



# Representatives of US and Canadian Tamil organizations make presentation at UNHRC sessions in Geneva

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Representatives of United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC) and Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) attended the 21st sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Sessions in Geneva,



Switzerland and made presentations on matters concerning the situation in Sri Lanka.

USTPAC and CTC participated at the UNHRC Geneva sessions with the accreditation provided by Pasumai Thyayagam Foundation, a Non Governmental Organization operating in South India which has special consultative status with Economic and Social Council of United nations.

Full Text of statements by Dhamy Rajendra and Tasha Manoranjan of USTPAC and Vani Selvarajah of CTC as follows:

## UN Special Rapporteur on Racism urged to make an official visit to Sri Lanka



**Presented by Dhamy Rajendra, United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC), 25 September 2012:**

Thank you Madam President.

We draw this Council's attention to

racism and intolerance in Sri Lanka against Tamils, Muslims and Christians.

Since the proclaimed end of the armed conflict in May 2009, the Sinhalese led government of Sri Lanka has accelerated its systematic discrimination against the Tamil speaking peoples living in the war-torn Sri Lanka.

Despite calls from the international community and the government's own Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission report to de-militarize, the Sri Lankan army (SLA) continues to construct new army cantonments and refuses to dismantle high security zones in the traditional Tamil majority areas of the island.

This has resulted in the coercive control and repression of the Tamils in virtually every aspect of their lives by an army whose ethnic composition is nearly entirely Sinhalese, and whose presence constitutes the largest military occupation per capita in Asia. There is 1 soldier for every 5 civilians, an army camp for every village, a guard post at every intersection.

The Sri Lankan army has facilitated the destruction of Muslim mosques and Christian churches, which is leading in part to the decimation of religious and ethnic identity of subjugated groups. The army is also responsible for exacerbating harsh conditions for women, particularly young or widowed Tamil women, who are victimized by rampant sexual violence by Sri Lankan soldiers.

Racism in areas of language, education and employment is pervasive and deeply ingrained in Sri Lanka's social, economic and political structures.

For these reasons and more we request the Special Rapporteur on Racism to make an official visit to Sri Lanka to make an assessment of the underlying structural inequalities and escalating intolerance there, and to report his findings and recommendations to the Human Rights Council. We also call upon the Council to establish an independent Commission of Inquiry to properly account for the past and present human rights violations committed by the Sri Lankan government.

Pasumai Thaayagam thanks this Council for its attention to the grave issue of racial discrimination and related intolerance. We also commend the work of Special Rapporteur, Mr. Mutuma Ruteere, including his recent visit to Bolivia.

Thank you Madam President.

## Commission of Inquiry urged on Sri Lanka similar to Syria



**Presented by Tasha Manoranjan, United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC), 17 September 2012:**

Thank you Madam President.

Pasumai Thaayagam welcomes this Council's attention to the tragic situation unfolding in Syria.

We support the Council's Commission of Inquiry for Syria, and urge the Council to extend the Commission's mandate in order to ensure that accountability - a necessary precursor to lasting peace - is achieved.

We would like to turn the Council's attention to another example of international justice suffering under a violently oppressive regime. This is a situation in which a ruthless government corralled over 330,000 civilians into so-called "Safe Zones", prohibited humanitarian aid organizations from reaching this suffering population, and intentionally deployed heavy firing and shelling against these dense civilian areas. Over 40,000 civilians were killed in a matter of months. And yet three and a half years later, this Council has failed to even utter the words "Commission of Inquiry." Today, we ask the Council - Why?

This is Sri Lanka. In early 2009, the Sri Lankan government ended decades of armed conflict through a brutal bloodbath on the beach. Now, Sri Lanka's ongoing militarization in the war-torn Tamil North and East, forces victims of Sri Lanka's war crimes to live next to their victimizers.[6] The Sri Lankan government has not pursued a single investigation or prosecution regarding these war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Sri Lanka's death toll sadly surpasses the death toll in Syria, and yet there is no discussion of a Commission of Inquiry for Sri Lanka. We urge the Council to demand accountability for Sri Lanka's past and present war crimes and crimes against humanity - first, by initiating an independent Commission of Inquiry, and

second, by requesting the UN Security Council to refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court. These two mechanisms are the only way to bring truth, justice and sustainable peace to this war-ravaged island.

Thank you Madam President.

## Concerns of fundamental human rights violations remain unaddressed; especially those against women



**Presented by Vani Selvarajah, Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC), August 31st 2012:**

Good morning. On behalf of the Canadian Tamil Congress, I would like to thank UPR Info for providing us with the opportunity to address you today.

Founded approximately 12 years ago, CTC is a non-profit advocacy organization that serves as the voice of Tamil Canadians.

Headquartered in Toronto, with several chapters across Canada, CTC advocates on the unique issues that affect and are of concern to members of the Tamil community.

In April 2012, CTC made written submissions in support of Sri Lanka's Universal Periodic Review with a focus on "The Plight of Tamil Women in Sri Lanka".

Since Sri Lanka's first Universal Periodic Review in May 2008, Sri Lanka has shifted from a state of war to a post-war framework. While the nation has attempted to make significant changes to recuperate from a divisive civil war lasting three decades, concerns of fundamental human rights violations remain unaddressed; especially those against women.

ISSUE #1: Rights of Women

a) Previous Recommendation: During its first UPR in May 2008, it was recommended that Sri Lanka should give special attention to the rights of women and further promote education, development and their representation in politics and public life.

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The Government of Sri Lanka reported to the UN Human Rights Council, that it would continue to take steps that seek to advance the empowerment of women, women's rights and gender equality at national levels.

b) Progress, if any: Despite this general commitment, almost 3 and a half years after the culmination of the civil war, the plight of Tamil women in Sri Lanka has not improved.

Women in Sri Lanka's predominantly Tamil speaking North and East continue to face highly vulnerable circumstances that imperil their economic, physical and sexual security. Women continue to suffer from the loss of their husbands, children and multiple displacements.

Women have become victim to domestic abuse, rape, and discrimination. The heavily militarized environment in the North and East continues to pose very serious concerns.

Issues involving economic, physical and sexual security of Tamil women in Sri Lanka continue to be a concern that is often overlooked.

c) Recommendation:

The Government of Sri Lanka should be urged to take action to address the

most pressing issues confronting Tamil women in Sri Lanka with particular attention given to Tamil war widows and female-headed households.

ISSUE #2: War Widows:

a) While Tamil women were among civilians and combatants killed in the final stages of Sri Lanka's war, the vast majority were men. As a consequence of these deaths, tens of thousands of war widows and female-headed households were created in the north and east. Approximately 89,000 Tamil widows and female-headed households were estimated to be present in Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka as of December 2011.

b) They face a plurality of consequences ranging from the struggle for subsistence and economic survival to the threats of sexual violence and sexual exploitation. The struggle by female headed households to survive has produced the unfortunate consequences of mothers being forced into prostitution as the last economic alternative to provide subsistence for themselves and their children

Sexual abuse and the threat of sexual assault by Sri Lankan security forces against Tamil women have not ended

since the conclusion of the war

Since the policy of resettlement has been introduced, particularly in the North, the threat of sexual abuse has increasingly focused on the home fronts of Tamil war widows and female-headed households.

The fear of sexual violence in the home is increasingly widespread because of the military's unfettered access and because women often have no choice but to interact with them.

The dominant and overwhelming presence of government military and security forces plays a significant role in consistently exposing war widows and female-headed households to the ever-present threats and pressures of sexual exploitation.

Despite various allegations and even video footage that surfaced with the UK's Ch. 4 documentary, the Government of Sri Lanka has failed to provide a meaningful response to address these issues to date. What has emerged instead is consistent and systematic denial of abuse by state forces.

b) Recommendations:

We urge the Sri Lankan government to address ways in which Tamil women can explore and develop forms of economic enterprise. In order to liberate Tamil households from the omnipresent threat of sexual assault or exploitation, it is essential and the north and eastern regions be substantially demilitarized and replaced with local civil administra-

tive authorities and the rule of law that can both encourage economic development & provide physical security to families.

We urge the Sri Lankan government to train and equip police officers with the ability to handle gender based violence and to be cognizant of the security needs of women. It would also be helpful to reform the police presence by recruiting more female officers in the North and East.

\*The civil war that lasted for almost three decades has had lasting effects on thousands of people. The consequences for Tamil women have especially been severe

\*Tamil women are heading their own households and are trying to raise families in a highly coercive environment that emerges from the omnipresent role of government military and security forces.

\*Tamil women who have experienced considerable trauma, tragedy and stress as a result of the war continue to suffer from a lack of resources to address their psychological/medical and rehabilitative needs.

\*Unless these women are provided with opportunities to ensure their economic sustainability and until Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka is demilitarized and given some level of regionalized power,

\*Tamil women in Sri Lanka will continue to live a life of fear, insecurity and economic hardship.

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Questions to Ask Yourself	Bank Mortgage Insurance	London Life Insurance
1. Who owns the policy?	1. The bank owns the insurance policy.	1. Client owns their own Policy.
2. Who controls the policy?	2. The bank controls all the options.	2. Insured has control of all the options.
3. Can I guarantee I will always be covered?	3. Your policy will lapse if your mortgage goes into arrears.	3. Policy will not lapse if you miss a Mortgage payment.
4. Who is my beneficiary?	4. Your Beneficiary is the Bank.	4. You can name any Beneficiary you want.
5. What kind of coverage do I have?	5. Your coverage is decreasing term with level cost.	5. Level term coverage with fixed premiums.
6. Can I be covered if I change mortgage holders?	6. Moving the mortgage means reapplying for insurance.	6. Your covered regardless of which institution you choose.
7. How much insurance do I have?	7. Face amount of the policy cannot exceed the value of the outstanding mortgage.	7. Your coverage is determined by your needs and wants.
8. What options do I have if I or my spouse dies?	8. No option but to pay off the mortgage.	8. Survivor can invest the money and use returns to pay the mortgage and still keep the capital.
9. Can I convert my insurance to a permanent plan at any time?	9. Not extendible.	9. Your policy is renewable and convertible.
10. Am I penalized for casual deposits?	10. Penalizes casual deposits.	10. Rewards casual deposits.
11. Who guarantees that I am covered if I die?	11. Underwriting is done at time of death and research can date back to birth.	11. Underwriting is done at time of application and before a second premium is paid.
12. Who is more expensive?	12. Can be very expensive.	12. We are very competitive.