



British Tamils Forum

பிரித்தானிய தமிழர் பேரவை



Canadian Tamil Congress
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Congrès Tamoul Canadien
“Voice of Tamil Canadians”



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Sri Lanka's Disappeared Must Have Justice

Australian Tamil Congress (ATC), British Tamils Forum (BTF), Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) and US Tamil Action Group (USTAG) once again on the International Day of the Disappeared draw attention to the large number of enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka and the utter lack of resolution of their cases, particularly for the Tamil community. We stand in solidarity with the Mothers of the Disappeared who have been protesting for over 900 days in the North East and with those rallying today throughout Sri Lanka and in Australia, Canada, Europe, the US and the UK.

According to Amnesty International, Sri Lanka has a backlog of 60,000 to 100,000 cases of enforced disappearance from all communities since the late 1980s¹, approximately 40 - 80,000 of whom are Tamils.² Following a visit to Sri Lanka in 2015, the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearance noted that Sri Lanka has the second highest number of unresolved cases under its consideration.³

This year we note in particular the promotion of Major General Shavendra Silva to the post of Commander of the Armed Forces, an affront to the families of the disappeared who surrendered to the Sri Lankan armed forces at the end of the war and have not been heard from since. Silva was one of the most important field commanders at the end of the war and the International Truth and Justice Project Sri Lanka has stated, “Given his presence in and command over the area, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Major General Silva knew of or consciously disregarded information which clearly indicated that the troops under his responsibility were responsible for the enforced disappearance of those who surrendered, summarily executing some of them.”⁴ Issuing the list of those who surrendered to the armed forces at the

¹ Amnesty International: ‘Sri Lanka: Refusing to Disappear, Tens of Thousands Missing; Families Demand Answers,’ February, 2017 <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ASA3754972017ENGLISH.PDF>

² Human Rights Watch, ‘Recurring Nightmare: State Responsibility for “Disappearances” and Abductions in Sri Lanka’ <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/srilanka0308/2.htm>, accessed Aug. 29, 2017

³ https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/33/51/Add.2, accessed Aug.29, 2019

⁴ <http://www.itjpsl.com/assets/29-Jan-2019-Shavendra-Silva-press-release.pdf>, accessed Aug. 29, 2019

end of the war is one of the first actions for any credible government effort to provide truth, resolution and justice for enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka.

We draw attention to the BTF's 'Are They Alive?' Campaign launched in the aftermath of the war on 2009 and to the Human Rights Data Analysis Group and International Truth & Justice Sri Lanka's '[Counting the Dead](#)' effort as ways for those affected by disappearances in their families and communities to record those missing and disappeared and to push for truth and justice.

We call on the international community to set up a justice mechanism outside Sri Lanka to resolve the atrocity crimes committed in Sri Lanka during and after the war as Sri Lanka is making absolutely no progress on this serious problem ten years after the war despite the UNHRC providing extra time for Sri Lanka to fulfill its commitments for transitional justice in March's HRC resolution 40/1.

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