

# Australian Tamil Congress

## A Unified Voice for All Tamils



7 April 2010

*Given your interest in the Tamil issue, we wish to update you on developments within the island of Sri Lanka and abroad.*

In late January, the [Permanent People's Tribunal](#) found [Sri Lanka guilty of war crimes](#) after hearing evidence from eye witnesses.

Last month UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [Navi Pillay stated](#), "I am convinced that Sri Lanka should undertake a full reckoning of the grave violations committed by all sides during the war, and that the international community can be helpful in this regard."

UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon simultaneously called for a panel of experts to investigate allegations of war crimes from the final stages of the war. However Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa [rejected this plan](#), responding that this panel was "totally uncalled for and unwarranted," claiming that Sri Lanka will take "necessary and appropriate action" instead - something the government has failed to do for the past eleven months.

The same month, the [US Department of State](#) issued a report on Sri Lanka which confirmed several concerns harboured by Tamil in Sri Lanka and abroad:

- "...the **overwhelming majority of victims of human rights violations**, such as extrajudicial killings and disappearances, **were young male Tamils**...[and] observers linked the government closely to paramilitary groups believed responsible for serious human rights violations..."
- "There were also reports of **secret government facilities** where suspected LTTE sympathizers were taken, **tortured, and often killed**..."
- "The government required Tamils who wished to move within the country, especially those Tamils living in Jaffna, to obtain special passes issued by security forces..."
- "**Security forces** at army checkpoints in Colombo **frequently harassed Tamils**. After the government assumed effective control of the east, both the government and the TMVP operated checkpoints that impeded the free movement of residents, especially Tamils..."
- "Tamils throughout the country, but especially in the conflict-affected north and east, reported **frequent harassment of young and middle-aged Tamil men** by security forces and paramilitary groups..."

This report was also soon [dismissed by the Government of Sri Lanka](#) as unsubstantiated.

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An independent journalistic piece by French media 'France24' has revealed what we have believed for months - Tamils being denied their land and being prevented from returning to their homes due to Sri Lankan military occupation, while members of the majority Sinhalese community are being settled into Tamil areas by the Sri Lankan government as part of their ongoing land grabbing schemes in the north and east of the island.

[France24 – Sri Lanka: Tamils on Probation Part 1](#)

[France24 – Sri Lanka: Tamils on Probation Part 2](#)

There is also growing concern of the increasing number of [Buddhist temples being constructed in the Tamil homeland](#) while Tamil schools, hospitals and temples lay destroyed – another sign of chauvinism by the Government of Sri Lanka.

On a recent campaign rally in Jaffna, a Tamil area, Sri Lankan media reported [President Rajapakse to have said](#) in Sinhala, “Yes, we are Sinhalese. You Tamil, listen to me. Do not try to be too wise. If you cannot listen, get out from here.”

Although various human rights organisations around the world have consistently called for inquiries into crimes, Sri Lanka ignores these requests and maintains that it committed no human rights and international law violations or war crimes.

While Sri Lanka’s repressive bans on media and NGO access have given it ample time to destroy incriminating material evidence, the lack of attention given to the topic of reconciliation during the recent elections illustrates that Sri Lanka’s president is clearly more concerned with his own political success than with achieving justice for his country’s citizens.

The Australian Tamil Congress calls for the Australian policy makers to pressure Sri Lanka to take genuine steps in ensuring long term peace is restored for all citizens on the island.