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State Sponsored Terror Continues Against Tamils in Northern Sri Lanka

The Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations (AFTA), the umbrella body of the peak Tamil associations in the States and Territories of Australia and New Zealand, while concerned about the 15 deaths and mass evacuation of towns and suburbs in Queensland in Australia and floods and landslides that have killed scores and displaced over 200,000 civilians in the eastern and central regions of Sri Lanka, would like to bring to the attention of the Independent Media and the Democratic Governments of the world especially of Australia and New Zealand, the continuing state terror, defenceless Tamils in northern Sri Lanka are facing.

The Associated Press reported on 6 January 2011 that Sri Lanka's former war zone is again seeing unexplained killings, abductions and rapes despite the heavy presence of the Sri Lankan security forces in the north of the island. According to this report, a group of Tamil parliamentarians submitted to the Sri Lankan Parliament a list of 15 serious incidents that they say occurred in the northern Jaffna peninsula in the past two months. They asked the government to explain how such crimes could take place one and a half years after the end of the military conflict and with some 50,000 government troops stationed in the northern Jaffna peninsula alone (a ratio of 1 soldier per every 10 civilians). One of the parliamentarians Mr. Suresh Premachandran has remarked that "these atrocities are escalating under a heavy security blanket and how could these happen without the government knowing?"

Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS) reported that within the last two weeks of 2010 the violence against northern Tamils reported from a region with a disproportionate military presence where independent media and voluntary organizations are barred is worrying. This includes but not limited to the;

- killing of a Deputy Director of Education for objecting to the government making Tamil school children recite the Sri Lankan national anthem in Sinhala against their wish,
- a chief priest for paying respect to the war dead and,
- an environmentalist for campaigning against illegal mining of sand by a paramilitary group and
- the abduction of a school teacher.

Opposition leader, Ranil Wickremasinghe told the Sri Lankan Parliament that an all-party delegation should be urgently sent to the Tamil heartland to assess the situation. Government minister, and Tamil politician, Douglas Devananda added that "a fear psychosis" was prevailing in the Northern Province.

AFTA is convinced that these killings are not random acts of violence by the Sri Lankan armed forces or pro-government armed paramilitary groups. They are calculated acts to terrorize the Tamil people and to subjugate them, particularly after the Tamils' armed resistance has been crushed.

The Sri Lankan Government continues to use the draconian anti-terrorism law and the special emergency regulations, even after silencing the armed resistance of the Tamil people. Instead of focusing on the resettlement of the displaced and reconciliation, the Rajapaksa regime continues to deny free access to the war ravaged areas to the media and independent observers and is hastily building in these areas, war memorials for its victorious army, new army cantonments, Buddhist temples, tourist hotels and prisons. It is alleged that these measures are aimed at removing or concealing all hard evidence against the terrible war crimes committed during the last phase of the war in the first half of 2009.

On the shameful attitude of the International community with regard to the violation of human rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka during the last phase of the war, Hon. Kofi Annan, the much respected former Secretary General of the United Nations Organization stated then: "*There has been a deafening global silence in response to Sri Lanka's actions, especially from its most influential friends. The International community cannot be selective in its approval to upholding the rule of law and respect for human rights. Impunity anywhere is a threat to international peace and security*". In spite of all the efforts of people like Hon. Kofi Annan, due to the continuing silence by the International Community with regard to the violations of human rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan government and its paramilitaries continue to act with impunity and continue the structural genocide which Tamils living in Sri Lanka have been subjected to for the past 60 years.

AFTA whilst praying for and pledging support to, the suffering victims of the floods in Queensland and Sri Lanka, calls on the governments of Australia and New Zealand and the like minded democracies around the globe to take positive diplomatic measures to end the continuing state terror directed against the Tamils and help restore rule of law and democracy for all the peoples in Sri Lanka.

AFTA also appeals to the independent media to highlight these human right violations and help to inform the public so that they could in turn persuade their respective governments to positively intervene in Sri Lanka.

AFTA Member Associations:

Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland and Wellington