



May 19, 2009

Dear Mr. Templer,

We appreciate your article, “Day of reckoning in Sri Lanka” published on April 20 in which you highlighted the imminent massacre of civilians in Northern Sri Lanka and the call for international actors to demand the Sri Lankan government end its military offensive. You are probably aware that since that time, thousands of Tamil civilians have been killed by bombing and shelling in the “Safe Zone.”

As organizations who represent a large part of the Tamil Diaspora in the United States, we have been campaigning for the United Nations and ICRC to establish a presence on the ground to monitor the “Safe Zone” and government-run internment camps in Vavuniya. Claims of civilians being used as “human shields” in conflict areas and human rights violations inside internment camps must be immediately investigated. We thank you for your calls to action regarding these grave allegations.

We strongly agree that there is no military solution to this conflict and a political solution must be realized with the full participation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE continues to receive significant support from the Tamil people in Sri Lanka and abroad and any future political solution should be reflective of this reality. As many analysts and diplomats have warned, a “military victory” claimed by the Sri Lankan government at any time will not end this 60-year conflict. The conflict will continue until the grievances of Tamils are addressed through a meaningful political dialogue with the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government.

Your article stated that there were “disturbing signs that a new generation of young Tamils in the United States, Canada, Britain, Europe and India are being radicalized ... [with the potential to lead to] ...new forms of terrorism and violence.” We are surprised and concerned by this pernicious allegation. In the United States, young Tamils have organized and participated in countless peaceful actions to highlight the suffering of Tamils in Sri Lanka. They continue to navigate mainstream channels of grassroots and professional advocacy in seeking a sustainable, political resolution to the crisis.

The younger generation in the United States has given voice to the Tamils in Sri Lanka through peaceful protests, hunger strikes, meetings with Congressional offices, writing opinion articles and connecting with other US-based human rights organizations. We are perplexed as to how these actions could be construed as the younger generation becoming “radicalized” or leading to “new forms of terrorism.”

Applying such a blanket statement to the younger generation of Tamils all over the world and especially to those in the US has the detrimental effect of isolating the younger generation at a time when the world community, including policymakers, media and the population at large, should be engaging with them. Moreover, your statements cultivate a dangerous and damaging smear campaign that endangers the legitimacy and credibility the younger generation has established in empowering the Diaspora in one of the biggest worldwide civic movements of this century.

Not only do these claims have racist connotations, but it perpetuates the Sri Lankan government's propaganda and stereotyping that all Tamils should be suspected of being "terrorists" whenever they attempt to articulate or engage in constructive action to highlight the suffering of their brethren. We are deeply disturbed to see that the International Crisis Group has chosen to make these unfounded generalizations and ask that evidence be submitted to support your claims that young Tamils are "recipes for another, possibly more explosive generation of terrorism." As American citizens and global citizens, young Tamils in the United States embrace the rights afforded under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and U.N. conventions and continue to advocate for Tamils in Sri Lanka to actualize these rights.

This statement is drafted by members of People for Equality and Relief in Lanka and HELP Advocates Sri Lanka and endorsed by:

Americans for Peace in Sri Lanka
American Tamils of Wisconsin
Association of Sri Lankan Tamils in the USA
Boston Tamil Association of New England
Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America
Florida Ilankai Tamil Sangam
Georgians Against Genocide in Sri Lanka
Minnesota Tamils for Peace
North Carolinians for Peace
Panai Nilam Tamil Sangam (Association of Tamils in South Carolina)
Tamils Against Genocide
Tamils for Obama
Tamils of Northern California
Tamils of Seattle
World Tamil Organization, Inc.