

British Tamils Forum

United Kingdom

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Militarisation and Buddhification Continue in the Tamil Homeland, Exposing the Futility of Domestic Accountability in Sri Lanka

The British Tamils Forum (BTF) strongly denounces the Sinhala Buddhist hegemony for the illegal erection of the Tissa Vihara on privately owned land belonging to the Tamil people.

Amid the systematic destruction of Tamil heritage—most notably the targeting of Hindu temples—the continued proliferation of Buddhist structures is deeply alarming. The construction of a Buddhist vihara in Thaivyiddi, situated in the heart of the Tamil homeland of Jaffna, where there is little to no Buddhist population, is particularly egregious. The establishment of this vihara on privately owned land has caused serious unrest and distress among local residents.

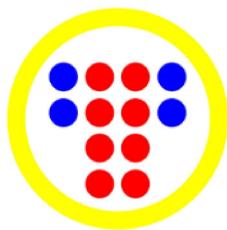
This action, carried out by the occupying military, has now drawn condemnation even from some prominent Buddhist monks within the island, underscoring the gravity and injustice of the situation.

Thaivyiddi, a village in the Jaffna Peninsula near Kankesanthurai, has become a stark symbol of the Sri Lankan state's ongoing militarisation and land dispossession in the Tamil homeland. The Sri Lankan military has occupied privately owned Tamil land and enabled the construction of the Tissa Raja Maha Vihara on land claimed by 18 Tamil families. The land was subjected to prolonged military occupation, with no transparency, no consent from private owners, no planning permission from the local authority, and no adherence to basic legal procedures governing private property. Similar patterns have emerged in many other areas in the traditional Tamil homeland, demonstrating that this is not an isolated incident but part of a systematic military-backed land grab that undermines the rule of law and constitutes a serious violation of human rights.

The construction of Buddhist temples in predominantly Tamil areas is widely understood by local communities, Tamil parliamentarians, and civil society as part of a broader project of Buddhification and demographic engineering in the North-East. Despite sustained peaceful protests, successive Sri Lankan governments have failed to address the core issue of illegal land seizure, exposing the futility of internal accountability mechanisms for Tamil people. This raises an unavoidable question: how long are Tamils expected to endure military occupation, land dispossession, and cultural erasure in their own homeland?

Notably, this time resistance to these land grabs has also come from within the Buddhist community itself. A Buddhist monk of Nainativu Vihara has publicly supported Tamil landowners, stating that land seizure is unjust and incompatible with Buddhist values.

This stance exposes the falsity of the state's narrative and highlights the abuse of religion to legitimise militarisation. As extremist, state-aligned Buddhism continues to operate with impunity and international actors remain largely silent, Tamil representatives reiterate their call for decisive international



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intervention—through the United Nations, the Core Group, and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief—to investigate military land grabs, uphold freedom of religion, and ensure the immediate return of private land to its rightful Tamil owners. This case exemplifies the broader failure of domestic accountability mechanisms within the Sri Lankan state apparatus.

Although Buddhism preaches non-violence and other noble values and calls upon its followers—particularly Buddhist monks—to practise these principles, the reality in Sri Lanka has been markedly different. Over decades, the country has witnessed aggressive hate speech, violent attacks, and open threats against non-Buddhists by powerful monks, including Ampitiye Sumanarathana Thero, Chief Incumbent of Sri Mangalarama Viharaya in Batticaloa, and Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) General Secretary Ven. Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thero. Such hate-mongering by prominent religious figures—who have orchestrated violence and called for the annihilation of other faiths, ethnicities, and identities—has, over the past seven decades, contributed to bloodshed, cycles of violence, and genocide, ultimately driving the island toward bankruptcy and state failure.

It is imperative for the international community to take a firm stand against such virulent racism cloaked in religious authority. The influence of these actors, past and present, has enabled persecution against Tamils and other communities. **Measures against notorious religious leaders—including travel bans and targeted sanctions, grounded in principles of universal jurisdiction—are necessary to support a genuine peace-building process and to empower the minority within Buddhist institutions who seek true transformation through meaningful structural changes.**

The enforced land grab and illegal construction of Buddhist structures in Thaifyddy must therefore be understood not as an isolated dispute, but as part of a broader pattern of conduct engaging Sri Lanka's obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law, including protections against arbitrary deprivation of property and discrimination. Continued inaction risks entrenching impunity and further exposes the systemic failure of domestic accountability mechanisms. The international community's response—or its silence—will determine whether these violations persist.

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Notes to Editors:

British Tamils Forum exists to harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and significant others including mainstream decision makers in the UK with the aim of alleviating the sufferings of the Tamils community in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self-determination within a democratic frame work under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. For more information info@britishtamilsforum.org and/or visit: www.britishtamilsforum.org