces rearing its head to resist and block all avenues available for consensus

resolution to the national question... Neelan has worked with selfless dedication to realise the much cherished peace in the island. He has given us the message of hope to work for peace without giving in to any form of extremism. ***Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE)***

...Dr. Tiruchelvam had worked for several decades to find ways to protect and promote human rights more effectively. He had also contributed to enriching international debates on human rights by bringing the Sri Lankan situation to focus... ***Asian Human Rights Commission***

... Neelan Tiruchelvam sacrificed his life in the cause of achieving ethnic harmony in a peaceful and united Sri Lanka. The best way to pay tribute to him is for civil society to prevail on the members of the parliament to reach a consensus and adopt the constitutional amendment that includes the devolution proposals suitably modified to provide the basis for a peaceful resolution of the conflict... ***The National Alliance for Peace***

International Press

...Neelan Tiruchelvam was a tireless activist in the sphere of human rights and on behalf of ethnic minorities, not least in his native Sri Lanka... Highly regarded around the world both as a legal scholar and as an advocate for a peaceful resolution to inter-ethnic strife, in his native country Tiruchelvam represented the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) as a "national list" Member of Parliament. He was dedicated to peaceful change and to seeking a solution to his country's ethnic conflict that would accommodate both communities, and he was much involved at the time of his death with the Sri Lankan Government on plans to introduce a significant measure of constitutional reform and devolution... He soon built an international reputation both as a scholar and as a campaigner for social justice. As a result he was invited to join missions of experts and observers sent in the 1980s and 1990s to Pakistan, Chile, Kazakhstan, Ethiopia, South Africa and Nigeria. He performed similar work in Sri Lanka as a member of the Presidential Law Commission and the Presidential Commission on Democratic Decentralisation and Devolution, and held a number of other legal and constitutional appointments...Slight and unassuming in appearances, with a quiet, thoughtful manner, Tiruchelvam had sharp and firm convictions. His commitment to reconciliation and to radical but peaceful change set him at odds with those whose positions were more entrenched. *The Times*, U. K. August 2, 1999

...Soft in voice gentle in manner, Neelan never seemed to fit the vicious game of modern Sri Lankan politics. He was a gentleman, courteous and well-read... If Sri Lanka

had a voice of reason, Neelan was it...The last time I saw Neelan was in January of last year...I had just interviewed Sri Lanka's foreign minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, who could not contain his delight with Canada's decision to deport a key Tamil Tiger fundraiser, Manickavasagam Suresh...I thought Neelan's opinion would be valuable, as a Tamil lawyer, human-rights activist and adviser to the President. "Torture is routinely practised in detention and especially in antiterrorist cases", he said, measuring his words carefully before adding: "He'll be interrogated aggressively." A day after Neelan's comments appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, Mr.Suresh's extradition was over-turned on appeal. Neelan knew his words would help a key player in the Tamil Tiger machinery. He knew someone bent on destroying his dream of a federal Sri Lanka would, at least for a time, remain safe in Canada. In private, Neelan despised the Tamil Tigers, the group that had killed so many of his friends...Yet here he was speaking up for Mr.Suresh, because the prisoner's basic rights were more important than Neelan's own political beliefs or his contempt for the Tigers. *The Globe and Mail, July 30, 1999*

...A moderate parliamentarian, Tiruchelvam had played a major role in trying to mediate the conflict between ethnic Tamils and Sinhalese...This fall, Tiruchelvam was scheduled to teach a seminar and a course titled "Ethnicity, Constitutionalism, and Human Rights" at Harvard, where he received his postgraduate degrees in 1970 and in 1973. He taught previously at the school, said Robert C.Clark, dean of the law school. "The law school will miss a truly extraordinary teacher and alumnus," Clark said. "The world will miss a truly great human being." *James Bandler, Boston Globe, July 30, 1999*

...Tiruchelvam was a human rights lawyer and the director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo. He was particularly concerned with the reform of the constitution to give more autonomy to the north and east, which the Government hopes could help end the 16-year-old conflict. *Susannah Price, The South China Morning Post, July 31, 1999*

...Tiruchelvam was a splendid example of the scholar-activist, he was Sri Lanka's best-known fighter for human rights, who dedicated his life to ending the ethnic crisis that had taken a particularly vicious turn 16 years ago. No one did more than him to highlight the need for ethnic healing on the international plane.

Tiruchelvam played many unique roles. A Tamil, he formed a vital bridge between the ethnic minorities and the Sinhala majority. A constitutional lawyer, he was architect of the boldest package of political devolution and decentralisation South Asia has ever seen. An intellectual, he personified the highest level of refinement to be found among engaged scholars in South Asia. A political strategist, he showed a remarkable ability to combine theory with activist practice... *Praful Bidwai, Frontline, August 27, 1999*

...With the death of Tiruchelvam, the world has lost a man who dreamed impossible dreams and made them a reality. Sri Lanka has lost a democrat and a peace-maker; the Tamil people have lost a man who deeply cared for their security and their aspirations; his colleagues have lost their inspiration and his commitment to excellence; his friends have lost his generosity and nurturing ways and his family has lost a loyal and caring husband and father. We are all poorer without him. As a columnist recently wrote: "We always kill the best." But in

responding to his killing, we must heed the views of his son Mithran. When a reporter of The New York Times asked him what his father would have felt about the assassination, Mithran replied that his father would not have been angry, he would have only been sad. **Radhika Coomaraswamy, Frontline, August 27, 1999**

"Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in Mankind," wrote the metaphysical poet John Donne. The ongoing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka continues to extract a heavy human toll. In my personal capacity as a Sri Lankan Tamil and in my professional capacity as a journalist writing on the ethnic strife, I have lost count of the number of people related or known to me who have encountered violent death. But no man's death as a result of the war in northern Sri Lanka has diminished me as that of Neelan Tiruchelvam on July 29.

Neelakandan Tiruchelvam, well-known as Neelan or Dr. Neelan, strove ceaselessly to achieve a peaceful solution to the Tamil issue. He dedicated himself to that cause with a sense of purpose, although he could have easily pursued a lucrative academic or professional career as a lawyer in Sri Lanka or abroad. He chose to remain in Colombo through very trying circumstances and pursue his vision of a lasting political settlement where all communities, including that of his own, the Sri Lankan Tamils coexisted with justice, dignity and peace.

In the context, his death is an irreparable loss to the country in particular and humanity in general...**D.B.S. Jeyaraj, Frontline, August 27, 1999**

...He maintained a live dialogue with the democratic forces of all ethnic communities and the democratic community abroad, because he was not a nationalist in the sense of Tamil nationalism with which we are so familiar.

He created and nurtured the International Centre for Ethnic Studies and the Law and Society Trust primarily to set in motion an intellectual dialogue so that the Sri Lankan intelligentsia, through research, reflection and debate, would re-define their political debate. He actively took part in the exercises of drafting constitutions and laws, because he believed that political structures and institutions were necessary to facilitate the social and political practices of democracy and pluralism ensuring diversity as a fundamental reality in the modern nation-state.

...In life as in death, Neelan has been described as a "moderate Tamil politician". Knowing Neelan for a few years, I find this expression and most insulting to the foremost democratic political thinker who the Sri Lankan Tamil society has ever produced. In a way, it is a pity that he had neither the time nor leisure to write a book on political and constitutional theory in the way Roberto Unger, his colleague at Harvard did. But Neelan, the busy lawyer and active politician, knew his Roberto Unger, Benedict Anderson, John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Norberto Bobbio, Avishai Margalit and to mention an old name, Hannah Arendt well. He also knew his Marx and Foucault. That is precisely why he was not a nationalist, but a citizen of the world. And Sri Lanka's extreme nationalism, whether Sinhalese or Tamil, can hardly tolerate a citizen of the world...*Jayadeva Uyangoda, The Hindu, August 2, 1999*

...Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam was a moderate a voice of reason speaking on behalf of the Tamils in the north. Possibly, the last person a body that purports to be interested in the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils would want to get out of the way. More a political visionary than a politician, Tiruchelvam was largely responsible for the devolution package intended to give the Tamils a share in

the State. It helped the Chandrika Kumaratunga government consolidate the image of being the first non-chauvinist Sinhala authority... *The Indian Express*, July 31, 1999

...If anything had so dramatically altered the political landscape of Sri Lanka and had illuminated at long last possibilities of a democratic and healthy resolution of the ethnic crisis, it was the comprehensive set of constitutional and political reforms, called the "devolution package", proposed by the Government of Ms.Chandrika Kumaratunga, which for the first time offered a new paradigm of power sharing between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority. That package which envisaged the devolution of significant power to political and institutional structures in the different provinces, including the troubled north-east, reflected, among other things, significantly the labours of Dr.Tiruchelvam. *The Hindu*, Editorial, July 30, 1999

...Had he been allowed to live, he would have probably continued his quiet persuasion of his friends in the Sri Lankan Government, notably the Law Minister, Mr.G.L.Peiris, and the President, Ms.Chandrika Kumaratunga, to frame a constitution as enlightened as possible to provide for the exercise of democratic political rights by all ethnic communities in Sri Lanka. It is easy to figure out why the LTTE targeted him. His work had the potential to take the bitterness out of the ethnic divide and to heal history's wounds. By enlarging the debate beyond the issue of Sinhala versus Tamil to a question of how to satisfactorily address the rights and aspirations of all ethnic groups in the country, Neelan was pointing the debate towards a direction that would have invested Sri Lanka's political future with a good deal of visionary idealism. *Malini Parthasarathy, The Hindu*, July 30, 1999

...Above all, an intellectual who could win his audience with clear logic. Dr.Tiruchelvam authored books on justice, ethics and the judiciary to name a few. As part of international missions, he assisted in the evaluation of the Constitution of Kazhakstan and participated in an early review of the constitution-making process in Ethiopia. His intellectual pursuit was quenched in partial measure through the various seminars he organised at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) and the Law and Society Trust (LST) in Colombo and by active participation in seminars abroad...
The Hindu, July 31, 1999

Besides being a Tamil and Sri Lankan, Neelan was also a South Asian, with a keen interest in developments across the subcontinent. He wanted other Sri Lankans to get rid of their insularity and look outward; for this he would regularly organise public lectures by scholars from abroad, especially India and Pakistan, on issues of current interest in the subcontinent.

....All researchers on Sri Lanka, anywhere in the world, have had contact with him in one way or another and benefitted immensely from the interaction. Neelan was a compulsory stop-over for every foreign journalist with whom he always found the time to share his insight as well as his family's hospitality. *Nirupama Subramaniam, Indian Express, July 31, 1999*

... Dr. Tiruchelvam, favoured a peaceful resolution that would provide Tamils a share of power and autonomy within a united Sri Lanka, an idea that the guerrillas rejected. As a member of Parliament and a Harvard educated legal scholar, he had helped draft a package of constitutional changes...Dr. Tiruchelvam who led the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo, was often consulted by visiting

journalists, diplomats and scholars.... *Celia W. Dugger, New York Times, July 30, 1999*

...Dr. Tiruchelvam's death in a bombing a few streets from his home robs his nation of one of the few moderate politicians with the will and the ability to help negotiate a just peace for his nation. ... As an international lawyer, Dr. Tiruchelvam was a man dedicated to peaceful change, not just in Sri Lanka but in many communities where the rights and interests of minority groups have been marginalised by those in the majority. *Melbourne AGE, August 3, 1999*

Sri Lanka Press

... Neelan believed in negotiations and devolution as a solution to the protracted conflict and relentlessly worked towards that end only to pay for it with his life...[He was] a brilliant scholar and sane politician who rose above petty communal politics and strove to make a difference in Tamil politics... *The Island, July 30, 1999 (Editorial)*

...At the time of his death Neelan Tiruchelvam was an authority on South Asian affairs, and was a regular speaker at various international fora on the sub-continent. The last forum I met him was the South Asian Editors Conference held in New Delhi this year...He flew into New Delhi two hours before he was due to speak and had to fly back immediately afterwards to participate at another seminar. Such was his demand... *Gamini Weerakoon, Editor, The Island - July 30, 1999*

... In Dr. Tiruchelvam, Sri Lanka had one of its finest minds in contemporary times. Besides his work as a moderate Tamil politician, a first rate constitutional lawyer and academician, Dr. Tiruchelvam gave ample proof of his dedication to the cause of ethnic peace through institutions such as the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, which he helped establish. Let the peace-makers of Sri Lanka be inspired by his illustrious life. May they continue spiritedly from where he left off. *Daily News, July 30, 1999 (Editorial)*

... The next two months will be historically crucial for Sri Lanka and the loss of a man of Neelan Tiruchelvam's stature at this vital stage is indeed a terrible blow. But to

react negatively and act in a manner that retards the peace process would be a further blow to the memory of Dr. Tiruchelvam and to the highest national interest of our country... *Daily Mirror, July 30, 1999 (Editorial)*

... It was Dr. Tiruchelvam who, more than any other contemporary Tamil politician, has contributed to the creation of a political framework for the resolution to this island community's most serious crisis since 1815, when the British colonial invaders extended their regime of domination and plunder over the whole of this island... Dr. Tiruchelvam's enthusiastic involvement in numerous organisations were a channel for his genuine personal concern for people at an individual level and there are many who have enjoyed his guidance, care and patronage... *The Observer, July 30, 1999 (Editorial)*

... In a key note address at a seminar for South Asian Editors in New Delhi in April, Dr. Tiruchelvam said: "The real challenge is to enable us to construct a future which acknowledges the diversity of the people of the world and provides for a plurality of belonging to the world, the nation and the community". This was Neelan Tiruchelvam's vision and it should not be forgotten... *The Weekend Express, August 7 -8, 1999 (Editorial)*

... As chairman of the Minority Rights Group that works in association with the United Nations, he worked for the welfare of ethnic and religious minorities worldwide . He always stood for inter-ethnic harmony, reconciliation, peace and pluralist democracy, the ideals for which he actively dedicated his whole life... Dr. Tiruchelvam has paid the highest price for peace. His martyrdom should inspire us in the fight for peace, just as the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin

Luther King and many others inspired their people... *Sunday Observer, August 1, 1999 (Editorial)*

Each gruesome murder has for a little time at least the effect of focusing attention on the conflict from which it springs and on the ways in which it should and could be resolved. The slaying of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam is no exception. Neelan devoted so much of his energy to a political settlement of the conflict incorporating constitutional guarantees to the minorities. His killing especially underscores the importance of understanding the conflict and the urgent need for its resolution... *Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, The Sunday Leader, August 8, 1999*

... Tiruchelvam was tragically lost to the country and society at a decisive period of our political life when his services would be most needed. He had perhaps a unique ability to interact harmoniously with the key players of all political groups on both the government and opposition sides and use his sincerity of purpose no less than the sharpness of his mind and his many other talents to narrow differences and work towards acceptable compromises... *Sunday Island, August 1, 1999 (Editorial)*

...Neelan Tiruchelvam belonged perhaps to the last generation of that intelligentsia which grew up amidst the best trappings of the liberal culture of the west. As a child and a young man he belonged to a time when education encouraged the deepest immersion possible in the best of the literature and culture which come to us as part of the British Colonial yoke, but remained to become a liberating influence, on the best talents of the day including the Marxist intelligentsia. ... He was always ready, formidable intellectual though he was, to listen to the other man's point of view. His academic accolades are too numerous and well-known to catalogue

here. ... Whatever might be the reason the killing of Neelan Tiruchelvam is perhaps the most dismal portent of recent times that our society is deeply sick to the core... **Ajith Samaranayake, Daily News, July 31, 1999**

Dr. Tiruchelvam was unique in combining political, academic and civil society activism with humanism and distinction. He strengthened the moderate mainstream of political life. He was a dynamic personality who tried to forge a mainstream political consensus regarding fundamental reform of the Sri Lankan polity. But above all, he was a very fine human being who intended no harm to others and embodied the higher human qualities... **Jehan Perera, Daily News, August 5, 1999**

... He was certainly among the very best and the very brightest of his generation, and probably he was the nicest as well... His persistence in Sri Lankan politics, when he could have so easily moved to a lucrative and prestigious career here or abroad, had to mean a preparedness for self-sacrifice... Persistence with the peace process certainly seems to be the best way of honouring Neelan's memory... **Izeth Hussain. The Weekend Express, August 7-8, 1999**

...It was in mid 1998 that a workshop on the Northern Ireland Peace Accord was held in a Colombo suburb under the aegis of the ICES, and Neelan was present with his undimmed personal radiance and affability to see it through. On speaking to him in between sessions at this workshop, I found that he cherished within him an abundance of hope that the Government-initiated peace process could be proceeded with... **Lynn Ockersz, Daily News, July 31, 1999**

... Neelan Tiruchelvam was a friend. He was an intellectual, a lawyer, a tireless campaigner for justice, a

cricket fan. A very decent man. Most of all, perhaps he was a Tamil of principle. And it is the latter that I want to remember. That every inhabitant of this godforsaken country should be proud that we have had people like him. And I am honoured to have known him... *Quadri Ismail, The Sunday Leader, August 1, 1999*

... The untimely demise of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam leaves an unfillable gap in the social, political and intellectual life of this world. Dr Neelan will be all the more missed because of his immense dynamism and his outstanding scholarship. Within a short space of time, Neelan gathered a wealth of experience, all of which he put to good use so that mankind was the richer for his contribution. His murder proves that a person can be physically removed but you cannot hope to destroy his ideas or his thinking... *A. J. Wilson, Sunday Island, August 8, 1999*

... His demise is a stunning blow to the peace constituency as well as to the secular, democratic, forces in Sri Lanka committed to restoring peace with equality and justice in the face of jingoism, intolerance and the cult of violence... *Kethesh Loganathan, The Sunday Times, August 15, 1999*

Other Tributes

...We have lost a friend and colleague, and I think Sri Lanka and all civilized humanity have lost a champion for peace, tolerance and understanding. Human beings such as Neelan are, alas! a rare breed in our times, but precisely because of this, they are indispensable in the world, and also because of this they are hated by the perennial enemies of tolerance and mutual understanding. **Rodolfo Stavenhagen**

Neelan was unique -- as a thinker, writer, lawyer, activist and politician. With malice towards none and a dedicated kindness towards everyone he met, for some of us he will always remain one of the outstanding persons of this generation. It is difficult to imagine a world without him. **Rajeev Dhavan**

...I know few people who so uniquely combined so many qualities which are all too rare in most of us: brilliance with gentleness; firm convictions with civility and tolerance; scholarship with deeds; courage with a blessed meekness; sacrifice with compassion -- these and many more.

He enriched lives all over the world, and he will inspire and help to shape the careers of generations to come because so many of his friends, in so many places, will preserve and celebrate his life as a legacy of infinite value. **James C.N.Paul**

We are shocked and deeply saddened at the news of the murder of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam. We hope and pray that the senseless violence that has plagued Sri Lanka and has claimed the lives of so many, including those like Neelan

who had dared to stand up for justice and human rights for all, will end. South Asia has lost one of its most committed and eminent spokespersons on human rights. *Shireen Huq*

...Whenever a sane history of this cursed region of ours is ever written, I know that Neelan will be the person who will be remembered as a figure who will tower above all for his vision and his courage...I pray for Neelan's legacy to be passed on to hundreds of young people and for some way of conveying to him how much we all loved him. *Veena Das*

Neelan was one of the finest human beings I have known in the international human rights movement. He was an intelligent, articulate advocate of justice who had few parallels. It was not just his brilliance. Neelan spoke from the heart. He exuded warmth and compassion. *Chandra Muzaffar*

I never agreed with Neelan Tiruchelvam all that very much. When I first met him in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he was visiting Harvard and I was an undergraduate at MIT. I, it was rumored in the circles my mother moved in, had fallen in among bad friends, and had turned terrorist...If I dissented, from a position he took, a direction he wanted to pursue, a project he wanted to start - and I would dissent with the passion of youth, often scornfully, or even angrily - Neelan would listen and he would hear me. And from that day in Cambridge, through many years in Colombo, until our last dinner together in the Sengor Airport in Dakar, Senegal, Neelan, simply, enabled the consolidation of my position, whatever it was. *Pradeep Jeganathan*

For all of us, Neelan stood out as a truly multi-dimensional human being -- not only an indefatigable fighter

for a pluralistic solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis and a compassionate advocate for human rights, but also a good and kind man who reached out to so many others and touched their lives.

Among the many other things we remember about Neelan is the truly inspiring commencement address that he delivered at Mithran's and James's graduation at OCS. At the end of this speech, Neelan exhorted all OCS graduates to "ensure that the values of tolerance, pluralism and accommodation will ultimately triumph against the forces of bigotry and of domination", and to "build the bridges of understanding which are necessary to fashion a world which is united by people who are committed to a core of human values". We can think of no person who more fully lived his life in accordance with these principles than Neelan himself.

Roberto and Julie Lenton

...Along with his many friends from around the world, I have long admired Neelan for his commitment to ethnic peace and harmony in Sri Lanka, for his determined opposition to violence and intransigence, and for his courageous stands for moderation and reconciliation. **Marion V. Creekmore, Jr.**

...Neelan's assassination has affected me, and many other fellow-scholars, in a much deeper way, because he represented all the values we live and work for: fairness, objectivity, inquiry, pursuit of the common good. **Dennis McGilvray**

...He was among the nicest people I know, and certainly one of the most able, committed and, perhaps above all, totally trustworthy. **Mick Moore**

...It is only now that I understand the pace at which Neelan lived and the urgency with which he undertook

everything he did. Suddenly, tragically, it makes sense... We used to giggle and tease Neelan about his grand ideas. But implicit in all those ideas was the belief that we could do anything. He never doubted our capacity or our ability. He took it for granted that anything was within the realm of our possibility. It is only now that we will be tested.

Lisa Kois

...By bringing to our lives and work, the integrity, commitment and sense of purpose that he did to his, we can begin to pay tribute to him in the manner he deserves.

Swarna Rajagopalan

...Neelan laid down his life for peace and justice which has eluded us for so long and without which Sri Lanka can never go forward. His sad and untimely passing away in the cause of peace and harmony should embolden all of us who desire peace to redouble our own efforts to bring this lasting peace to our land which I feel is an eminently attainable goal well within our reach if all sections of our political leadership sincerely and wholeheartedly work for it with unwavering devotion and unflinching zeal as Neelan always did.

Ronnie de Mel

...Neelan was a very rare person of passions and conviction completely selfless about his own person.

David Swope

...[H]is name is not only a name for me. I was personally affected very much on knowing the force of his death. I felt like something was snatched from me. We need to invoke strength from inside to face such cruel happenings.

C. Raj Kumar

...I remember Neelan not just as a scholar, a patriotic son of Sri Lanka and a friend, but also as a kind, gentle and warm human being. The best tribute to Neelan is for us to continue his inspiring work, each person in his or her own way... *H. L. Seneviratne*

...Despite the appalling tenor and violence of our contemporary political life, we thought a tireless and indomitable person who strained every nerve and sinew of his intelligence and perception to contrive a feasible solution to our crisis would be spared to continue his work. It was not to be, and we trust that the torch he lit and carried fearlessly in defence of humanity, justice and fundamental rights, will not go out. *Ian Goonetilleke*

...That it happened as it did, was both horrid and characteristic -- of victim and perpetrator: the victim as imperturbably dedicated to his chosen goal of non-violent change and reasonable approaches to justice. The perpetrator represented those who see in justice and decency the adversary to their hunger for power, and their contempt for tolerance is limitless. *Robert B. Goldman*

....Sri Lanka has lost the voice of sanity and moderation; and India a dear friend. Personally I will miss him immensely because I benefited a lot from his friendship. *V. Suryanarayan*

I would like to think that I would have said a lot of things to Dr.Tiruchelvam when I left LST. I wish I could have said:

thank you for taking me in -- just another kid who wanted to be near you

thank you for "So, what do you think?" each time I completed one of your reading assignments

thank you for making me nervous, like a teacher, and, like a teacher, for reminding me that everyone is allowed to have an opinion

thank you for acting like my interpretations and views meant something to you and for leading me to believe that they did

thank you for your endless supply of "what now?" instead of "why this?"

thank you for never being too busy to hear my question and give me an answer

thank you for the way you treated you employees and co-workers with dignity, for respecting human rights on a daily basis

I don't think I'll ever stop working for him -- for the things he selflessly sought and, more importantly, in the way he struggled to achieve them. **Gowri Koneswaran**

Neelan was a person of extraordinary talent, great intellectual refinement and unwavering political commitment for democracy, pluralism, secularism, justice and humanism. His was a voice of reason which compelled attention and inspired thousands of scholars, thinkers, activists and political leaders not just in Sri Lanka but all over South Asia.

Neelan was eliminated by forces of extreme intolerance because they cannot co-exist with democracy, reason and human values. His death only underscores the importance of fighting such forces in our entire region and of reaffirming our commitment to what Neelan stood for. **Romila Thapar, Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Praful Bidwai, Veena Das, Ambrose Pinto, Abha Bhैया, Miloon Kothari, Sayeeda Hamid, Maja Daruwala, Kuldeep Nayyar, Seema Mustafa, Swami Agnivesh, Kamal**

Chenoy Mitra, Prabir Purkayastha, Imrana Qadeer, Dunu Roy, Chandrelekha, Sadanand Menon, Kalpana Kannabiran, Vasanth Kannabiran, K.G.Kannabiran, Sudesh Vaid, Kumkum Sanghari, Smitha Kothari, Rajni Kothari, Ashis Nandy

He had the qualities Sri Lanka so desperately needs: The intellect to cut through the complexities - real and false - of the country's political stalemate, the integrity to stick with his beliefs, the finesse to express them in ways that helped build consensus; the courage to participate in politics in the face of great danger. ***Teresita Schaeffer***

Neelan's contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights for peace is well known. He had many more years to crusade and realise this cause. The cowardly act of those destructive of peace robbed the world of this fine human soul. ***Param Coomaraswamy***

...For me, he was the embodiment of everything that is decent, kind, and noble in human nature... what Neelan represented -- reason, justice, moderation, tolerance -- will eventually prevail over the forces of darkness in your land, and the peace that will follow will be his living memorial. ***John Fisher Burns***

...Dr.Neelán was an outstanding leader who represented the true aspirations of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka and of all democratic sections. His killing is a tragic waste of a fine human being. ***Prakash Karat***

...He was a truly remarkable individual in every respect; brilliant, yet humble; dignified, yet warm and outgoing; committed and courageous, yet open-minded and cheerful.

Neelan was an inspiring individual, a wonderful human being, and good friend to those fortunate enough to know him.

Neelan's death is especially tragic because there are so few people of his exceptional qualities in this world, and fewer still willing to dedicate their lives to making our world a better place. The violent and senseless end to his promising life's work is itself a testament to the need for those rare people like Neelan to continue their valuable efforts to raise the rest of humanity to a higher standard. **Robert B. Shanks**

...Neelan was a generous mentor to many young professionals who now carry on his interests. He inspired numerous programs and organizations that now advance people's rights and support fine scholarly work. His devotion to the rule of law and the needs of the poor and disadvantaged set a high standard for us all.

All of us who shared his concern for political, social and economic justice will carry it forward, knowing that would be his wish. **Susan V. Berresford**

...he was the type of person that makes a great impression on you from the initial contact. His deep commitment to his work, his belief that situations could always be improved through human agency, his organisational skills, his calmness at moments where others are nervous remain part of my fond memories. At the level of advancing south-south cooperation, we have all been inspired by his zeal and determination in initiating and advancing Afro-Asian research cooperation. **Jibrin Ibrahim**

...The energy that made Neelan run circles around anyone who could not keep up with him is the same energy that made him irrepressible in his optimism, kindness and good will. It is so hard to believe that we will never again see

him swirling through I.C.E.S. with a thousand ideas and a barely hidden sense of mischief. *Yasmin Tambiah*

...Neelan gave so much to his country -- a whole generation of young people in whom he instilled the highest ideals and values. (I count myself very fortunate that my own child had the opportunity to learn from a mentor like him.) Thanks to his dedication, the cause of justice will be sustained by this new generation... *Marina Fernando*

...[I]t is telling that, while [Neelan] was living, I had heard only positive accounts of his life and work. Perhaps his is a rare case where the dignified and glowing tributes told in the eulogy of a political figure ring true to his life. *Daniel M. Jenkins*

...He has been a firm champion of the rights of minorities and in supporting peace initiatives throughout the world. He will be greatly missed... *Jaap Dijkstra*

Oh Neelan that your worthy life
Should meet this tragic end,
Your academic brilliance,
Your high ideals transcends.

Your dedication to the cause
So dear to your heart,
Has caused this awful tragedy
From hearth and home to part.

You could have lived a sheltered life
In distant foreign climes,
Where all your talents would have shone
Unmarred by cruel crimes.

A grieving nation mourns your loss,
No power can replace,
The spark of life that once lit up
Your cheerful, smiling face.

Mervyn Casie Chetty

...At moments like this we must all remind ourselves that the effects of his courage, sanity and compassion will be felt by all of us long into the future. We cannot let the hope his work inspired die with him. *Jonathan Spencer*

...He was a friend, teacher, and inspiration. I can't even begin to imagine how much he will be missed. *Brenda Cossman*

...We hope to work with ICES in any way that will carry forward Neelan's commitment to peace, to diversity, to constitutionality and to global dialogue and debate. *Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge*



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