

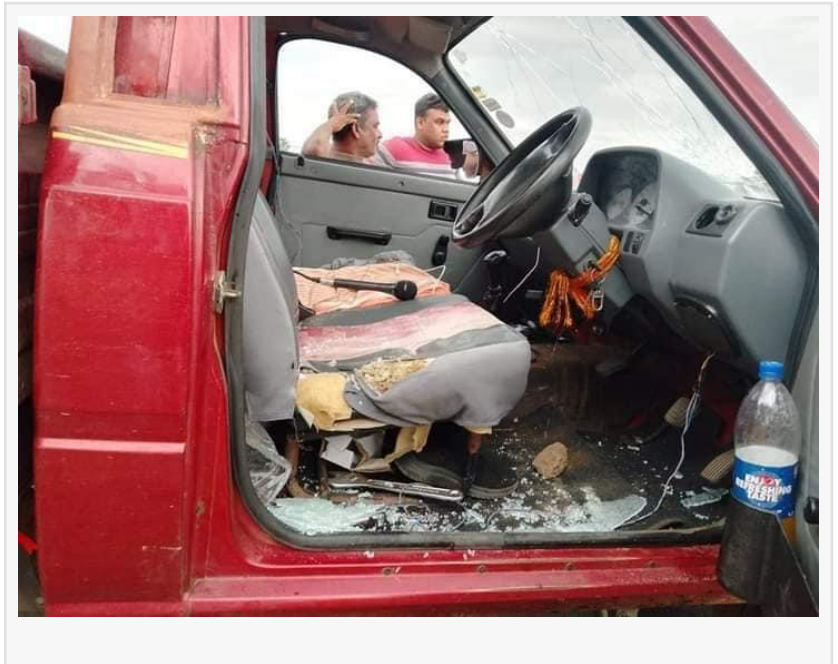
Memorialization Procession for Martyr Thileepan Attacked in Sri Lanka, Persecution of Tamils Continue: TGTE

This incident is only the most recent among a long-history of the Sinhala State denying Eelam Tamils their fundamental human rights

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On September 17, 2023, in the presence of Sri Lankan police, a Sinhala mob violently attacked the Memorialization Procession for Thiagi (Martyr) Thileepan. This incident is only the most recent among a long-history of the Sinhala State denying Eelam Tamils their fundamental human rights, underscoring the urgent need for an independent state for Eelam Tamils, as it is the only way the Tamil Peoples dignity and rights can be ensured and protected.

* Watch: <https://youtu.be/L-76Qqv9tDA?feature=shared>



Notably, during Sunday's attack on the procession, MP Selvarajah Gajendran, a respected member of parliament, and Mr. Kandeepan, a prominent attorney at law--both Tamil--were also targeted by the racist mob. This reprehensible act of violence against peaceful participants in a memorialization event highlights the ongoing challenges faced by the Tamil Nation in the island of Sri Lanka in asserting their inherent human rights.

Sunday's memorialization event commemorated the sacrifice of Lieutenant Colonel Thileepan, who, in 1987, embarked on a hunger strike to advocate for five key demands presented by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leadership to India. These demands included that the Sri Lankan State release Tamils detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, halt Sinhalese colonization in Tamil areas under the guise of rehabilitation and withdraw Sri Lankan security forces from schools in Tamil villages.

Despite the LTTEs hope at the time that India could influence Sri Lanka to meet these demands,



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Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran

when no response was received from India by September 15, 1987, Lieutenant Colonel Thileepan began his hunger strike. Tragically, on September 26th, after 12 days of refusing water and food, Lt. Col. Thiagi Thileepan lost his life. Since then, annual commemorations have been held by Tamils worldwide to honor his memory.

In light of Sunday's procession attack, it is especially crucial to recognize that memorialization is a fundamental right, representing a way for communities to remember their history and those who sacrificed for their cause. This right is protected by international human rights principles.

Sunday's attack on the Memorialization Procession for Thiagi (Martyr) Thileepan not only demonstrates the grave challenges faced by the Tamil Nation in the island of Sri Lanka but also highlights the refusal of the Sinhala polity to acknowledge even peaceful campaigns, the Tamil Peoples rights to peaceful assembly and free speech, and the significance of memorialization as a fundamental right.

In 2020, the Sri Lankan judiciary banned the commemoration of Thiagi Thileepan's death on the ground that "unnamed foreign citizens were planning to attend the event which risked spreading Covid-19". Following the ban the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) sent a petition to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, urging them to ensure that Sri Lankan public authorities respect the Tamil Nation's right to pay homage to Thiagi Thileepan through peaceful assembly and expression.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Turk, highlighted in his most recent report to the Human Rights Council the ongoing challenges faced by human rights defenders, activists, and those involved in memorialization initiatives in Sri Lanka. In his report released earlier this month, High Commissioner Turk further stated that reports of surveillance, intimidation, and harassment by Sri Lankan intelligence services, the military, and the police, or by unidentified individuals affiliated with former paramilitaries, are deeply concerning and must be addressed.

Link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/accountability-central-sri-lankas-future-un-human-rights-report>

TGTE calls on the international community to stand together and protect the fundamental human rights of the Eelam Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka, ensuring the Tamil People in the island of Sri Lanka their rights to memorialization, peaceful assembly, and expression.

This past Sunday's mob attack on the peaceful procession to commemorate a member of the

Eelam Tamil community is a stark reminder that the denial of Tamils right to memorialization, let alone their rights to peaceful assembly and expression, reinforces the necessity for an independent state for the Tamil People in the island of Sri Lanka. Only such an independent state can provide them the space to exercise their fundamental international human rights, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and allow them to live with dignity, and security to which they are entitled.

ABOUT THE TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL EELAM (TGTE):

The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) is a democratically elected Government of over a million strong Tamils (from the island of Sri Lanka) living in several countries around the world.

TGTE was formed after the mass killing of Tamils by the Sri Lankan Government in 2009.

TGTE thrice held internationally supervised elections among Tamils around the world to elect 132 Members of Parliament. It has two chambers of Parliament: The House of Representatives and the Senate and also a Cabinet.

TGTE is leading a campaign to realize the political aspirations of Tamils through peaceful, democratic, and diplomatic means and its Constitution mandates that it should realize its political objectives only through peaceful means. It's based on the principles of nationhood, homeland and self-determination.

TGTE seeks that the international community hold the perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against the Tamil people to account. TGTE calls for a referendum to decide the political future of Tamils.

The Prime Minister of TGTE is Mr. Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran, a New York based lawyer.

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