

As UN Human Rights Council meets in Geneva TGTE calls for Justice for Victims of Sri Lankan War Crimes

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The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) wishes the 37th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), currently underway in Geneva, a resounding success.

We believe this Session will contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights around the world. We also hope that this Session will take constructive and meaningful steps to end impunity and promote accountability. From the

Rohingya in Myanmar to Tamils of Sri Lanka, and from people in Syria to people in Yemen, millions of people have high expectations from the Council's deliberations and decisions.

TGTE is a political formation of diaspora Tamils from Sri Lanka, built on the principles of democracy, accountability, transparency and self-determination. The TGTE is deeply committed to accountability for international crimes, namely war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed during the final stages of the armed conflict in the island of Sri Lanka in 2019.

The HRC passed Resolution 30/1 concerning the above issues, which it reaffirmed in 34/1, in 2015 and 2017 respectively. However, as stated so explicitly by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in his Report dated 25th of January 2018, "a comprehensive transitional justice strategy, including a clearly defined timeline for implementation, has yet to be made publicly available and consulted" by the Government of Sri Lanka. The UNHRC report also said "authorities have not yet demonstrated the capacity or willingness to address impunity for gross violations and abuses of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law".

The TGTE will issue in the next few days a mid-term report card on the Sri Lankan government's commitments made to the UNHRC. The Sri Lankan President and its Prime Minister have repeatedly and explicitly repudiated their commitments made to the Council.

In an interview to Al Jazeera, the Sri Lankan President, Maithripala Sirisena, denied that any war



crimes were ever committed at all by the government forces against Tamil civilian population in 2009. "I must say very clearly there is no allegation regarding 'war crimes', there were war crime allegations during the early stages. But at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, mainly in the proposals presented in September, there were no war crime allegations against us" he told the news channel.

On Nov. 11, 2017 President Sirisena in a speech to an audience of 350 soldiers at the Colombo Army Hospital said, "Unlike the disgruntled politicians and some retired Army personnel allege saying that the War Heroes would be tried and punished, I, as the President of this country would not allow anyone be subjected to interrogations by foreign judges." <http://www.ft.lk/front-page/President-reiterates-his-pledge-to-protect-war-heroes-from-foreign-tribunals/44-643195>

Given this attitude of denial and deception by those ruling Sri Lanka, the question arises as to whether keeping the country under the purview of the Council for another year is worthwhile or not. While it may be true that keeping Sri Lanka under the Council's radar would retain the spotlight on the country for its horrific human rights record and stance, we do not believe that it will lead to any justice for the victims.

We hope that the HRC will take all the above into consideration and follow up with more meaningful actions such as recommending Sri Lanka to the UN Security Council, referring Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and adopting targeted sanctions against those who appear to be most responsible for war crimes, as member states did in the case of North Korea.

For information contact: pmo@tgte.org

Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam

TGTE

+1-212- 290- 2925

email us here

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