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PRESS STATEMENT – PRESS STATEMENT – PRESS STATEMENT

The British Tamil Community is puzzled by HM's Government's Statement on Sri Lanka

The British Tamil Community whilst appreciating the government's public acknowledgement of the current dire humanitarian situation in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka also notes with great regret and displeasure of some of the contents of the joint statement issued yesterday, Friday 26 September 2008, by the Department for International Development (DFID) Minister Rt. Hon Shahid Malik MP and Rt. Hon Lord Malloch Brown – Foreign Minister responsible for Africa, Asia and UN.

Instead of strongly condemning the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) for the infliction of this current humanitarian catastrophe and the military action against the Tamil Nation for fundamentally a political problem, the joint statement shares its "acute concern".

The British Tamil Community and the British Tamils Forum have for a long period, by way of continuous engagement with the British Political Establishments and Civil Servants in various formal and informal meetings, letters and through their respective Parliamentarians have shared their strong feelings and dissatisfaction of the lack of credible and substantial action by HM's Government against GoSL.

We regret the inability of the current Labour Government and the Civil Servants to understand the feelings of the British Tamils.

This opportunity missed to publicly condemn the GoSL for its indiscriminate aerial bombardment of its own citizens, the military action that has internally displaced 200,000 to 230,000 (UN Estimation) Tamil people, the expulsion of the UN Aid Workers and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGO) from the worst affected areas, other gross violations of human rights such as abductions, killings, restrictions of mobility of people and restrictions placed on journalists has puzzled the Tamil community around the world.

The Community feels confused by the joint statement which acknowledges the apparent "recognition by GoSL of its responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by the conflict and its continued co-ordination with humanitarian agencies". This is in direct contradiction to the recent statements



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made by the Sri Lankan Government Agents of Mullaitivu and Kilinochi and by other International Aid Agencies which clearly stated that there are acute shortages of food, medical supplies, shelter, drinking water, sanitation, fuel, specialised staff including medical doctors and nurses.

The British Tamil Community greatly appreciates the Prime Minister Gordon Brown and the Secretary of State for DFID for making the time to highlight the concerns of the International Community to the President of Sri Lanka. However, the indifference that is reflected in the statement by avoiding to condemn the GoSL for restricting free movement of civilians within and out of Jaffna Peninsula where the Sinhala Army is an occupying force, the degrading restrictions laid on the Tamil Community living in and around Colombo, restrictions placed on Journalists to travel around Sri Lanka to report on current security situation and human rights violations and the inhuman treatment of internally displaced people by restricting their mobility by placing them in 'detention centers' (e.g. in Mannar) in contravention of humanitarian practices, human rights laws, UN Charters and Geneva Conventions.

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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