

Australian Tamil Congress

A Unified Voice for All Tamils



10 May 2010

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

One year ago this month, the Tamil people were robbed of their lives, homeland and dignity. Up to [40,000 Tamil civilians were killed](#) in a [war initiated by the Sri Lankan government](#). Known as the *May Massacre* many consider this the epitome of the genocide of the Tamil people perpetrated for six decades by Sinhala dominated Sri Lankan State Forces.

The large loss of Tamil lives has often overshadowed other acts of persecution by the State. This very month, 30 years ago, police and Sri Lankan government sponsored para-militaries [burnt down the Jaffna library](#) - an act of cultural genocide of the Tamil people.

Today, Tamils continue to be treated as second-class citizens, with *Caritas* affirming recently that Sri Lanka is yet to see real peace. Its confirmation that [Tamils continue to suffer](#) in military run detention camps is evidence that a year on [Tamils still await the peace dividend](#). [Sri Lanka's history and current predicament](#) continues to show that Tamils in Sri Lanka cannot expect justice at the hands of a racist regime.

On World Press Freedom Day last week, *Reporters Without Borders* included Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary (and brother of the President) [Gotabhaya Rajapaksa in its list of 40 'predators'](#). A leading [political reporter abducted two months ago](#) is still missing and acts such as the [recent appointment](#) of former defence spokesman as media minister continue to [intimidate journalists](#) in the island.

Sri Lanka's [link with China](#) is steadily strengthening and this strong alliance has seen [Sri Lanka block its cricketers from visiting the Dalai Lama](#). Ironically Sri Lanka prides itself as a Buddhist nation, with Buddhist monks holding a strong presence in Parliament through active Buddhist political parties. Beijing has previously helped [block discussions and resolutions in the UN](#) on Sri Lanka's possible war crimes and human rights violations during and after the war on the Tamil people and was a [strong supplier of military equipment](#) to Sri Lanka.

Although two months ago, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he would set up a panel of experts to advise him on possible war crimes in Sri Lanka, [no panel](#) has to date been named. The Sri Lankan President's surprise announcement last week that he would create a Sri Lankan commission on "lessons learnt and reconciliation" to investigate any violations of law during the

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war has been received with scepticism by *Human Rights Watch* whose Asia director stated, “Every time the international community raises the issue of accountability, [Sri Lanka establishes a commission that takes a long time to achieve nothing](#). Ban should put an end to this game of smoke and mirrors and begin a process that would ensure justice for all the victims of Sri Lanka’s war.”

With great pride the Australian Tamil Congress wishes to inform you that despite the UN’s lack of action, Australians are leading the way with [Australian lawyers joining forces with the International Commission of Jurists](#) to take witness statements and prepare evidence for any future war crimes tribunal on Sri Lanka, in the hope it will help demonstrate the need for a full investigation and help protect those who might be subject to further human rights abuses.

These continuing acts of systematic persecution and oppression of Tamil people by successive Sinhala dominated Sri Lankan governments and the lack of action by international powers to bring the perpetrators to justice might explain the motivation behind the results of a [ballot](#) held in mid April this year which [revealed that 99.38%](#) of Australian Tamil voters were in favour of the [re-establishment of an independent Tamil homeland](#). These results mirror [trends of similar ballots](#) held in Canada, UK and other European nations. Many Australian Tamils also feel that an independent Tamil homeland may also be the best solution to the influx of [Tamil asylum seekers](#) arriving in to Australia by boat.

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.