



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## USTPAC and BTF call on the Swiss authorities to detain Sisira Mendis on charges of torture

**GENEVA, Switzerland** (16 November 2016): Mr. Sisira Mendis, Director of Sri Lanka's Centre for National Intelligence in the Ministry of Defence, is currently in Geneva as part of a delegation purporting to defend the government of Sri Lanka's record of adherence to the Convention Against Torture before the UN Committee Against Torture. According to the report of the UN's OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka, Mr. Mendis had command responsibility over police units known to routinely practice torture during the final period of the Sri Lankan civil war.

"While USTPAC and BTF are encouraged by the government of Sri Lanka's decision to engage the UN Committee Against Torture, we are dismayed that the government has nominated Mr. Mendis to represent it before the very UN Committee charged with ensuring governments prevent and punish torture," Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham, President of **US Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC)**, said. "His attendance in Geneva deeply disrespects Sri Lanka's torture victims and mocks the esteemed work of the Committee Against Torture and the human rights machinery of the UN."

Mr. Mendis served as Deputy Inspector General of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and was also responsible for the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) from March 2008 to June 2009. Both organizations are known for their routine use of torture.

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"On the basis of universal jurisdiction," Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham added, "we call on the Swiss authorities to immediately detain and prevent Mr. Mendis from leaving Switzerland until there is a thorough investigation into the serious and substantiated charges against him."

"The government's brazen decision to send a known torturer to Geneva is a particularly egregious example of the culture of impunity that stubbornly persists in Sri Lanka. We strongly endorse the High Commissioner for Human Rights' recommendation in September 2015 to establish a hybrid court for Sri Lanka with international judges, prosecutors, lawyers and investigators," said Ravi Kumar, General Secretary of the **British Tamils Forum (BTF)**. Mr. Mendis' participation in Sri Lanka's torture review, and indeed the fact that he is now Director for National Intelligence, demonstrate that **an internationalized court is needed now more than ever**.

### About USTPAC

USTPAC is a US-based Tamil advocacy group advocating for a cessation of ongoing human rights abuses in Sri Lanka, accountability from all sides for crimes committed during and after the civil war, and a

political settlement to address the root causes of the conflict. It has worked for these goals at the UNHRC since 2012.

**About BTF**

The British Tamils Forum, also widely known as 'BTF' is an organisation which represents and gives voice to a large Tamil community in the United Kingdom in political and socio-economic spheres.

'Working for peace with justice and dignity.'

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