



For immediate release

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Protests Against Clothing 'Made in Sri Lanka' on September 12

On September 12, 2009 concerned consumers across the nation plan to stage protests in front of GAP and Victoria's Secret stores to warn customers to check the label and say no to products made in Sri Lanka. USTPAC welcomes this campaign by consumers who are advocates for human rights. Sri Lanka is attempting to destroy the Tamil community on the island and this effort is being paid for by American customers who buy clothing 'Made in Sri Lanka.' We are asking Americans to say 'No to Garments for Genocide.'

In 2009, the Sri Lankan armed forces killed over 20,000 Tamil civilians with indiscriminate attacks and starvation. While Western nations call for an investigation of war crimes, the Sri Lankan government continues to deny independent investigators and journalists access to war-torn areas. Currently 282,000 Tamil civilians are being held indefinitely in military-controlled internment camps in unsanitary conditions without adequate food and water, from which 4-5 young people are taken every day to unknown destinations. An estimated 1400 civilians die per week from preventable diseases, as humanitarian agencies are not being allowed to provide sufficient aid.

While holding innocent Tamil civilians in internment camps and claiming insufficient funds to provide necessary food and shelter, the Sri Lankan government continues to recruit troops and build up its army to occupy the traditional Tamil homeland in the North East of the Island. To sustain such a highly militarized state, the Sri Lankan government depends on the garment industry, Sri Lanka's largest source of foreign exchange. Recognizing Sri Lanka's human rights violations, the European Union has indicated in the past week that Sri Lanka will likely lose its trade preferences for garments.

Protestors hope that American corporations will begin to move their production of clothing to other countries that do not commit serious human rights abuses. GAP and Victoria's Secret are two primary American corporations who purchase and sell garments made in Sri Lanka, thus helping the Sri Lankan government fund its military. Accordingly, these two corporations have been targeted as part of a larger boycott campaign against products made in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has tried to sell its garments under the slogan 'Garments Without Guilt' because of its labor conditions, but that slogan does not take into account the treatment of the Tamils on the island generally and the job discrimination against Tamils in the garment factories.

Consumers who purchase products made in Sri Lanka enable the Sri Lankan government to continue to violate the basic human rights of its Tamil citizens. In order to call attention to Sri Lanka's brutal treatment of Tamils and prevent further violations, protestors are asking consumers to check the label and not purchase products made in Sri Lanka.

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