



For immediate release

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USTPAC Mourns Passing of Senator Edward Kennedy

The US Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC) mourns the passing of Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy. Our members from Massachusetts who were his constituents and supported him in many elections are particularly filled with sad emotion at his loss.

The loss of Sen. Kennedy is particularly grave for Tamils at this time when hope is hard to find. Tamil Americans take comfort always in his inspiring words "...the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die."

Sen. Kennedy for many years carried the torch of tolerance, an appreciation for diversity and an understanding of the need for the respect for democracy and human rights not just here in the US, but also in the rest of the world. Standing for these values has been particularly important during the all-or-nothing periods of the Cold War and its successor, the War on Terror, when fear and hatred of the 'other' threatened to overwhelm these core American beliefs.

According to Sen. Kennedy, "Ultimately, America's answer to the intolerant man is diversity, the very diversity which our heritage of religious freedom has inspired." These are important words both for America and many conflict-ridden parts of the world, including Sri Lanka.

We echo Amnesty International USA's statement that "the world has lost an active supporter of human rights around the globe, especially in the United States. He worked tirelessly on behalf of people whose voices were never heard, whose plights were hidden from view and whose well-being was ignored... From advancing reforms on immigrant detention, to championing healthcare as a right for all Americans, to pushing for torture victims' relief, to pressing for humanitarian aid for refugees around the world including the most recent conflict in Sri Lanka, to defending the rule of law, Senator Kennedy always knew and acted to end the misery of those who were suffering... [T]he Kennedy family legacy of helping the disempowered remains vital and vibrant."

The 300,000 Tamils interred indefinitely in 21st century concentration camps in Sri Lanka will miss Sen. Kennedy's concern, as will all Tamil Americans.

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