

Canada's Foreign Minister Marc Garneau Urged to Refer Sri Lanka to International Criminal Court by Disappeared Families

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Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

OTTAWA, CANADA , January 29, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ --

In a letter to Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Marc Garneau, Families of the Disappeared have urged him to refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Canada is taking a leadership role on Sri Lanka at the upcoming 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council Session in Geneva in February / March 2021.

Recently, Michelle Bachelet, the United Nation's High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in her Report dated 12th January 2021 urged UN Human Rights Council Member States to take steps toward the referral of the

situation in Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"Since you are a member of the Sri Lanka Core-Group at the UN Human Rights Council, we from the families of the disappeared are writing ahead of the 46th session of the Council, to respectfully appeal to you to include in your Sri Lanka Resolution, to Refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC)" said the letter.

"We specifically urge you this request after losing any hope to get justice for our disappeared relatives including our disappeared babies and children. As you are aware, UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances stated that the second highest number of enforced disappearance cases in the world is from Sri Lanka" continued the letter.

The letter outlined history of false promises by successive Sri Lankan Governments and Background on International Crimes Committed in Sri Lanka.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS:

1) According to the March 2011 Report of the UN Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka stated that there were credible allegations that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed during the final stages of the armed conflict between

the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and there could have been as many as 40,000 Tamil civilian deaths in the final six months.

2) According to the November 2012 Report of the UN Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on UN Action in Sri Lanka, over 70,000 people were unaccounted for during the final phase of the war in 2009.

3) Several were killed when Sri Lankan forces repeatedly bombed and shelled an area designated by the Government as No Fire Zones (Safe zones). Even hospitals and food distribution centers were bombed. Several also died of starvation and bled to death due to lack of medical treatment.

4) International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) in February 2017 handed over details to UN of Sri Lankan Military run "Rape Camps", where Tamil women are being held as "sex slaves."

5) According to UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office report on April 2013, there are over 90,000 Tamil war widows in Sri Lanka.

6) Thousands of Tamils disappeared including babies and children. UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances stated that the second highest number of enforced disappearance cases in the world is from Sri Lanka.



Canada's Foreign Minister Marc Garneau

BELOW, PLEASE FIND THE LETTER:

January 29, 2021

Marc Garneau

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Canada

Dear Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Re: Appeal to include in the Resolution on Sri Lanka to Refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Since you are a member of the Sri Lanka Core-Group at the UN Human Rights Council, we from the families of the disappeared are writing ahead of the 46th session of the Council, to respectfully appeal to you to include in your Sri Lanka Resolution, to Refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

As you are aware, Michelle Bachelet, the United Nation's High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in her Report dated 12th January 2021 urged UN Human Rights Council Member States to take steps toward the referral of the situation in Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

We specifically urge you this request after losing any hope to get justice for our disappeared relatives including our disappeared babies and children. As you are aware, UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances stated that the second highest number of enforced disappearance cases in the world is from Sri Lanka.

HISTORY OF FALSE PROMISES BY THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT:

We also would like to bring to your attention that successive Sri Lankan Governments have failed to implement any of the UNHRC Resolutions, including the ones they voluntarily co-sponsored.

Previous Government not only failed to take any meaningful steps to implement the Resolution that it co-sponsored, on the contrary the President, Prime Minister and senior members of the Government have repeatedly and categorically stated that they will not implement the UNHRC Resolution.

The current new Government went one step further and officially withdrew from the co-sponsorship of the Resolutions 30/1, 34/1 and 40/1 and walked away from UNHRC accountability process.

Furthermore, as a snub to UNHRC, only soldier who was ever punished and sentenced to death for killing civilians including children was pardoned by the current President.

Also, several senior military officials who were credibly accused of committing war crimes have been given promotions and treated as "war heroes." One officer who was named in UN reports as a suspected war criminal was promoted as a four-star General.

BACKGROUND ON INTERNATIONAL CRIMES COMMITTED IN SRI LANKA:

According to the March 2011 Report of the UN Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka stated that there were credible allegations that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed during the final stages of the armed conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and there could have been as many as 40,000 Tamil civilian deaths in the final six months.

According to the November 2012 Report of the UN Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on UN Action in Sri Lanka, over 70,000 people were unaccounted for during the final phase of the war in 2009.

Several were killed when Sri Lankan forces repeatedly bombed and shelled an area designated by the Government as No Fire Zones (Safe zones). Even hospitals and food distribution centers were bombed. Several also died of starvation and bled to death due to lack of medical treatment.

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According to UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office report on April 2013, there are over 90,000 Tamil war widows in Sri Lanka.

Thousands of Tamils disappeared including babies and children. UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances stated that the second highest number of enforced disappearance cases in the world is from Sri Lanka.

REQUEST:

We once again respectfully urge you to include in the Resolution on Sri Lanka to Refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Y. Kanagaranjini A. Leeladevi
President Secretary

Association for Relatives of Enforced Disappearances in the North and East Provinces of Sri Lanka.

Cosigned by District Leaders:

1) T. Selvarani – Ampara District.

- 2) A. Amalanayaki – Batticaloa District.
- 3) C. Illoankothai – Jaffna District.
- 4) K. Kokulavani – Kilinochchi District.
- 5) M. Chandra – Mannar District.
- 6) M. Easwari – Mullaitivu District.
- 7) S. Davi – Trincomalee District.
- 8) S. Saroyini – Vavunia District.

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