

TAMIL AMERICAN PEACE INITIATIVE

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Tamil American Peace Initiative Applauds the EU's Push for Human Rights Protections in Sri Lanka

The Tamil American Peace Initiative (TAPI) commends the EU on its recent decision to rescind Sri Lanka's preferential trade status unless the country pledges to improve its human rights record within six months. The EU is taking this measure to correct serious shortcomings in the protection of human rights in Sri Lanka uncovered by an in depth investigation.

"This is exactly the kind of pressure that Sri Lanka should receive," said TAPI spokesperson Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham. "The EU has demonstrated that it will not tolerate Sri Lanka's continued human rights abuse. It will hold the government accountable. The US should take note and follow suit."

In addition to demanding a written commitment to protect human rights, the EU's requirements also include making the police and judiciary independent from Presidential influence and lifting the emergency law. TAPI believes these are necessary steps that will strengthen the government and protect all people in Sri Lanka.

TAPI is disturbed by Pres. Rajapaksa and the Sri Lankan Government's vehement rejection of the EU's requests. The government's refusal to make concessions demonstrates a lack of interest in human rights and protecting the Sri Lankan people.

If the EU rescinds Sri Lanka's preferential trade status, it is estimated that the country and its people will lose \$150 million a year. However, Pres. Rajapaksa has stated that he is "not bothered," and that "if the EU doesn't want to give it, let them keep it." TAPI is particularly concerned by this flippant attitude.

"The government's refusal to comply with the EU's demands represents a great blow to human rights in Sri Lanka, the country's economy, and its reputation in the international community," said Dr. Arulanantham.

TAPI believes that Rajapaksa's attitude and lack of respect for human rights demonstrates a great need for international pressure. The US and the international community must continue to demand human rights protections and accountability from the government.

About TAPI

The Tamil American Peace Initiative was formed by a group of Tamil Americans to help bring lasting peace, justice, democracy, good governance and economic development to Sri Lanka; to focus attention on the destruction of Tamil communities and culture caused by 30 years of war; and to demand an end to the continuing oppression of Tamils on the island.

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