

Issued for Immediate Release

PRESS STATEMENT – PRESS STATEMENT – PRESS STATEMENT

Urgent Appeal to Protect Victims of Genocide

UN estimates over 7,000 civilians, many of them children, died in the final offensive by the Sri Lankan military, however according to reliable sources the figure is likely to be as high as 25,000. The Sri Lankan State still forbids access to international free media.

"The UN confirmed this week that as many as 300,000 Tamil refugees are now jammed into the camps dubbed "welfare villages". Western journalists have been banned from going near them."

Dan McDougall, Award-winning reporter, undercover in Sri Lanka's refugee camps reported in News of the World, 24 May 2009. Posing as an aid worker, he witnessed first hand the poignant scenes at the camps;

"A child no more than two-years-old toddles naked towards the razor wire imprisoning her and her family. Terrified of retribution, parents pull the child away. Many of the refugees are dressed only in rags and tattered clothing. Chicken pox and skin diseases are sweeping through the camp and hepatitis is a growing problem because of poor sanitation."

The Sri Lankan government has, to date, rejected pleas by various governments and the Secretary-General of the UN for immediate access to humanitarian aid agencies in to the camps. Preoccupied by destroying the evidence of the genocide, the Sri Lankan State is wary about allowing independent witnesses to the Tamil homeland.

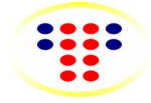
Tamils in every part of Sri Lanka are held under siege. In the North and East, they are brutalised by the armed forces and paramilitaries operating under their direction. In the South, the Tamils are intimidated and harassed by Sinhala hoodlum under the protection of law enforcement authorities.

During the recent visit by the UN Secretary-General, the democratically elected Tamil Parliamentarians were denied access to meet with him. The Tamils are now totally silenced and marginalized while the international community stands by in silence.

The Tamils, from Sri Lanka and worldwide, have been warning of the impending Genocide for several months. Faced with overwhelming evidence of the genocidal intent with which this destruction of the Tamil ethnicity is being conducted, the international community must embark on immediate action to alleviate the suffering of the interned IDPs at least now.

British Tamils Forum calls upon the wider community to contact their MPs and highlight the plight of over 300,000 civilians trapped in the internment camps, separated from their families, lacking even basic facilities.

British Tamils Forum



We, the British Tamils Forum, call on the UK establishment to urge immediate unrestricted access for all international aid agencies, monitors and media to all of the camps and North East regions to conduct the much needed humanitarian relief and to also account for all of the people who were in Vanni during this military offensive.

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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 Tamil community in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self determination within a democratic framework underpinned 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