

Sri Lanka: Visiting Portugal Leader Urged to raise Security for Witnesses to UN War Crimes Investigation: TGTE

Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE)

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In an appeal to the Prime Minister of Portugal Mr. Pedro Passos Coelho, the Prime Minister of Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam Mr. Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran has urged the Portugal leader to raise with Sri Lankan President the issue of security for witnesses who will be testifying before a UN inquiry for the mass killing of Tamils.

Prime Minister of Portugal is currently visiting Sri Lanka.

The UN Human Rights Council in its March 2014 Session created an investigative body on Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan Government has taken a hostile attitude towards this investigation and some Cabinet Ministers have warned anyone from testifying before this body.

"Several Tamils who are either victims or witnesses are eager to testify to seek justice for the mass killing of their relatives and other Tamils" said Mr. Rudrakumaran.

"As the first world leader to visit Sri Lanka since the creation of the UN investigative body, you have enormous opportunity and responsibility to urge Sri Lankan President not to harm Tamils who testify before this UN body" continued Mr. Rudrakumaran.

"There are also concerns that the Sri Lankan Security forces may target the relatives of the witnesses."

According to United Nations Internal Review Report on Sri Lanka over 70,000 Tamils were killed in five months in early 2009 and Tamil women were sexually abused and raped by the Sri Lankan Security Forces. This UN investigation is about these and other abuses.

BACKGROUND:

Tamils have faced repeated mass killings since 1958 and the mass killings in 2009 prompted UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to appoint a Panel of Experts to report on the scale of killings.

According to the report by this UN Panel, tens of thousands of Tamil civilians were killed and women were sexually abused and raped by the Sri Lankan Security Forces (According to UN Internal Review Report over 70,000 Tamils were killed in five months in 2009).



These Tamils were killed due to deliberate and intense shelling and bombing of areas designated by the government as "no-fire zones", where Tamil civilians had assembled for safety. The Sri Lankan Government also restricted food and medicine for Tamils, resulting in large numbers of people dying from starvation and many of the injured bleeding to death.

According to the UN Panel, the killings and other abuses that took place amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Independent experts believe that there are elements of these abuses that constitute an act of genocide.

According to a May 2012 report by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Human Rights and Democracy; there are up to 90,000 Tamil war widows in the North-East of Sri Lanka.

UN Human Rights Council in March 2014 established an international war crimes investigation to investigate these killings and the investigations have begun.

A Buddhist Monk shot and killed a Sri Lankan Prime Minister in 1958 for having talks with Tamil political leaders to find a solution to the conflict.

Members of the Sri Lankan security forces are almost exclusively from the Sinhalese community and the victims are all from the Tamil community.

Tamils overwhelmingly voted in a Parliamentary election in 1977 to establish an independent and sovereign country called Tamil Eelam. This Parliamentary election was conducted by the Sri Lankan Government.

ABOUT TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL EELAM (TGTE):

Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) is a democratically elected Government of Tamils (from the island of Sri Lanka) living in several countries. TGTE was formed after the mass killing of Tamils by the Sri Lankan Government in 2009.

TGTE held internationally supervised elections among Tamils around the world to elect 132 Members of Parliament and is leading a campaign to realize Tamils' political aspirations through peaceful, diplomatic and democratic means.

TGTE has a bicameral legislature and a Cabinet and held one of its Parliamentary sittings in the British Parliament. The Constitution of the TGTE mandates that it should realize its political objective only through peaceful means.

The Prime Minister of TGTE is Mr. Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran, a New York based lawyer.

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