

UK Prime Minister Urged to act on disappearance in Sri Lanka. A petition handed over after a rally

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We, the British-Tamil citizens and residents of the United Kingdom who are originally from the island of Sri Lanka, petition the Right Honourable Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to urge Mr. Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, to investigate the large-scale disappearance of cadres of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who surrendered and were detained by the Army of Sri Lanka at the end of the civil war in May 2009.



Families of disappeared

By Sri Lanka's own accounts 12,000 Tamil combatants were either captured or surrendered at the end of the conflict. In addition to the tens of thousands of civilians who remain unaccounted for, thousands of LTTE soldiers who either surrendered or were captured have not been seen since. At the time of their surrender or capture these cadres came under and still remain under the protection of Common Article Three of the Geneva Conventions. Protections that include prohibitions against murder, inhumane treatment and punishments unless imposed by a properly constituted court and subject to the internationally recognized guarantees.

The UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, after its visit in November 2015, stated that Sri Lanka has the second highest number of unresolved disappearances of any country in the world. We believe that enforced disappearance of LTTE cadres who were captured or surrendered constitutes one of the largest categories of the disappeared in Sri Lanka. More than 90 percent of the complaints received by the Sri Lankan Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) related to cases of missing persons during the final stages of war. Their whereabouts must be investigated along with the disappearance of all others in Sri Lanka as part of any transitional justice process. We the families of these unaccounted for soldiers have a right to the truth regarding what happened to them. We the families of the missing continue to suffer uncertainty of not knowing whether they are alive or dead.

The UN Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights have consistently called for justice and accountability since the day after the conflict ended. They have consistently called upon the Sri Lankan government to investigate the disappearance of so many at the conclusion of the war and provide the families and the public with information about the missing. The UN has attempted to

investigate the fate of the missing several times only to be blocked by the Sri Lankan government. In his report of September 2015, entitled Report of the UNHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL Report) the High Commissioner indicated that although there were reasonable grounds to believe that tens of thousands of civilians and former combatants disappeared, his office was unable to properly investigate the fate of missing civilians and Tamil fighters who surrendered at the end of the conflict. As he stated in his report, "The greatest obstacle to OISL work was the absence of cooperation and undermining of the investigation by the former Government."

There was no independent body monitoring the surrenders at the end of the war and no independent access to those who accused of LTTE involvement. We hear from Sri Lankan government that they have "rehabilitated" and released 12,000 LTTE cadres yet most believe that the majority of those people who were incidentally involved in the conflict were members of the political wing or were low level cadres.

What has happened to the bulk of the LTTE fighting force? It is not believable that they were killed in the last days of fighting. Video recordings depict some soldiers alive after their surrender. There are credible eyewitness accounts of large-scale surrenders of people who have not yet been accounted for since the war ended over seven years ago. Below is a list of some of those who have not been seen since they surrendered. Their whereabouts must be investigated along with the disappearance of all others in Sri Lanka as part of any transitional justice process.

- 1) K.V. Balakumar and his son Sooriyatheepan
- (2) V. Ilankumaran (alias Baby Subramanian) Head of the Tamil Eelam Education Department. His wife Vettrichchelvi and daughter Arivumathy.
- (3) Yogaratnam Yogi in charge of 'Institute for Conflict Research' in Vanni
- (4) Poet Puthuvai Ratnadurai, Coordinator of LTTE Arts and Cultural Department
- (5) K. Paappa, Coordinator LTTE Sports Department
- (6) Rajah (Chempiyan) Assistant Coordinator LTTE Sports Department and his 3 children
- (7) Ilanthirayan, LTTE Military spokesman
- (8) Veerathevan, Coordinator LTTE Bank
- (9) S.Thangkan, Political Wing Deputy Chief
- (10) Aruna, Tamil Eela Education Department
- (11) S. Naren, Asst. Executive Head of TRO
- (12) Kuddy, Head of the LTTE Transport Department
- (12) Piriyan, Head of Administrative Service Department and his family
- (13) V. Poovannan, Head of the Administrative Service Division of the LTTE
- (14) Thangaiah, Administrative Service Department
- (15) Malaravan, Administrative Service Department
- (16) Pakirathan, Administrative Service Department
- (17) Reha, Head of LTTE Medical Division
- (18) Selvarajah, Commander Manal Aru Head Quarters

- (19) Bhaskaran, Commander Manal Aru Head Quarters
- (20) Major Lawrance
- (21) Major Kumaran
- (22) Prabha, Batticaloa District Commander
- (24) Rupan, Coordinator of Supplies
- (25) Babu, Coordinator of Jewellery Business
- (26) Ilamparithy, Executive Head of Political Wing
- (27) Elilan, Head of Trincomalee Political Wing
- (28) Vijitharan, Executive Secretary, Political Wing
- (29) Major Veeman

- (30) Sakthy, Coordinator Forestry Division and his family
- (31) E.Ravi, Charge of Houses
- (32) Sanjai, Mulliyavalai Divisional Political Wing Coordinator
- (33) Para Ratha, Coordinator Justice Department
- (34) Kumaravel, Coordinator Air Force Security
- (35) Chithrankan Malathy, Commander Manal Aru District
- (36) Suhi, Commander
- (37) Arunan, Major Sea Tigers
- (38) Manoj – Medical Department
- (39) Lawrance, Finance Department
- (40) Lawrance Thilakar, Coordinator TRO Planning Department
- (41) Karikalan, former Commander, Eastern Province

The above list is by no means complete.

A recent Inter-Press Service Report has noted that it remains dangerous to attempt to trace anyone who disappeared during combat, notwithstanding the various commissions on the disappeared from different periods.

Given, the High Commissioner's finding regarding Sri Lanka's inability to conduct credible impartial investigations, given Sri Lanka's recently expressed commitment to allow UN personnel to visit and work in the country, we urge you to request that the High Commissioner send personnel to Sri Lanka to conduct appropriate investigations to determine the fate of the missing LTTE cadres who surrendered or were captured at the end of the conflict. We, the British-Tamil citizens of the UK want to know where our family members are.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

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