



5<sup>th</sup> May 2007

Mr Michel Legras  
French Ambassador to New Zealand  
Embassy of France in New Zealand

Dear Mr Legras

In your capacity as the French Ambassador to New Zealand, the Tamil Youth Organisation New Zealand (TYONZ) wishes to raise the issue of the treatment of Tamils and Tamil property in France.

The arrest of Tamil community leaders in France has come as a shock and a major disappointment to TYONZ. We are also furthermore stunned and appalled by the raid on Tamil holy institutes, media organisations and NGOs.

As you are well aware, the Tamil Diaspora exists as a result of persecution in Sri Lanka. As with any ethnic group, Tamils living away Sri Lanka do not wish to lose their language, culture or identity. Hence it is vital that institutes such as the TTN television station, the Hindu temples and NGO groups working for Tamils are allowed to function. Without such groups we lose the only and most vital link with our language, culture and identity. And in fostering these connections, community leaders are very important. They play a fundamental role in keeping the community together and fostering the Tamil identity away from the Tamil homeland.

This is why the aggression shown towards the Tamil community in France is an issue of major concern. By stopping Tamil activities in Paris, French authorities are essentially denying several generations of Tamils their only link to their culture. This link is especially critical for the young generation to keep the Tamil culture alive.

TYONZ is gravely concerned that our counterparts in France will miss out on a chance to relate and learn about their culture if the hostility shown towards to Tamil community is not immediately halted.

TYONZ also condemns the closure of Tamil institutes in France and the arrest of community leaders. The gross violation of freedom of expression that has occurred in France cannot go unnoticed. The Tamil community internationally cannot sit back and take the denial of human rights to French Tamils; as this is why Tamils left Sri Lanka in the first place.

We implore you not to let France become another Sri Lanka for Tamils and to release the community leaders and reopen Tamil institutes.

Yours Sincerely

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