



பிரித்தானிய தமிழர் பேரவை
British Tamils Forum



For immediate release

Leading Tamil Diaspora Organizations Welcome UN Human Rights Commissioner's Report on Sri Lanka and Call for International Action

GENEVA, March 2, 2018: The United States Tamil Political Action Council (**USTPAC**), the British Tamils Forum (**BTF**) and the Australian Tamil Congress (**ATC**) welcome the [report by High Commissioner Zeid](#) to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) as the current Council session commenced on the progress made by Sri Lanka in implementing the HRC resolutions it co-sponsored. The report notes that progress is 'virtually stalled,' so we call on member states to assure that Sri Lanka presents a time-bound plan for moving forward on its commitments and that Sri Lanka stays on the Council's agenda until those commitments have been met.

USTPAC, ATC and BTF fervently endorse the High Commissioner's call to the Member States to "explore other avenues, including the application of universal jurisdiction that could foster accountability."

After two and a half years since Sri Lanka committed to implement Transitional Justice measures called for by Resolution HRC-30/1, and nearly nine years since the end of war, the Tamil areas of NorthEast Sri Lanka remain heavily militarized. Disturbingly, there are ongoing violations of arbitrary arrests, surveillance, and [torture of Tamils](#) continuing to take place. Yearlong protests by relatives of the missing Tamils have been ignored causing despondency and distrust. Attacks by Sinhala Buddhist mobs against other communities are occurring with impunity and political leaders routinely use ethnic/communal slurs for electoral gain.

In his report, High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad al-Husein noted, "The lack of sufficient progress in implementing critical confidence-building measures, such as the release of land, the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the solution to the pending cases under the Act, have antagonized key constituencies that could be instrumental to the Government's reform efforts."

Highlighting the continued impunity even in the emblematic cases, the High Commissioner argued, "The authorities have not yet demonstrated the capacity or willingness to address impunity for gross violations and abuses of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law."

Prince Zeid further observed that, "**the failure to show major progress in these emblematic cases strengthens the argument for the establishment of a specialized court.. staffed by specialized personnel and supported by international practitioners.**"

We call upon the Member States of the Human Rights Council to stop accepting Sri Lanka's promises and start demanding concrete accomplishments. Bilateral initiatives should push Sri Lanka toward fulfilling its commitments in a timely fashion. The exercise of universal jurisdiction as called for by the High Commissioner, imposition of military and trade restrictions, and referral of Sri Lanka to the Security Council are other important alternatives to be considered to assure progress is made on transitional justice in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka should be encouraged to present at this 37th session of the HRC, a time-bound action plan to deliver on all aspects of Transitional Justice with parallel mechanisms for achieving accountability, investigation into the missing, reparations, truth-telling and a political solution ensuring non-recurrence.

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<http://srilankabrief.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Sri-Lanka-Report-of-the-OHCHR-2018-March.pdf>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/exclusive-evidence-ongoing-torture-sri-lankan-tamils-180301070109291.html>

About USTPAC: USTPAC is a US-based Tamil advocacy group advocating for cessation of ongoing human rights abuses in Sri Lanka, accountability for crimes committed during and after the civil war, and a political settlement to address root causes of the conflict. Since 2009, it has worked for these goals with the US Government and UN Human Rights Council.

About BTF: British Tamils Forum exists to harness skills and the knowledge of members of the forum, 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 framework underpinned by international law, its covenants and conventions.

About ATC: The Australian Tamil Congress encourages positive participation of Tamils in Australian society, highlights issues of importance to Tamils, engages other communities, governments and organisations in addressing the socio-cultural and political concerns of Tamils. Educating people on Tamils' right to survival and self-determination, and teaching the lessons of Tamil Genocide in Sri Lanka for future generations.

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