

Sri Lanka: Thousands Rally in Jaffna For Tamil's Rights - Calls for Referendum For Political Solution !

Urged India to take more pro-active role in the plight of Tamils

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Braving rainy weather, thousands rally in Sri Lanka's northern town of Jaffna for Tamil's main demands and called for conducting a Referendum for a political solution to end the protracted Tamil conflict in the island.

Mr. C.V. Wigneswaran, co-chair of the Tamil People's Council addressing the rally said that what happened to Tamils is Genocide and backed it by the requirements of Genocide adopted by the United Nations.



A Section of the Crowd

He appealed to India to take a more pro-active role in the plight of Tamils.

"The soft approach by India so far with regard to our ethnic problem we are sure would soon give way to a more dynamic approach which will ensure the protection of our identity and continued residency in our traditional homelands" he said.

"Having understood the gravity of the situation where our people simply disappear, lands get expropriated, our economy gets seriously affected we request the International Community for help through this Eluga Thamil demonstration"

It is not possible to tolerate such injustices and repressive activities anymore, he said.

"The International Community must also consider conducting a Referendum in terms of International principles of Law among the Tamil people to find out their views with regard to the ideal political solution which could bring peace and amity among all communities".

HERE IS Mr. C.V. WIGNESWARAN'S FULL SPEECH:

Guru Brahma...

My dear Tamils!

In the first instance I salute whole heartedly all those dear ones who have congregated here in several thousands from the North and East.

It is the crying baby which attracts the attention of the mother to have its milk. When the baby cries the mother remembers the time is up to feed the child. Saint Manicavasagar sang his hymn saying "If I cry oh lord! I will have you!" So even God runs towards those who cry for Him. We are gathered here today to tell our Government and the International Community aloud the crying state of our people!

We do not intend crying publicly today. But we shall certainly stamp our feelings and make the International Community turn their attention towards us!

I speak here today as Co - Chairman of Tamil People's Council (TPC). None will be called to speak on behalf of our Party. In pursuance of the request made by some of you I am also being called up to the Rostrum from amongst you.

From pre - historic times the Tamils have as a stable community of people governed themselves until 16th century AD when they came under the yoke of colonialism. For nearly 450 years foreigners' rein lasted. In 1948 when Independence from the British dawned under a Unitary Constitution the rights of the Tamils were lost. This was the history before Independence.

Thereafter successive Sinhalese dominated governments resorted to activities to undermine us and to indulge in "genocide" through legal means and extra judicial means in the light of the Tamils not being provided with the right to solve their own problems, to develop their own areas and to secure their own areas of residency. Their objections to such activities by successive Sinhalese dominated governments brought out by democratic and peaceful means as well as by violent means when all those democratic means failed, constitute our history after Independence.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide (Genocide Convention) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 9th December, 1948, and acceded to by Sri Lanka in 1950. It provides as follows -

"In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, national, ethnical, racial or religious groups.

- a) Killing Members of the group;
- b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to Members of the group;
- c) Deliberately inflicting on the group, conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

Thus "genocide" does not mean only the killing of members of a group of people. It extends to causing bodily and mental harm, causing physical destruction, sterilization to prevent births in the group and transporting children from victims' group to another group.

Between 1948 when Independence was granted up to 2009 when war ended there had been innumerable ways in which our traditional home lands have been expropriated, demography in traditionally Tamil areas have been deliberately changed to accommodate Sinhalese colonists from outside the North and East, many Tamils murdered mercilessly, many caused to be simply disappear and thousands of our women folk have been forcibly abused and raped.

Our traditional historical, archaeological and cultural remains have been destroyed surreptitiously. Over a million of our people have been chased out from their traditional residences and forced to flee to other Countries as refugees. Our assets and belongings have been destroyed and our economy has been brought to a standstill.

Intermittent interventions by foreign countries to bring about reconciliation did not deter the continued commitment of such offences against humanity. Right before the eyes of the world "a

war without witnesses" was conducted and a human tragedy was enacted in 2009 at the time the war came to an end. In this background Sri Lanka was brought before United Nations for accountability. But despite that, acts of genocide continues in Tamil areas even now.

The Army, the Forest Department, the Wild Life Department, the Housing Authority, the Mahaweli Authority, the Archaeological Department and other limbs of the Government machinery are being used to erase off traces of Tamil residency and Tamil identity in the North and East which acts amount to acts of genocide. Successive governments are using their Departments successfully to undermine the Tamils in their own areas.

It is not possible to tolerate such injustices and repressive activities anymore. It is to tell the world at large that we will not cow down to such unreasonable actions on the part of successive governments that we are conducting this Eluha Tamil demonstration.

We are gathered here today at the Jaffna Esplanade clamouring for our rights. At this very moment many of our brethren in our diaspora are staging Eluha Tamil demonstrations in their own Countries. Our Tamil brethren in Tamil Nadu have openly come forward to lend support to our agitations.

Our People truly believe that India would put forward a solution to enable the Tamils to live in their traditional homelands using the legal right of self determination. The soft approach by India so far with regard to our ethnic problem we are sure would soon give way to a more dynamic approach which will ensure the protection of our identity and continued residency in our traditional homelands. We do ask India through our Eluga Tamil demonstrations to change their hitherto sterile attitude to a more robust and judicious one.

None should underestimate the demonstration of our people stressing their legal and community rights. A little while ago our Resolutions were read out by our Co - Chairman.

Apart from the six demands reiterated he stressed the need to follow the recommendations for a Political settlement put forward to the Government by the Tamil People's Council earlier. In addition we would like to ask the Government not to appoint persons from outside our Province to vacancies found in our Public Service.

We would further request our Central Governments to form an Interim Special Economic Mechanism with the help of the International Community to develop the war battered North and East to enable our people to reach the living standards maintained by others in the South. We ask of our Sinhalese and Muslim brethren to admit/recognize our right to self determination in order that we may live with self dignity in our areas. We further request the Government to find out from our people what sort of political solution they want by conducting a Referendum in this regard among them and act according to their wishes.

The Sinhalese and the Tamils have lived in this Island as indigenous communities side by side. We Tamils have not stood in your path of growth and development. We want you to live and let us live too. Therefore we ask of you to please desist from continuing with your activities prejudicial to us and recognize our right of internal self determination.

To the International Community we say the continued residency and identity of an ancient community of this world are nearing extinction on account of the decades' old ethnic strife and they are under obligation to take this fact into their consideration. We beg of the International Community to act in terms of International Human Rights' norms, principles and Covenants and perform your obligations humanely.

All attempts by the International Community to bring Sri Lanka before the Human Rights' Council under an accountability mechanism on account of the War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity have failed.

The removal of the GSP Tax Exemption given to Sri Lanka by the European Union has not deterred the Sri Lankan Government pursuing its anti human rights' course. This must be taken into consideration by the International Community.

The appointment of Lt.General Savindra de Silva as Army Commander in the background of his being found guilty of War Crimes and Crimes against humanity by International Human Rights' Organisations is evidence to the scant respect Sri Lanka pays to International norms, values and opinion. The successive Governments of Sri Lanka have been able to deceive the International Community as well as the Tamils and continue upto date with its genocidal pursuits.

Having understood the gravity of the situation where our people simply disappear, lands get expropriated, our economy gets seriously affected we request the International Community for help through this Eluga Tamil demonstration.

Our people have sacrificed their daily pursuits to be here. Traders have closed their business establishments at great loss to be here at this Eluga Tamil demonstration in order to show their solidarity with our non violent struggle for Justice. We hope the International Community would understand the feelings of our people. The International Community should also consider taking Sri Lanka to the ICC for appropriate action by them.

We also request the UN to send a Special Rapporteur to Sri Lanka to examine the Human Rights' violations being committed against the Tamils. We also request the High Commissioner for UNHRC to open up branches in the North and East to superintend and over see Human Rights' violations still being committed.

The International Community must also consider conducting a Referendum in terms of International principles of Law among the Tamil people to find out their views with regard to the ideal political solution which could bring peace and amity among all communities.

Finally I like to make a special observation. There are no terrorists among us. Only those affected by State terrorism are among us. We ask the powers that be not to couple the names of our people with those who have been identified as fundamentalist religious terrorists. Our youth and others fought for a noble cause – the independence of their people. It is as a reaction to State terrorism that our youth resorted to arms. But successive governments have demonised their spirit of independence as terrorism. I call upon the Governments present and/future to cease from behaving in this fashion. It were the successive Sinhala dominated governments after Independence who forced our youth to take up to arms. It is time our Sinhala brothers and sisters found out the truth about what has happened so far.

History has been distorted, Truth has been blunted, our people have been branded as terrorists and extremists and many of them have been found guilty and punished under a law which goes contrary to our general principles of law. It is time our Sinhala brothers and sisters looked upon these criminal activities of their successive governments with shame and regret.

Our Sinhala brothers and sisters must realise the falsity of the statements, activities and behavior of their successive governments so far and choose to help their Tamil brethren so that they would find light at the end of the tunnel. Making this request of my dear Sinhala brethren I bring my short speech to a conclusion.

Arise Tamil! Long live the Tamils!

Justice C.V.Wigneswaran
Co – Chairman
Tamil People's Council

Tamil People's Council

TPC
+1 614-202-3377
[email us here](#)

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