

TGTE Urges Granting Indian Citizenship Fairly and Equally, including to Eelam Tamil Refugees

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The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) earnestly shares the deep concern of those who have expressed their anguish at the discriminatory provisions of the Citizenship Amendment Act Bill (CAB), which has been passed by the Parliament of India on December 11 and signed into an Act by the President of India.

Though it is claimed that the CAB will address the problems faced by those persecuted in the neighboring states of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, it conspicuously leaves out the Rohingya people, who have undergone discrimination in Bangladesh, and actually subjected to genocide in Myanmar, a genocide that UN Human Rights Council reports address. It is not fair to discriminate against a persecuted people such as the Rohingya based on their religion and we urge the great nation of India to rise above any such religious discrimination. Such religious intolerance does not augur well for the Human Rights situation in the South Asian region, which is replete with problems of persecution by states and the consequent large scale displacement of peoples.

We, on behalf of the Eelam Tamils of Sri Lanka, would like to bring to the attention of the Government of India that nearly two lakhs of our people have sought asylum in India since the early 1980s. Almost half of them live in so-called refugee camps, the other half outside. These desperate people have not even been treated as refugees under international law as India has not signed the UN Convention of the Status of Refugees, nor the subsequent 1967 Protocol.

The fact remains that India has signed the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the human rights of all persons irrespective of whether they are citizens or refugees. Without citizenship rights, persons become stateless, and to be stateless in a civilized world means the lack of basic human rights.

Our people in India are stateless and have suffered for decades from their inability to gain citizenship rights in India. Elsewhere in the world, Eelam Tamils have been granted citizenship rights, which have helped them enjoy all basic human rights and they have become productive citizens of their adopted countries.

We, Eelam Tamils, have been victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity, as borne out by at least three UN reports. We have been the victims of the first genocide of this century, which culminated in the 2009 Mullivaakkal massacre. The UN and the international community has not yet succeeded in securing even a modicum of the transitional justice needed following such serious crimes due to the intransigent attitude of the Government of Sri Lanka and the failure of the international community to force it to honor its own commitments.

Tamils are grateful that India has been the safe haven and home for so many of our friends and relatives for so many years. India did play a role in the evolution of a situation that has led to the displacement of our people and so many of them being scattered all around the world, including across the Palk Straits. The Tamils of Tamil Nadu and the Tamils whose came from Sri Lanka share much in common, especially language, culture and religion, so are already from the same

family.

We urge the Government of India to take the moral position while attention is being paid to the wider issues, and grant Tamils originally from Sri Lanka citizenship rights, at least to those who ask for it and to those who have been born and grown up in India.

Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam

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