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**Speech delivered by Suren Surendiran as British Tamils Forum Spokesperson at the meeting with Foreign Secretary Rt. Hon David Miliband MP and Foreign Minister Lord Mark Malloch Brown on 27 January 2009 at the UK Parliament**

Rt. Hon Foreign Secretary, Hon Members of Parliament, guests, and fellow British Tamils, on behalf of all my colleagues at the British Tamils Forum, and British Tamil Community which the Forum represents, I thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. We really appreciate the time and efforts that you and others in the Parliament make to bring about peace in Sri Lanka. We are particularly grateful to all the Members of Parliament who speak on behalf of the Tamils as Members of All Party parliamentary Group for Tamils.

However, it is extremely unfortunate, that, these are the only complementary remarks that I am able to make about the Labour Government's commitment to saving the Tamils from the systematic genocide carried out by the Govt of Sri Lanka.

As British Tamils, our message to the Labour Government, and the Party, is a blunt one today.

As bearer of this blunt message, Foreign Secretary, please accept my sincere apologies.

I will be failing from my duty if I fail to communicate to you the anger and hurt we fellow British Tamils feel. British Tamils are hurt that their adopted country has not only failed to stop the genocide of Tamils but also Britain has chosen to side itself with a chauvinistic state - the Government of Sri Lanka.

Foreign Secretary, if you talk to any Tamil man or woman in the streets of Britain today - their message to you will be a blunt one too - the Labour Government's and particularly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's role in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is unforgivable.

Within the very few minutes that I have been given the floor today, I want to tell you how ordinary Tamil men and women feel about what is happening in the Tamil homeland and the Labour Government's attitude towards it

No matter what justifications you may want to offer for your actions or inactions - the British Tamils can clearly see the policy of the Labour Government - the unconditional support you are offering to what is a racist and a terrorist state - the Government of Sri Lanka

Time and again, we have seen human rights violations being used as a vehicle to bash the Tamils and their leadership - but never against the Government of Sri Lanka that is committing a genocide against its own people. You have already seen the video which captured the collective punishment that the Tamil community have been subjected to, through indiscriminate shelling and aerial bombardments. Every day, hundreds of innocent Tamils are dying and being displaced as a result of state terror in Sri Lanka. What British Tamil voters wanted to know is why the Foreign Office is yet to take a firm stance against the Government of Sri Lanka, despite very well knowing that the actions of the Government of Sri Lanka amounts to a war crime.

British Tamil community's most recent 'serious' engagement with our Government and the Foreign Office started approximately about 2 years ago. Since then, the British Tamils Forum and the wider community had a number of discussions with your Office. I want to draw your attention to, and remind every one here today, some of the things that we have been saying in private at various key points in the last 2 years

We talked first when the A9 highway was closed and the Government of Sri Lanka enforced an economic blockade on the people Wannu. Your officials told us that they are using diplomatic pressure on the Government of Sri Lanka and making every effort to open the A9. 2 Years on - Tamils are still at the mercy of a racist Government for food and other essentials.

We talked again, when the Eastern province was under siege. Your officials told us the same - they said to us that they are using diplomatic pressure on the Government of Sri Lanka and doing all they can. You very well know what is happening in the Eastern province now. It has become the paradise for Para-militaries. Our own High Commissioner Dr Peter Hayes has recently said that the Tamils in the East are living in fear.

We talked to you again - when the Government of Sri Lanka walked out of the Ceasefire Agreement. Your officials told us the same - they said to us that they are using diplomatic pressure on the Government of Sri Lanka and all they can do. Thousands of lives have already been lost. Hundreds are dying each hour.

We talked again when the Government of Sri Lanka ordered the International non Governmental Organisations out of Wannu. You never uttered word against the Government of Sri Lanka. Tamil people want to know why?

The list of our engagement with your office and the things that we requested are endless. What did we get? A British Military Attaché posing with the commander of the racist state of Sri Lanka - looking at the destruction of the Tamil home land and the de facto state. The de facto state Tamils and their leadership built which gave us the parity of power in our quest for peace with justice and dignity. British Tamils are angry and hurt that our Government, Her Majesty's Government, has offered its unconditional support to the destruction of the Tamil homeland - by

saying Sri Lanka has the right to defend itself from terrorism and also giving Government of Sri Lanka the assurance that you support the territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka.

Foreign Secretary, ladies and Gentlemen, this is not a time to go into the historical reasons for the conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese, for which Britain also need to take its fair share of responsibility - for uniting the separate Tamil and Sinhalese Kingdoms together just for the sake of administrative convenience. Time has come to not only to call for a ceasefire but also for Britain to recognise the Tamils right for self determination. This is only way that peace and stability to the Tamil and Sinhalese homeland in the island of Sri Lanka.

Today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. I sincerely hope that we will act before it is too late for the Tamil Race as well. Thank you.

Foreign Secretary and Foreign Office minister