

**Demanding accountability for international crimes committed by Sri Lankan Armed Forces
attending 2017 UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference in Vancouver**

For Immediate Release

November 8, 2017

Ottawa, ON - A coalition of organizations will be in Ottawa today at 1:30 p.m. to highlight Sri Lanka's litany of violations of international law and to demand swift action from the Government of Canada during the upcoming UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference to be held in Vancouver on November 14-15, 2017. In a letter written by the coalition to Minister Ralph Goodale, and to Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould, the coalition is asking the Canadian government to take decisive action. Minister Goodale is asked to deny entry of senior officials of the Sri Lankan armed forces to Canada under section 35(1) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, and Attorney General Wilson-Raybould is asked to commence an investigation into war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide under the *Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act*.

"There are damning allegations against the Sri Lankan armed forces in violating international human rights and humanitarian law. They are alleged to have bombed hospitals, no-fly zones, innocent civilians, and other unimaginable acts against their own people. We have eyewitnesses to these violations residing in Canada who are traumatized at the prospect of Sri Lankan armed forces members walking free on Canadian soil. The Sri Lankan armed forces continue to occupy civilians lands, and there is a pattern of rape, and sexual violence against Tamil women. Notwithstanding the mounting evidence of these violations, the culture of impunity that exists in the Sri Lankan state has shielded members of the armed forces from prosecution" stated Malliha Wilson, senior partner for Nava Wilson LLP, counsel for the coalition of organizations.

Sri Lanka's deployment to Haiti as UN Peacekeepers adds to the pattern of impunity and sexual violence. Sri Lankan army personnel are alleged to have ran a child sex ring and raped Haitian women and children while serving as UN Peacekeepers. From 2004 to 2007, at least 134 Sri Lankan peacekeepers are alleged to have sexually exploited and abused nine children in a child sex ring, according to the Associated Press. While 114 peacekeepers were sent home after the report was filed, none were ever indicted or convicted. Mario Joseph, a Haitian lawyer at Bureau des Avocats Internationaux, shares the sentiment among many other Haitians, wondering "whether the UN has done more harm than good in a country that has endured tragedy after tragedy."

"We see history repeating itself with states killing its own citizens. From Sri Lanka to Syria to Myanmar, the recent swath of gross and systematic violations of international law will continue unabated without countries like Canada taking a firm stance and hold those responsible to account. Today, we start a new campaign for accountability of Sri Lanka in Canada" concluded Wilson.

Coalition of Organizations:

National organizations

Canadian Tamil Congress
Centre for War Victims and Human Rights
National Council of Canadian Tamils
Quebec Tamil Development Association
Tamil Canadians Civil Society Forum

International organizations

Australian Tamil Congress
British Tamils Forum
People for Equality and Relief in Lanka
Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam
United States Tamil Political Action Council

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