

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## USTPAC Welcomes UN Human Rights Council-led Investigation: A Long-Awaited International Inquiry into Grave Crimes in Sri Lanka

**WASHINGTON DC, March 28 2014:** On Thursday, March 27, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) adopted a [resolution on Sri Lanka](#), A/HRC/25/L.1/Rev.1, which creates an international investigation into widespread human rights violations committed during the war that ended in May 2009. “Tamils have waited nearly five years since end of the armed conflict for a genuine accountability mechanism to be established, and the resolution just adopted marks a turning point in their quest for justice,” said Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham, the President of the **US Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC)**, welcoming the international probe.

Marking the adoption of the resolution, the [US Secretary of State](#) John Kerry stated: “[Today’s] vote in the UN Human Rights Council sends a clear message: The time to pursue lasting peace and prosperity is now; justice and accountability cannot wait.” The resolution was cosponsored by 42 countries and passed overwhelmingly with the backing of nearly half the countries in the Human Rights Council with wide support across global alliances.

This is the third in a series of resolutions on Sri Lanka that the UNHRC has passed in the last three years, but the first that has moved beyond domestic inquiry mechanisms. The resolution requests the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), who has repeatedly called for an international investigation since 2009, to “undertake a comprehensive investigation.”

“Its mandate and scope are broadly defined such that this resolution can help push Sri Lanka move beyond the decades-long ethnic conflict. We also welcome the resolution’s acknowledgement of the need for a more comprehensive approach to transitional justice,” continued Dr. Arulanantham. The “systemic failure” of the UN during the Sri Lankan war has triggered reforms within the UN under the Rights Up Front initiative.

While the Tamil people have suffered the most from the culture of impunity that prevails in Sri Lanka today, human rights defenders, journalists and ethno-religious groups including Muslims, Hindus and Christians are increasingly under attack. The recent arrests of human rights defenders, Balendran Jeyakumari, Ruki Fernando, and Reverend Praveen Mahesan under the *Prevention of Terrorism Act* even as the UNHRC resolution was being debated in Geneva, demonstrate the government’s lack of political will to work towards justice and reconciliation. “The suffocating all-Sinhalese military presence (<http://ustpac.org/reports/sinhalization/>) in Tamil areas perpetuates ongoing crimes against humanity, particularly, enforced disappearance, torture and sexual violence, and reinforces the government’s impunity and policy of suppressing Tamils,” added Dr. Arulanantham.

USTPAC expresses its gratitude for the rigorous OHCHR report on Sri Lanka provided by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay ([A/HRC/25/23 of Feb 14, 2014](#)), which, together with the UN Panel of Experts report, laid the groundwork for formulating this resolution. USTPAC also expressed sincere appreciation of member countries that co-sponsored the resolution, which included USA, UK, Macedonia, Montenegro and Mauritius and those who supported the resolution.

“Tamil Americans are grateful to the US Government for spearheading this resolution. USTPAC also thanks the many legislators of the Senate and the House who called for independent international investigation into the mass killings of civilians in Sri Lanka,” said Dr. Arulanantham.

Dr. Arulanantham stressed that while this resolution brings hope for justice and redress to the Tamil people and signifies a shift in engagement of the international community, it is by no means a comprehensive plan for addressing the threats to the collective identity of the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka. “An international inquiry is a necessary first step into establishing the truth. The ongoing atrocities committed against Tamils and Muslims by Sri Lankan forces in the North and East demand greater international attention and action. Only through international involvement can Tamils live freely and peacefully in their homeland,” concluded Dr. Arulanantham.

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#### *About USTPAC*

*The United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC), founded in 2009, is a grassroots advocacy organization committed to work for a political solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. To this end, USTPAC coordinates advocacy and political activism on a national scale.*