



TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

1st January 2008

The Rt Hon. Dr Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India

Dear Dr Manmohan Singh

An appeal to cancel your visit to Colombo on 4th February 2008 - It will be seen as an endorsement of the Sri Lankan government's war to eliminate the Tamils

Your reputation as a humane and erudite scholar and an eminent technocrat who has governed the emerging global power that is India with a surefootedness has given us great hope for our region. I write as a British resident of some 40 years standing, originally from Sri Lanka. I am also a retired senior executive of the Royal Dutch Shell Group from its Head Office in London. Let me wish you, your family and your country a happy and prosperous New Year.

Sri Lanka is soaked in the blood of innocent Tamil civilians, where their homeland is bombed and shelled by supersonic aircraft and multi-barrelled cannons. In this indiscriminate war, the victims and the fatalities are the hapless Tamils. The Sri Lankan government is determined to trample on the rights of Tamils even if it meant killing most of them and obliterating their traditional homeland. Through your High Commissioner in Colombo, you must know of the harrowing tales of kidnap and death of Tamils by the government's own forces or their paramilitaries in government controlled areas. The government is executing Tamil leaders using their paramilitary associates and very soon there will be no effective leader left for them.

It was reported today that Colombo district Tamil parliamentarian of the opposition United National Party, T. Maheswaran, was shot at Ponnambala Va'neasvarar temple at Kochchikkadai in Colombo today (1st January 2008) around 10:00 a.m., while he was paying homage at the shrine, and succumbed to his injuries at Colombo hospital. The shooting, which also claimed the life of his bodyguard, comes a few hours after the parliamentarian had said that he would reveal details on how abductions and killings in Jaffna are managed by the Sri Lankan establishment through the EPDP paramilitary, from Colombo. Eleven days ago, the government of Sri Lanka had reduced the Ministerial Security Division guards provided to the MP from Eighteen to two.

Another Tamil parliamentarian in Colombo, Mano Ganesan, the leader of the Western Province Peoples Front (WPPF) and the convener of the Civil Monitoring Committee, whose security was also slashed by the GoSL, has recently said he was left with no other option than leaving Sri Lanka as the lives of Tamil parliamentarians have been endangered by the reduction of security provided to them. Two years ago, a senior Tamil politician and the Tamil National Alliance Member of Parliament, Joseph Pararajasingham, was shot and killed at St. Mary's co-cathedral church in Batticaloa city, while attending Christmas prayers on the night of Christmas eve. A year ago, a lawyer turned politician and former mayor of Jaffna, Nadarajah Raviraj, the Jaffna district Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP, was assassinated in Colombo on November 10, 2006.

In addition, the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami mostly hit the Tamil areas of the East and the North-east with over 30,000 deaths and hundreds of thousands rendered homeless. The government would not agree to any reasonable mechanism to distribute millions of dollars of foreign assistance pledged to alleviate the appalling conditions of the Tsunami affected



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Tamils of the NorthEast, as in their eyes they are worse than dogs. Their humanity is denied and they have been allowed to starve and languish in camps even after three whole years.

The government of Sri Lanka treats the NorthEast not as any part of its own territory when it resorts to ruthless bombing on a daily basis. Bomber aircraft and rockets are launched on daily sorties to wipe out the Tamils and the propaganda machinery of the government claims all kills as Tigers. These bombs cannot tell a Tiger cadre from a civilian Tamil and so the toll of Tamil civilians mount by about 10,000 each year. There is a veritable genocide being carried out on your doorsteps with artful deception to avert your eyes. The Tamil people being killed are brothers and sisters of your own people of Tamil Nadu. Your voice on their behalf will save them from death and extinction.

I recently read your speech at the University of Oxford when you accepted your honorary degree. In a gem studded speech covering relations between India and Great Britain, I just picked at random three passages at the beginning of your speech that left me reeling with delight at your perspicacity of understanding the world we live in, sprinkled with quotations from the illustrious and legendary heroes of my youth, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The Tamils of the NorthEast of Sri Lanka before the granting of independence were the engine that drove the Education sector of the whole of Sri Lanka, the civil service and the mercantile sector. Analogous to India under the British as you have stated, the economy of the NorthEast Sri Lanka has collapsed under the Sinhala yoke and after 50 years of grave discrimination it is time for the Tamils and their homeland to be set free. Once the Tamils are recognised as equals with the Sinhalese, Tamil-Sinhala relationship at the individual and state level will flourish to the mutual advantage of both nations.

This how you have described Indo-British relationship and your thoughts are so perceptive that I would like to ask for your kind permission to repeat these below:

"There is no doubt that our grievances against the British Empire had a sound basis. As the painstaking statistical work of the Cambridge historian Angus Maddison has shown, India's share of world income collapsed from 22.6% in 1700, almost equal to Europe's share of 23.3% at that time, to as low as 3.8% in 1952. Indeed, at the beginning of the 20th Century, "the brightest jewel in the British Crown" was the poorest country in the world in terms of per capita income. However, what is significant about the Indo-British relationship is the fact that despite the economic impact of colonial rule, the relationship between individual Indians and Britons, even at the time of our Independence, was relaxed and, I may even say, benign".

"This was best exemplified by the exchange that Mahatma Gandhi had here at Oxford in 1931 when he met members of the Raleigh Club and the Indian Majlis. The Mahatma was in England then for the Round Table Conference and during its recess, he spent two weekends at the home of A.D. Lindsay, the Master of Balliol. At this meeting, the Mahatma was asked: "How far would you cut India off from the Empire?" His reply was precise - "From the Empire, entirely; from the British nation not at all, if I want India to gain and not to grieve." He added, "The British Empire is an Empire only because of India. The Emperorship must go and I should love to be an equal partner with Britain, sharing her joys and sorrows. But it must be a partnership on equal terms." This remarkable statement by the Mahatma has defined the basis of our relationship with Britain.

Jawaharlal Nehru echoed this sentiment when he urged the Indian Constituent Assembly in 1949 to vote in favour of India's membership of the Commonwealth. Nehru set the tone for independent India's relations with its former master when he intervened in the Constituent Assembly's debate on India joining the Commonwealth and said:

"I wanted the world to see that India did not lack faith in herself, and that India was prepared to co-operate even with those with whom she had been fighting in the past



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provided the basis of the co-operation today was honourable, that it was a free basis, a basis which would lead to the good not only of ourselves, but of the world also. That is to say, we would not deny that co-operation simply because in the past we had fought and thus carry on the trail of our past karma along with us. We have to wash out the past with all its evil."

We take heart that the Tamils do not lack faith in themselves and that they are prepared to co-operate honourably with those who sought to suppress them. This constellation of sparkling ideas from the Mahatma, Nehruji and yourself gives me the confidence to conclude by asking again that you would be so kind as to not give your moral support to a ruthless and unscrupulous President Rajapakse and his morally bankrupt government by your presence at what is considered the day of the death of Tamil freedom in Sri Lanka. Great leaders of depth and understanding are indeed rare and your eminence is well deserved. The beat of his war drums are so loud and his threat to overrun the Tamil homeland in six months is so blood-curdling that it will lay waste to the whole of it with many thousands dead. Among all the current world leaders, you alone from the region have the power to stop this catastrophe.

May God bless you.

Yours sincerely

(Signed)

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