

Sri Lankan Leader Says Thousands of Tamils who Surrendered are Now Dead: TGTE Wants Clarification

"CALLS FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE MISSING TO THEIR FAMILIES"

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Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) urges Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wikramasinghe to clarify his statement that thousands of Tamils who surrendered to the Sri Lankan Security forces are no longer alive. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister made this statement on January 15th in Jaffna, when he spoke at a celebration of Thai Pongal, a Hindu festival.



The Prime Minister's comments sent shock-waves through the thousands of Tamil families who still do not know the fate of family members who peacefully surrendered to Sri Lankan Security Forces in May 2009. Large groups of civilians, including women and children voluntarily placed themselves in the hands of the security forces at the end of the conflict in reliance on assurances that they would be safe and ultimately released. Since then thousands more have been arrested or have disappeared and their fate also remains unknown.

International law recognizes that the families of the missing have the "Right to Know the Truth" with respect to the fate of their loved ones. On December 15, 2015, Sri Lanka signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Article 21 of the convention recognizes the continued victimization of the families of those who have disappeared and grants these victims the "right to know the truth regarding the circumstances...and the fate of the disappeared person[s]."

The TGTE urges Prime Minister Wikramasinghe, in the strongest terms, to make public the basis of his statement that the thousands who surrendered to the Security Forces are no longer alive and to provide concrete information about the location of their bodies so that the families can finally have some closure. Any continued failure of the Sri Lankan government to provide such concrete information prolongs the suffering of the families of the missing; constitutes an ongoing violation of their human rights, and constitutes an ongoing failure by Sri Lanka to fulfill its obligations under international law as well as its obligations under Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/30/1 (15 October 2015).

This new revelation reconfirms the Tamils' firm belief that Tamils will only get justice through an international mechanism such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), said the TGTE and urged the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council to refer Sri Lanka to the ICC.

It is disturbing that the same security forces that committed mass atrocities remain stationed in large numbers in Tamil areas.

ABOUT TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL EELAM (TGTE):

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

TGTE twice held internationally supervised elections among Tamils around the world to elect 132 Members of Parliament. It has a bicameral legislature and a Cabinet. It held one of its Parliamentary sittings in the British Parliament.

TGTE is leading a campaign to realize Tamils' political aspirations through peaceful, democratic and diplomatic means. 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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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 UN internal review report on Sri Lanka, over 70,000 Tamils were killed in five months in early 2009 and Tamil women were sexually assaulted and raped by Sri Lankan Security forces. There are over 90,000 Tamil war widows and thousands of Tamils disappeared due to the conflict.

According to this 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.

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

A Buddhist Monk shot and killed a Sri Lankan Prime Minister in 1959 for having talks with Tamil political leaders to find a solution to the ethnic conflict.

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.

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