

Sangam

ILANKAI TAMIL SANGAM, USA, INC.
ASSOCIATION OF TAMILS OF SRI LANKA IN THE USA

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The US must stand by the peace process in Sri Lanka

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Maryknoll, NY – The Sangam strongly rejects the press release issued by the Sri Lankan Ambassador to the United States on 16th August 2005 as it contains several factual inaccuracies, misrepresentations and is implicitly calling for continued violence and instability in Sri Lanka.

The Sangam asks the United States Government and the international community to continue to support the peace process by supporting confidence-building measures, by assisting with the pressing short-term hardships facing parts of the Sri Lankan population and by addressing the long-term grievances that have contributed to the continued instability in Sri Lanka.

The Ambassador's press release on the recent assassination of the Sri Lankan foreign minister has been overly hasty to blame the LTTE for his death. The (neutral) Norwegian Peace Monitoring Mission has stated 'there is no evidence pointing at LTTE.' The LTTE rebel movement has formally rejected these accusations.

Significantly, the press release fails to note that this killing took place in a context in which political murders (mostly by government-armed paramilitaries), the targeting of minorities, church burnings, ethnic and religious intolerance, forced displacements, and the withholding of aid to areas devastated by war and the tsunami have been the norm for more than two decades. The ultimate responsibility for this sad situation lies with the Government the Ambassador represents. This Government has failed to govern responsibly and justly and has instead done the opposite.

By making an unsubstantiated accusation completely out of context and for calling for further sanctions against the LTTE rebel movement, the press release is in effect calling on the international community to support the Sri Lankan Government's anti-democratic, repressive, cruel and unjust policies towards its people, including the Sri Lankan Tamil community.

The Sangam welcomes Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent statement supporting the Sri Lankan peace process. The Sangam urges the United States Government to continue to support the peace process and to demand that all parties abide by the Cease-Fire Agreement (CFA) completely and without reservation. The US must urge the parties to build upon that cease-fire by taking steps to measurably improve the living conditions and quality of life in the war-torn and tsunami-affected areas of Sri-Lanka. The Sangam also calls upon the US Government to urgently reach out to the LTTE rebel movement and to the Tamil National Alliance (the elected Tamil Political Party) as they are both key parties to the peace process.

The Sangam also expresses great concern that the continued failures to implement the (CFA) and to visibly improve living conditions will most likely lead to a continuation of the civil war. A resumption of war will lead to further loss of life, misery, economic deprivation and, possibly the breakdown of the Sri Lankan state.

The Ilankai Tamil Sangam is 27 year old non-profit organization based in the United States that promotes Tamil culture and an awareness of the conditions of the Tamil-speaking people in Sri Lanka. The Sangam has successfully fulfilled that mandate by organizing cultural events, workshops on conflict resolution and

social gatherings. It has relationships with influential figures in the United States, Sri Lanka and India. It has supported rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the war-devastated areas of Sri Lanka. Sangam.org, the organizations web site is an influential forum for the publication of news and analysis on Tamil affairs. The Sangam is well known and respected throughout the world-wide Tamil community.

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