

Tamil Judge Flee Sri Lanka to Save His Life

TGTE Salutes Judge Saravanarajah for his Judicial Moral Courage and Calls for Threat Accountability

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2023
/EINPresswire.com/ --

On September 23, 2013, Judge T. Saravanarajah resigned from his positions as Mullaitivu District Judge of Mullaitivu and, the post of the magistrate, the post of family court Judge, the post of primary court Judge, the post of small claims court Judge, and the post of Juvenile court Judge. In his letter sent to the Judicial Services Commission, stated the cause of his resignation was due to threat of my life and lot of stress.



Judge Saravanarajah faced threats on his life, it is reported, due at least in part to the decision he issued pertaining to the Kurunthumalai Vihara matter. He rendered a decision on August 31 st 2023, holding the officials of the archeological department in contempt of court for their failure to the previous court order, calling for dismantling of all new constructions, including the construction of the stupa built upon the site of a Hindu temple, carried out after July 14 th, 2022.

* WATCH: https://youtu.be/er_I5in39gk?si=XYJrNGA4jD5S73Jm

For many years and even presently, the Sri Lankan government, comprised of the Sinhala ethnic group, has and currently is engaged in a campaign to either destroy entirely or appropriate Hindu temples and convert them into Buddhist temples under the false pretext of archaeological discovery. Several Buddhist temples have been built recently in historical Tamil areas or are in the process of being built with the active support of the Sri Lankan security forces stationed in repressively huge numbers in these Tamil areas, even after the war ended 14 years ago. It should be noted that no Buddhists live in the Tamil areas where these Buddhist temples are being built.

We now know it was not only the Tamil Temples that faced--and continue to face--imminent threat, but Tamil judges as well.

Since his ruling, Judge Saravanarajah has stated that he is being subjected to death threats and intense pressure.

Judge Saravanarajah also stated that two legal actions have been filed against him pertaining to his Kurunthormalai Vihara Decision in the Court of Appeals using his personal name, that his police protection had also been reduced, that he had been followed by Sri Lankan Intelligence Service, and had been summoned to the Office of the Attorney General on the 21st of September and was pressured to change the decision.

He concluded his statement by noting that due to the threats to this life, he was resigning from all judicial positions, which he cherished and loved so much.

The above incident--a veteran Tamil Judge threatened out of his many earned judicial posts--clearly shows that not only is there no domestic remedy for Tamils in Sri Lanka but also that Tamil Judges lives are also in danger. Given this, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe's talk of reconciliation is an affront to humanity.

This latest incident clearly shows the impotence of President Wickremesinghe.

Sadly, this incident of a Tamil forced to flee Sri Lanka to save his life despite having committed no crime and simply just for having upheld the rule of law is not a shocking one; it is only the most recent example of the brutal racism in the island of Sri Lanka.

Given the historical context of the persecution and genocide of Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka, the Human Rights Councils call for an internal investigation of the international crimes--namely Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, and War Crimes--committed during the final stages of the war is not only a cruel joke but also undermines the integrity of the Human Rights Council itself.

If Tamil members of the judiciary in Sri Lanka are unsafe for doing their democratic duty, how can the Human Rights Council possibly expect victims and witnesses to speak freely and remain safe?

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