

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2010

Tamil American Peace Initiative Deplores the Detainment of Fonseka

The Tamil American Peace Initiative (TAPI), a group of Tamil Americans dedicated to peaceful change in Sri Lanka, condemned the arrest and detainment Monday of defeated presidential candidate General Sarath Fonseka. The group called it an attack on democracy that diminishes the possibility of reconciliation on the island.

“In a country already fraught with ethnic and religious conflict, the arrest of Fonseka can only make things worse,” said Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham, a TAPI spokesman. “The newly reelected president should be working for reconciliation, security for all citizens, rebuilding and restoring peace. Instead, he is fomenting strife and insecurity.”

Fonseka’s arrest showed total disregard for democracy and the rule of law, TAPI said, and demonstrated that President Mahinda Rajapaksa was using state security forces against political opponents. The group fears that the Tamil community, which overwhelmingly supported and voted for Fonseka, will now face even more retaliation than before. TAPI urged other countries and international groups to voice their opposition to Fonseka’s treatment and to monitor the situation closely.

“If the government treats a presidential candidate -- who is also a former general and considered by many a war hero -- so egregiously, the threat to the Tamil community that overwhelmingly supported Fonseka in last month’s presidential election is grim,” Arulanantham said.

TAPI called on the Government to end politically motivated arrests, to restore free speech and freedom of movement for all people, and to release Fonseka and the tens of thousands of Tamils who still remain in detention camps. Only by taking such steps -- and promoting equality among all people, regardless of their ethnicity and religion -- can lasting peace be brought to the island, the group said.

“Rather than conducting personal and political vendettas, we urge the President and his government to pursue a course of democracy and reconciliation, and to make progress on the difficult job of rebuilding the country,” Arulanantham said.

About TAPI

The Tamil American Peace Initiative was formed by a group of Tamil Americans to help bring lasting peace, justice, democracy, 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.

Contact L. Kaufman at ustapi2010@gmail.com, or +1.202.448.5238 for additional information or to arrange an interview with Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham.