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**PRESS RELEASE – PRESS RELEASE – PRESS RELEASE**

**Termination of the work of the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP) in Sri Lanka – ‘serious concern’ – British All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils**

The British All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Tamils today (11 March 2008) expressed its serious concern at the decision of the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP) - headed by former Indian Chief Justice P N Bhagwati - to terminate its operations in Sri Lanka.

Today’s statement by the British APPG for Tamils is as follows:

‘Violence in Sri Lanka remains terribly and unacceptably high. The British APPG for Tamils deplores all killings and assassinations including the assassination of K. Sivanesan, a democratically elected member of the Sri Lankan parliament.

‘This last week has sadly brought further bad political and human rights news as well.

‘The decision by the IIGEP to terminate operations raises serious questions about the claims made by the Government of Sri Lanka that it is taking all efforts to uphold human rights. It is extremely worrying that a reputable body such as the IIGEP has now concluded that there is no further use for it in probing the abductions, disappearances and extra-judicial killings which the Group was invited to investigate in September 2006. We are very concerned for the safety and security of all citizens of Sri Lanka, and are very troubled about what the future holds for many of the minority Tamil community, who have been the victims of so many of the human rights violations in recent times’.

The statement by APPG for Tamils makes clear how important it is that Government of Sri Lanka heed the widespread advice of the international community. The Group congratulates Britain’s Minister for Asia in the Foreign Office, Lord Malloch Brown, and the Swedish Foreign Minister for their statements at the United Nations Human Rights Council’s seventh session in Geneva last week which made strong condemnation of the unacceptable levels of human rights violations in Sri Lanka. The Group will now be asking the British Foreign Secretary to consider what other action is available to the British government and to take all possible steps to ensure that Government of Sri Lanka plays by accepted international rules.

A political solution to the continuing conflict in Sri Lanka is as vital now as ever. There must be an end to the spiral of violence if the seventh decade of an independent Sri Lanka is to be one of justice, peace and prosperity’.

**- 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](mailto:admin@tamilsforum.com) and/or visit: [www.tamilsforum.com](http://www.tamilsforum.com) (currently under re-design)

The IIEGP website can be found at [www.iigep.org](http://www.iigep.org)