

Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam Calls Tamils Across the Globe to Support The Initiatives Battling COVID-19

TGTE Implores Governments Everywhere to Uphold International Human Rights Obligations

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COVID-19 poses a grave and global challenge. With over one million people infected, more than 51,000 people dead, and each of these tragic figures rising daily, transnational solidarity, which has eluded international relations for some time, is of monumental importance. Although we see Sates trending toward contradictory policies, namely each country closing their borders, international corporation is essential to beat the crisis.

We can, however, see the power of solidarity on the level of individuals. While social distancing keeps us physically apart, people the world over are standing together in solidarity with first responders, healthcare workers and all others on the frontlines of this global crisis.

It is in this spirit that the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) offers its full support to health authorities worldwide in their battle against the novel coronavirus. TGTE also would like to convey its heartfelt thanks to healthcare workers everywhere, who, in risking their lives to save the lives of others, exemplify the best of humanity and humanitarian ideals.

TGTE also welcomes the Indian government's initiative to create a fund to assist other South Asian countries in their fights against the pandemic. It is a splendid humanitarian gesture that holds the potential to save lives and bring people of the region closer together.

In this context, TGTE calls Tamils across the globe to fully participate in the efforts to contain and beat back the COVID-19 pandemic. TGTE also congratulates many Tamils who individually and /or collectively provide assistance to initiatives on the frontlines of the battle against COVID-19 with fundraising, as well as with mobilising and coordinating volunteers.

TGTE would also like to note that this crisis is having a greater adverse impact on the poor. TGTE, therefore, calls on governments to take immediate steps to ensure the welfare of the most economically vulnerable sections of their populations, such as those who have been hit hard by sudden unemployment or loss of income. Migrants, the homeless, and those with pre-existing



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and life-threatening medical conditions also deserve special attention, urgently.

At this juncture, despite TGTE’s broad support for containment measures like lockdowns and the quarantining of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients, TGTE also calls on governments to strictly implement measures that respect the fundamental rights and dignity of all people. TGTE furthermore calls on States to proactively protect marginalized populations, such as those based on religion, race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, and language.

It is necessary to make this point because, while a crisis

such as the one the world is facing today brings out the best in humanity, unfortunately, it can also elicit the worst in some due to fear, anxiety, power, political, motivations and/or prejudice.

States must hold those who do commit human rights violations accountable. While fighting the COVID-19 crisis is of the greatest urgency, it cannot be allowed to be used as a pretence for impunity.

TGTE calls attention to and condemns some State’s exploitation of the pandemic in order to gain expansive and undemocratic powers, as well as to violate fundamental rights, such as the right to privacy and freedom of expression. In Sri Lanka, for example, the acting Inspector General of Police, C.D Wickramarathna, has instructed the State’s Criminal Investigation Department and police to pursue legal action against individuals who criticise government officials on social media on the pretence that it obstructs the government’s duties.

On this note, TGTE would like to acknowledge and express its gratitude to the many healthcare workers worldwide going beyond the call of duty and risking their lives by defying censorship policies erected by some States. Speaking to the press to counter false narratives about national responses to the pandemic, even when it means risking death or detainment, is nothing less than an act of heroism. Protecting fundamental right to information and right to know is not in the Hippocratic oath, but many healthcare workers have made themselves protectors of these rights, nonetheless.

Undoubtedly, this pandemic will result in transformative changes in many spheres of life. Just as the Marshall Plan redefined the global order after World War II and 9/11 forever changed international relations and international law, so too will we one day divide time into life before the Coronavirus crisis and life after. It is incumbent upon each of us that we do not allow this change to be marked by States holding on to the expansive powers they have assumed under states of emergency. Internet freedom, for example, must be protected given we will see life further dominated by online communication.

It is TGTE’s hope that the solidarity we see today among many will be one of the lasting changes.

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