



For Immediate Release
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USTPAC Dismayed at Flawed Domestic Inquiry in Sri Lanka: Urgent International Investigation Need of the Hour

The United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC) finds the report of Sri Lanka's domestic inquiry into alleged war crimes deeply flawed and urges the implementation of UN Panel of Experts' recommendations by creating an international investigative mechanism.

USTPAC welcomes the public release of the long-awaited Report of the Sri Lankan Government's Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission, an action USTPAC has called for repeatedly during the year the Report has been delayed. Along with the rest of the international community, USTPAC has eagerly anticipated the findings and recommendations of the Commission, which is the Government's main attempt to answer widespread calls for accountability. However, USTPAC is dismayed to find that the Report is deeply flawed, and fails to address the serious issues raised in the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts Report.

USTPAC notes the Commission's acknowledgement of the disappearances, extra-judicial executions and arbitrary detentions that occurred during the war. The Commission also took a positive step in acknowledging that a "considerable" number of civilians died at the end of war. USTPAC is grateful for the courage of those who brought abuses to the attention of the Commission, despite the absence of witness protection.

As the UN Panel of Experts predicted, however, the Commission has proven unable to fulfill the Government's commitment to a process of accountability as necessary precursor to reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

While the Commission acknowledges for the first time that there were "considerable" civilian casualties during the final stages of the war, USTPAC notes that it refuses to assign responsibility to the Government's armed forces, placing blame mainly on the LTTE. USTPAC insists that crimes committed by both sides of the conflict must be investigated and punished with equal vigor. The Government's culpability must also be addressed, as should those crimes the Commission details were committed by the LTTE. The Commission's conclusion that the military gave the "highest priority" to protecting civilians is untenable and in stark contrast to the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts Report, which indicated credible allegations of

direct attacks by the Sri Lankan Army on civilians in the “No Fire Zones,” as well as on civilian objects such as hospitals. These are serious allegations that must be properly investigated in order for true accountability to take place, and for the country to begin the long process of reconciliation.

In short, the Report continues to sound the discredited theme that the widespread crimes against humanity were the work of a few “bad apples.” There is serious evidence, unanswered by this Report, that the atrocities perpetrated on the Tamil community resulted from a planned strategy of the Government at the highest levels to achieve their military goals.

USTPAC urges the UN Secretary-General, the UN Security Council and members of the UN Human Rights Council to take immediate action to establish a mechanism to investigate these serious allegations of widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that took place during the final stages of the war, provide justice for the victims, and protect those who survived. We believe such a mechanism must apply to both sides for the abuse and crimes committed.

“We in the Tamil community know the breadth of the abuses firsthand, because so many were directed against our families and friends.” said USTPAC President Dr. Elias Jeyarajah. “We therefore call again for a neutral, internationally established investigation to ascertain the facts and propose remedies. Simply covering up atrocities that all in the Tamil community know took place will not lay the foundation for true reconciliation.”

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About USTPAC:

The United States Tamil Political Action Council is a registered not-for-profit organization in the U.S. with the mission of achieving a peaceful political solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka by democratic, non-violent and lawful means.