



British Tamils Forum

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The Rt Hon Gordon Brown Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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Memorandum

To: Rt. Hon Gordon Brown, Prime Minister, United Kingdom

From: British Tamils

Date: 17 October 2009

Unlock the "Concentration camps" and free the innocent people

More than 150 days have now elapsed since the Sri Lankan government announced that it will release 80% of the 300,000, detainees within 180 days. Over 280,000 Tamil civilians are still arbitrarily detained in the camps and with no accountability. Many have disappeared in the camps - it is widely acknowledged the Sri Lankan armed forces are responsible for these disappearances. We the British people are extremely concerned for the safety and wellbeing of our kith and kin in Sri Lanka. We urge you as our prime minister to actively seek the release of the innocent people held against their will. Impending monsoon raises fears of an imminent humanitarian crisis if immediate steps are not taken to safeguard the welfare of these civilians.

Fifty thousand of those in these camps are children. They have been denied education, living in cramped, squalid military run camps in the north of Sri Lanka, surrounded by barbed wire and armed soldiers. On 26 September 2009, six unarmed people, including three children and a woman, were shot when they tried to escape from the increasingly unbearable conditions.

Government of Sri Lanka, whilst denying access to international humanitarian agencies and free media to these camps, continue to hold the people under false pretence. The government justifies this arbitrary detention in "concentration camps" citing screening processes and de-mining programmes. However, even the most vulnerable detainees have not been resettled and Jaffna peninsula, where a large number of the people have close relatives, is known to be free of mines, as it has been in the control of the Government of Sri Lanka since 1995.

Sri Lankan military knowingly massacred over 20,000 Tamil civilians in the final days of the war. The evidence is strewn around the slither of land in which the massacre took place, all of which is being systematically destroyed to avoid prosecution for war crimes.



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The regime is actively engaged in destroying Tamil identity in the areas now under its control and has embarked on building Buddhist temples across the Tamil homeland.

Tamils have lost confidence in Ban Ki Moon

"Failure to rapidly resettle nearly 300,000 Sri Lankans displaced by the Government's final onslaught against Tamil separatists and further suffering under harsh conditions in the camps could result in growing bitterness," Mr. Ban warned the island's Prime Minister, 28 Sep 2009. If only Mr. Ban had acknowledged this number of civilians being trapped in the 'Safe Zone' during the final stages of the military onslaught against the Tamils in the small slither of land, subjected to continuous barrage of artillery shelling many lives could have been saved.

As aptly summarised in Foreign Policy - "As tens of thousands of Tamil refugees lingered under fire on a narrow strip of beach in Sri Lanka, Ban and his advisors did little more than huddle in New York and wring their hands, only making a trip to the war zone after hostilities ended".

Norway's U.N. ambassador, Mona Juul, wrote that Ban is a "spineless and charmless" leader who has failed to convey the U.N.'s "moral voice and authority," according to a confidential memo to Norway's foreign minister.

Terje Roed-Larsen, one of Ban's Middle East envoys, sharply criticized Ban's handling of the crises in Sri Lanka and Burma in a memo, stating "The Secretary-General was a powerless observer to thousands of civilians losing their lives and becoming displaced from their homes". It is time the International community wakes up to what is happening to the Tamils in Sri Lanka before it is too late.

In this respect we as British people urge our government to use all the powers at its disposal to stop the Sri Lankan government from persecuting the Tamil people. We are grateful, Mike Foster, UK Development Minister, following his recent visit expressed that UK funding could not support people simply being transferred from existing "closed" camps to new "closed" camps.

We want the British government to demand,

1. The Sri Lankan government releases immediately all the Tamil people held against their will
2. The UN, ICRC and INGOs are given full and unhindered access to care for and protect the civilians and help them return to wherever they choose to live
3. A list of all those still alive and in custody be published, so that families can stop searching for loved ones



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4. Those who continue to be detained as alleged LTTE combatants be treated in accordance with the provisions of international law, and urgently given access to legal representation
5. Independent, international investigation into war crimes committed during the war
6. Sri Lankan government stops its activities that are designed to destroy the character of the Tamil Homelands
7. International community actively objects to the reappointment of Ban Ki Moon as General Secretary

Yours sincerely

Mr Nathan Kumar
Chairman