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Tamil American Peace Initiative Responds to SL Foreign Minister's US Visit and Calls for International Investigation into War Crimes

With the arrival of Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister G.L. Peiris in Washington this week, Tamil American Peace Initiative (TAPI) urged members of Congress and the Obama Administration to press the international community to pursue independent investigations into the alleged war crimes that occurred during Sri Lanka's twenty-five year Civil War.

"Many in the international community have been calling for an investigation since the end of the war," said Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham, a TAPI spokesperson. "The Sri Lankans who suffered abuse and lost family members and livelihoods can no longer wait. Justice must come to Sri Lanka."

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Union have already called for independent investigations. Additionally, various human rights groups, including the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Committee to Protect Journalists, have also called for an independent investigation into war crimes, crimes against humanity and human rights violations. Despite these calls, UN efforts to investigate have been stalled.

The groups cite violations on both sides in the war, however they present evidence that places most of the blame on the Sri Lankan troops. The alleged crimes include intentional bombings of civilians and humanitarian organizations; extrajudicial abuse and detention of unarmed civilians and former combatants; the use of child soldiers; harm to civilians and civilian objects; the killing of captives or combatants seeking to surrender; individual disappearances; and inhumane conditions.

TAPI is particularly concerned with the Sri Lankan External Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris' recent request for the UN to refrain from appointing a panel to advise the Secretary General concerning an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity. Peiris has demanded that the UN allow the Sri Lankan government to handle all such investigations.

This demand is particularly disturbing because the government-appointed chairman of the commission, Chitta Ranjan de Silva came under serious criticism for alleged interference with a similar investigation in 2006. As Arthur Dewey, former US assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration has said, "De Silva was the architect and enforcer of the attorney general's conflict of interest role with respect to the 2006 commission..."

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nothing good for human rights or reconciliation is likely to come from anything in which De Silva is involved.”

TAPI is urging law makers to raise these issues and to push for an independent international investigation into crimes committed during the war.

TAPI agrees with the Congressman Hon. Danny Davis, who stated in a Floor Speech commemorating the one-year anniversary of the end of the Sri Lankan war that “All parties complicit in violating human rights must be held accountable. Only then can the Sri Lankan people really move forward in trying to achieve peace and stability on the island.”

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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