



Issued for immediate release

PRESS STATEMENT

25 January 2016

Alarmed at President Sirisena's recent Comments regarding International Involvement on Accountability Mechanism – Global Tamil Forum

Global Tamil Forum (GTF) is deeply concerned and disappointed by the recent [comments of Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena](#) (BBC, January 21, 2016) concerning his opposition to international involvement in ensuring justice for war crimes and human rights abuses committed by both parties to the conflict in Sri Lanka.

President Sirisena downplayed the serious findings of war crimes and Human Rights abuses by the Sri Lankan military outlined in the Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL report - released on 28 September 2015), on the basis that no names were mentioned in the report ignoring the fact that this is a standard procedural matter in such investigations.

The President's assertions are a direct refutation of the Resolution 30/1 passed in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on 1 October 2015 which Sri Lanka itself co-sponsored. The resolution clearly committed Sri Lanka to involving Commonwealth and other foreign judges, defence lawyers and authorized prosecutors and investigators in its judicial processes. Sri Lanka will breach the provisions of a resolution that it co-sponsored if President Sirisena's assertions are implemented.

The OISL report explicitly stated the reality that an exclusively Sri Lankan judicial process cannot provide the much needed justice and accountability given its lack of capacity and independence or the statutes needed to prosecute such crimes. The victims and Tamil community in particular will consider international participation essential in their search for justice.

In turning his back on Sri Lanka's commitments to the victims of abuse and the international community concerning accountability only months after these commitments were made, President Sirisena will lose the trust of the Tamil community, which started to believe that Sri Lanka in fact had turned the corner, where public promises and pledges are made to be kept and faithfully acted upon.

In this context, we quote below sections from the speech delivered in the UNHRC on 14 September 2015, by Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs with his "Trust us" appeal and pledge:

*"...Therefore, I say to the sceptics: **DON'T JUDGE US BY THE BROKEN PROMISES, EXPERIENCES AND U-TURNS OF THE PAST....***

...the Government of President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has the political will and the courage of their convictions to ensure that we take the country forward, breaking the barriers of ignorance, fear, prejudice and hate....

உலகத் தமிழர் பேரவை

Global Tamil Forum



*....My plea to you Ladies and Gentlemen, is: **TRUST US** and join us to work together and create the momentum required to move forward and take progressive, meaningful and transformative steps to create a new Sri Lanka..."*

The Global Tamil Forum, together with its partners within and outside Sri Lanka, supported the Resolution 30/1 in good faith, acknowledging the importance of working in a spirit of partnership with the Government of Sri Lanka towards ensuring victims' right to truth and justice. We fear that any abandonment of that commitment and consensus has the potential to seriously damage the long-term prospects of genuine reconciliation and harmonious ethnic relations in Sri Lanka.

We understand that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid, will visit Sri Lanka early next month. We call upon him to continue to show the leadership on this important Transitional Justice issue by ensuring that Sri Lanka will stick to its promise and fully implements all aspects of the Resolution 30/1 without any exceptions.

We also call upon the international governments who co-sponsored the Resolution 30/1 in partnership with Sri Lanka, to impress upon the Government of Sri Lanka on the need to stand by its public commitments.

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Notes to Editors:

Global Tamil Forum (GTF) was established in 2009 by a number of grass-roots Tamil groups following the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. It is the largest Tamil diaspora organisation with members drawn from five continents. GTF is absolutely committed to a non-violent agenda and it seeks a lasting peace in Sri Lanka, based on justice, reconciliation and a negotiated political settlement. For more information please contact info@globaltamilforum.org and/or visit: www.globaltamilforum.org