

As US Secretary of State Blinken Call for Action on Sri Lanka - He was Asked to Help Refer to Int'l Criminal Court -ICC

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North-East Civil Society Forum

JAFFNA, SRI LANKA, February 25, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/

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Secretary of State Blinken in his maiden speech to the UN Human Rights Council on February 24th, called on UN Human Rights Council member countries to support a Resolution on Sri Lanka.

" We encourage the Council to support resolutions at this session addressing issues of concern around the world, including ongoing human rights violations in Syria and North Korea, the lack of accountability for past atrocities in

Sri Lanka, and the need for further investigation into the situation in South Sudan." said Secretary Blinken during his address to the Council.

A Civil Society Group from Sri Lanka have sent a letter to him, urging him to help refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"We are writing to thank you for calling upon the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to support the Resolution on Sri Lanka for accountability for past atrocity crimes in that island." said the letter, written by North East Civil Society Forum.

"As you may be aware, the current Zero draft Resolution on Sri Lanka tabled by Core-Group on Sri Lanka does not urge Sri Lanka to be Referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for past accountability for atrocity crimes committed in Sri Lanka."

"We urge you to use your good offices to persuade Core-Group Countries consisting of the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Montenegro, and North Macedonia to include in the Zero draft to Refer Sri Lanka to International Criminal Court (ICC)."

"Due to the serious nature of the situation, Tamils unitedly sent a letter to the Core-Group on January 15, 2021, urging Sri Lanka to be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC). This call was validated by tens of thousands of Tamils in a recent rally called Pothuvil to Polikandy (P2P) which was organized by the North-East Civil Society." letter continued.

"Not referring Sri Lanka to ICC will not only open the doors for abusers of atrocity crimes to escape justice, but it will also embolden Sri Lankan political leaders and Security Force leaders to commit international atrocity crimes against Tamil people without any hesitation, knowing well that they will not have to face justice. We strongly urge you to seriously consider this risk Tamil people will face if Sri Lanka is not referred to International Criminal Court (ICC)." cautioned the letter.

"Furthermore, the current High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet in her Report dated 27th 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)."

"Also, twenty former senior UN officials, including four former UN High commissioners of human rights, nine independent UN experts, and all members of the UN Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka jointly issued a statement on February 18, 2021, titled "Sowing the Seeds of Conflict" has called on Sri Lanka to be Referred to International Criminal Court (ICC)."

BELOW, PLEASE FIND THE LETTER:

February 25, 2001

Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
United States of America

Dear Honourable Secretary of State,

We are writing to thank you for calling upon the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to support



US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken

the Resolution on Sri Lanka for accountability for past atrocity crimes in that island.

As you may be aware, the current Zero draft Resolution on Sri Lanka tabled by Core-Group on Sri Lanka does not urge Sri Lanka to be Referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for past accountability for atrocity crimes committed in Sri Lanka.

We urge you to use your good offices to persuade Core-Group Countries consisting of the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Montenegro, and North Macedonia to include in the Zero draft to Refer Sri Lanka to International Criminal Court (ICC).

Due to the serious nature of the situation, Tamils unitedly sent a letter to the Core-Group on January 15, 2021, urging Sri Lanka to be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC). This call was validated by tens of thousands of Tamils in a recent rally called Pothuvil to Polikandy (P2P) which was organized by the North-East Civil Society.

Not referring Sri Lanka to ICC will not only open the doors for abusers of atrocity crimes to escape justice, but it will also embolden Sri Lankan political leaders and Security Force leaders to commit international atrocity crimes against Tamil people without any hesitation, knowing well that they will not have to face justice. We strongly urge you to seriously consider this risk Tamil people will face if Sri Lanka is not referred to International Criminal Court (ICC).

Furthermore, the current High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet in her Report dated 27th 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).

Also, twenty former senior UN officials, including four former UN High commissioners of human rights, nine independent UN experts, and all members of the UN Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka jointly issued a statement on February 18, 2021, titled "Sowing the Seeds of Conflict" has called on Sri Lanka to be Referred to International Criminal Court (ICC).

"...the fact is that Sri Lanka has made its justice institutions unavailable to its own victims. We, therefore, echo the High Commissioner's recommendations to work with victims and their representatives to pursue justice through universal or extraterritorial jurisdiction. Existing international avenues for accountability such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) should be considered" said the report.

SOME EXAMPLES OF INTERNATIONAL ATROCITY CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST TAMIL PEOPLE BY THE SRI LANKAN STATE:

1) According to the March 2011 Report of the UN Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka stated that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed during the final stages of the armed conflict and around 40,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the final six months of the war that ended in May 2009.

2) According to the November 2012 Report of the UN Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on UN Action in Sri Lanka, over seventy thousand (70,000) Tamils were unaccounted for during the final six months of the war that ended in May 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.

HISTORY OF FALSE PROMISES BY THE SRI LANKAN STATE ON ACCOUNTABILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL CRIMES:

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.

The 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 the UNHRC accountability process.

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

We would appreciate if you could urge Core-Group countries on Sri Lanka at the UN Human

Rights Council to include referral to International Criminal Court (ICC) in their Zero draft Resolution.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

North East Civil Society Forum

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