

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Tamil American Peace Initiative Condemns Minister-Lead Violence against UN Offices in Colombo**

The Sri Lankan Government's decision to lead violent protests against United Nations Development Program offices in Colombo should be of serious concern to the United States. In response to the UN's creation of a panel to investigate human rights violations in Sri Lanka, hundreds of protesters were led by Housing Minister Wimal Weerawansa to barricade the UN office with the employees inside. The protests represented such a danger for the humanitarian staff assigned to Sri Lanka that the UN has decided to close the office and recall its top representative.

TAPI has serious concerns both about the government-led violence and the intolerant tone that is dominating what should be a period of national reconciliation. The Sri Lankan Government's disrespect for the UN and its efforts to build a meaningful and lasting peace in Sri Lanka should be a cause for serious concern for the safety and wellbeing of all Sri Lankan citizens, including the Tamil community.

"While this protest was directed at international actors, such sentiments are easily corrupted and turned internally," said TAPI spokesperson Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham. "With such protests in the streets, how can Tamil communities in Sri Lanka believe that the Government intends to respect the human rights of its own citizens? This is precisely the type of 'pot-stirring' that could lead to renewed unrest and violence against vulnerable populations with little official representation."

The violent protests demonstrate the imperative need for the United States and the international community to push for a full-fledged, independent, international investigation into human rights violations and alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka in order to ensure that there is a genuine opportunity for lasting peace and prosperity for all Sri Lankans. Unless the causes of conflict are addressed, the potential for renewed fighting that could destabilize the region cannot be discounted.

### *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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