

**AUSTRALASIAN FEDERATION OF TAMIL ASSOCIATIONS INC.**

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**Media Release**

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***Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Kosovo***

The Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations (AFTA) welcomes Kosovo's recent Unilateral Declaration of Independence. AFTA appreciates the effort taken earlier by the NATO forces in protecting the people of Kosovo from the oppressive Serbian security forces, which has paved the way for Kosovo Albanians to come out free from the clutches of the Serbian aggression.

AFTA recognises the fact that people's representatives in Kosovo decided to take this unilateral action after realising that, there is no reason to believe that further negotiations would lead to a mutually agreed solution to the conflict. AFTA congratulates the people of Kosovo for taking such a bold move. AFTA also believes that this is the only way Kosovo can guarantee the security of its people and continue its economic and political development.

AFTA appreciates the swift signals shown by the Major Western Nations such as USA, UK, many EU countries, Australia, Norway and other Nordic countries in support of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of Independence. AFTA appreciates the Australian government respecting the decision of the people of Kosovo and promptly announcing publicly its decision to establish soon, diplomatic relations with Kosovo.

AFTA believes that Kosovo will now develop into a multi-ethnic, democratic state with respect for human rights and rule of law. AFTA hopes that Kosovo will respect the religious and cultural heritage of the various ethnic groups in this fledgling Nation.

In regards to the conflict in Sri Lanka, having been subject to oppression leading to genocide, the Tamil people of Sri Lanka came to a foregone conclusion in 1976 that, only the restoration of their statehood based on their inalienable right to self-determination would allow them to, protect their Tamil identity, live in security and dignity and reach their full potential. AFTA strongly believes that the International Community would have come to the conclusion at least by now, that the Sinhala Political establishment in Sri Lanka is not willing to negotiate an enduring power sharing political arrangement with the Tamil people that respects and recognises their right to self-determination.

Therefore AFTA appeals to the International Community in general and Australian government in particular, at this critical phase of the conflict in Sri Lanka, to at least publicly recognise the right to self-determination of the Tamils in Sri Lanka who have been facing a similar situation as the people of Kosovo, for more than 50 years and loosing 80,000 precious lives in the process.

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