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President Rajapakshe will think twice before visiting London next time – British Tamils Forum

British Tamils Forum joined forces with NSSP (Nava Sama Samaja Party) UK, TYO (Tamil Youth Organisation), S4P (Solidarity for Peace), Socialist Party, International Socialist Group and South Asia Solidarity Group and very effectively mobilised the masses in London to protest against the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakshe. Mr. Rajapakshe is here in London for a Commonwealth Conference, where twelve other Heads of State are also present.

The protest was in front of the Commonwealth Secretariat – Marlborough House at the Pall Mall. Over a thousand people, largely Tamils turned up in a relatively short notice to show strength and the will of the Tamil Diaspora. Age, Religion, Language or Gender were no barrier as from grand parents to babies in push chairs, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus to Tamils, Sinhalese were all present at the scene. People from all walks of life made an effort to participate.

The three main objectives of this protest were condemnation for conducting an unjust war against the Tamil Nation and for actively seeking a militaristic solution to fundamentally a political problem. Therefore, **Stop the War!**

The primary reason for Sri Lanka being evicted by the United Nations Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) 47 member main body just over two weeks ago was due to the fact that Sri Lankan government has been systematically abusing human rights of the people of Sri Lanka. Therefore the second primary objective was to, **Stop the Human Rights Violations!**

Finally but most importantly, **enforce self-determination for Tamils in the predominantly Tamil Areas of the North and East of Sri Lanka!**

"I hope the international community will soon bring the Rajapakshe regime to the International Court of Justice for War Crimes" – A young protestor

It was a very noisy yet a cordial and a friendly demonstration. Kevin Rushford, Police Constable – Public Order Branch of the Metropolitan Police Division commented that efficient and effective volunteers, bilingual officers of the British Tamils Forum, the age and gender mix of general public involved in the protest were all reasons for a friendly yet an effective demonstration against something people believe in.

Stan Greatrick, Chief Inspector of Ilford Police who was as part of the Metropolitan Police said and we quote "It was a very successful demonstration, mutually...the people were great and friendly...this is how all demonstrations should be". From the organiser's part, British Tamils Forum shared their genuine gratitude for a fantastic community liaison and an effective policing that was performed by the large number of police present at the event.

Demonstrators shared their views by handing out preprinted leaflets to the passing public. Main points reflected in the leaflets were how Sri Lanka used to be viewed as a great holiday destination and how successive governments have made it a killing field. Point about the lack of will and the delayed actions of the international community which resulted in hundreds of thousands of innocent Rwandans, Dafurians, Cambodians and Bosnians being killed were highlighted. The fact that over 70,000 people, majority Tamils have been killed and a question

British Tamils Forum



was posed as to whether there had been any learning from the recent history and as to whether that is what the international community wanted on their conscience?

As a way of options it was articulated for the International Community to do nothing or talk about it or to take action.

Actions listed were:

- ✚ Boycott Sri Lanka and its national carrier Sri Lankan Airways
- ✚ Stop the WAR
- ✚ Recognise Tamils Self Determination
- ✚ Impose International Arms Embargo
- ✚ Create a 'Safe Haven' to protect Innocent Tamil civilians from Indiscriminate Aerial Bombardment of the Sri Lankan Air Force
- ✚ Evict Sri Lanka from The Commonwealth
- ✚ Impose Economic Sanctions (Do Not Grant GSP+)
- ✚ Force Sri Lanka to cut War Budget & Feed the Masses

Various media organisations and press were present at the event and the organisers intentionally chose this particular time to coincide with the scheduled press briefing at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

There was a demonstration organised as a direct challenge to the event by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party UK in support of the President and his visit to London. However, due to insignificant number of people (around 100) compared to the predominantly Tamil masses (over a thousand) who were loud in their expressions, the government sponsored event shut shop early and vacated quietly.

Photos of the demonstration can be found via the web link below:

<http://www.photobox.co.uk/album/52233283>

Password: tamilprotest (one word in lowercase)

- Ends -

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Notes to Editors:

British Tamils Forum exists to harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and significant others including mainstream decision makers in the UK with the aim of alleviating the sufferings of the Tamils community in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self determination within a democratic frame work under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. The forum was set-up in 2006 when, with the support 88 British Tamil community organisations, it also published an open letter in the Times newspaper. For more information admin@tamilsforum.com and/or visit: www.tamilsforum.com