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## ATC'S 2nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN SYDNEY

The 2nd Annual General Meeting of the ATC was held in Sydney on Saturday, 17 September 2011 at the Homebush Boys High School.

ATC being a democratic member based first national Tamil organisation in Australia and having successfully completing many of its objectives is something to be proud of.

The meeting began at 6.15 pm with the observance of one minute silence. This was followed by NSW AGM and then the National AGM.

Mr Nimalendran conducted the meeting.

Mr Manokaran, President of the NSW Chapter welcomed everyone and in his speech highlighted the need for an organization such as ATC and thanked the outgoing committee.

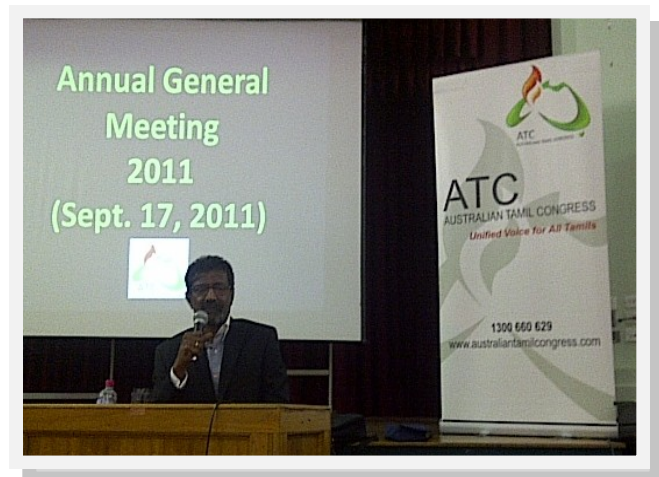
Dr Gowripalan –Director NSW, highlighted NSW's achievements and thanked the media Inbathamil Oli and Thendral for consciously promoting ATC.

The Chairman, Dr Raj Rajeswaran, in his address thanked the members for having faith in the Australian Tamil Congress to work towards setting up a road map to achieve our common goal of the right of self-determination for our people in our motherland. He reiterated without continued support of the member none of what we have achieved would have been possible.

He further stated 'what we have achieved so far is something we all should be very proud of but what we need to achieve going forward is a monumental task and will only materialise if all of us are truly committed to our cause and are willing to make some sacrifices for the good of others.

This was followed by the presentation of the Secretary's Report by Mr Kumaran Arulliah. In his report he

covered matters relating to the performance of the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, Membership Development Council and the Constitution Committee. He said that, in all, Board of Directors and the Executive Committee held 25 meetings for the period ended 30 June 2011, almost all of them via tele-conference. The proposed amendments to the constitution was then tabled.



**ATC Chairman Dr Raj Rajeswaran**

As there were no objections to the proposed amendments, the Returning Officer declared that the amendments were accepted unanimously.

A presentation by the Executive Officer for Public Relations (PR), Dr Sam Pari, then followed. Dr Pari said that the PR team set out to meet the ever changing challenges continuously faced by us by initially setting out three key objectives:

1. To counteract attempts by the Sri Lankan propaganda machine to taint the image of Tamils in Australia, whether they be citizens or those seeking asylum;
2. To advocate for an international independent inquiry into war crimes committed in Sri Lanka;
3. To lobby for a political solution that addresses the

## ATC'S 2nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN SYDNEY

grievances of the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka

She stated that over the past year ATC had delicately and effectively overcome many of the challenges and obstacles, while continuing to maintain earned respect of the politicians, eminent persons and the media.

Dr Pari concluded her speech by saying that while the road to justice is long and treacherous and filled with numerous stumbling blocks, disappointments and at times even betrayal, the journey will be worth all the pain



***Dr Sampavi Parimalanathan– Executive Officer Public Relations***

if we as a community work together and march forward with only the final destination in our convictions,

This was followed by the Executive Officer for Refugee Affairs Dr Bala Vigneswaran. He outlined the number of

challenges faced by the detainees in getting themselves accepted as genuine refugees fleeing persecution. The team has been providing help in terms of immigration advice, legal support, interpretation, access to documents, reading material and access to news. Further, he stated that many of them suffer from mental and physi-



***Dr Bala Vigneswaran-Executive Officer-Refugee Affairs***

cal health issues in addition to physical and mental wounds sustained from the conflict in Sri Lanka. There are many women and children as well in this uncertain predicament, he further added.

In closing Dr Vigneswaran said that our commitment and the best efforts to continue to work with the humanitarian protection applicants, ATC needs more volunteers to meet the diverse demands of these people who are seeking solace in Australia with justification.

The National Strategic Planning Report was then presented by the Executive Officer for Strategic Planning. He elaborated on the achievements of ATC through the year and gave an overview of the current political climate in Australia and globally.

The presentation summarised ATC's achievements in meeting strategic objectives to date:

ATC has earned the recognition as an important and trusted representative organisation of Tamils in Australia - a few mentioning ATC's work in their Parliamentary speeches and congratulatory messages from several Parliamentarians for our AGM

Built strong working relationships with tens of Parliamentarians, key government officials, eminent persons and the media

Developed the capacity to articulate Tamil point of view at senior levels of the government and also across all major political parties

Strong links with the elected representatives of Tamils

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**Mr. Manokaran-President NSW**

in Sri Lanka helped us with lobbying and providing us with the opportunity to be in touch with reality in the homeland

Our role within GTF is vital in creating an international dimension through collective lobbying with several major and minor countries, including India

The Executive Committee thanks "Inpaththamil Oli" radio for recording, editing and broadcasting it on Tuesday night for those who were not able to attend



**Mr. Nimalandran-Master of Ceremonies**



**Mr. Kumaran- WA Director and Secretary of ATC**



**Dr Gowripalan- NSW Director**

## *Public Relations Report*

This month ATC was invited by the Greens Party to participate in a **roundtable discussion** held at Federal Parliament. The round table, hosted by Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon, looked at furthering the call for an independent war crimes tribunal for Sri Lanka.

Participants were:

Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon

Dr. Sam Pari, Australian Tamil Congress

Hon. John Dowd AO QC, President of the International Commission of Jurists Australia

Associate Professor Jake Lynch, Director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Sydney University

Dr. Ben Saul, Professor of International Law and Director of the Sydney Centre for International Law at Sydney University

Peter Arndt, Executive Officer of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission Brisbane

This is the first time that groups in Australia have publicly made this call.

There has been considerable media coverage of this call, with both **ABC Radio** and **SBS Radio**, as well as the **The Australian** and **AAP** covering the issue. Internationally, we had the **BBC** and **TamilNet**.

ATC's Dr. Sam Pari's statement at the press conference can be viewed [here](#).



## *Western Australian Chapter Report*

As decided at the last AGM, the first committee meeting of the chapter was held in the Tamil Centre in Rossmoyne on the 4th of September 2011 at 10.00 AM followed by a General Meeting at 11.00 AM. Based on the AGM directive, the committee appointed Mr Keeran as the Secretary. The committee also decided to participate in the CHOGM protest being organized by the CHOGM ACTION NETWORK at 10 AM on the 28th of October 2011.

The CHOGM Action Network is sponsored by 20 organizations the list of whom and the other relevant information including Flyers is available in the website "Chogmprotest.org".

Tamil representatives have been attending some of the preparatory meetings of the CHOGM Action Network as well as the CHOGM Launch on Sunday the 25th of September 2011. Speeches at the

CHOGM Launch centered around Aboriginal Rights, Persecution of Tamils in Sri Lanka and anti democratic activities in Malaysia.

It is learnt that many in other States are also keen in participating in the CHOGM protest. It is recommended that they all join the same protest and develop Solidarity with our Natural Allies represented by the 20 organizations in addition to the main protest which include opposition to war crimes and the ongoing Genocide in Sri Lanka. The campaign to suspend Sri Lanka from the Commonwealth could be continued in this Rally.

Fight against oppression anywhere helps the oppressed everywhere because the oppressor is GLOBALISED.

<http://www.chogmprotest.org/post/218>

## *New South Wales Chapter Report*

ATC representatives have been working closely with some ALP branches in NSW.

The following NSW ALP branches passed resolution in their meetings that Australian Government should take a lead role and openly call for an international independent investigations into War Crimes in Sri Lanka by all parties concerned.

- ◆ Harris Park branch

- ◆ Young Labor

- ◆ Sub Continent Friends of Labor

NSW representatives also attended some branches and discussed the Sri Lanka's Killing Fields.

A few more ALP branches have requested representatives to attend meetings to discuss the concerns of the Tamil Community.

## *Rudd answers question on SL War Crimes*

### **ICP – [Report on Sri Lanka Called “UN Report” by Rudd, Nambiar Declines Comment](#)**



UNITED NATIONS, September 22 — While Sri Lanka's government claims that the Panel of Experts report describing war crimes is “not a UN report,” that is precisely what Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd called it Thursday night at the UN when Inner City Press asked him about the report.

Rudd had been scheduled to speak at 6 pm about the Commonwealth. Notably, there is a move to oust Sri Lanka from the Commonwealth in light of war crimes.

But Rudd's stakeout was pushed back past 9 pm, at which time he opened on wider themes. Inner City Press asked the first questions, about Palestine and the move in the Commonwealth to push for accountability for war crimes in Sri Lanka. Video [here](#), from Minute 7:55.

Rudd answered that members of the Commonwealth have been watching Sri Lanka over the last two years, “acutely aware of the report written by the UN,” and of the government's Commission.

Rudd said that the Lessons Learnt report must deal with the “issues raised in the UN report.” He said there will be many more conversations, that the key is the content of the Lesson Learnt report. Video [here](#), from Minute 12:24.



### Labour Party calls for an international commission of inquiry into war crimes allegations in Sri Lanka

Rt. Hon Douglas Alexander MP, the British Shadow Foreign Secretary, has given the Labour Party's full support for the establishment of an international commission to investigate the "

acts of unconscionable violence" perpetrated in the final months of Sri Lanka's armed conflict in 2009.



**GTF President Rev Dr SJ Emmanuel at fringe labour Party conference**

Speaking to a packed Tamils for Labour fringe event at the Labour Party Conference on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September, Mr Alexander stated that an investigation held under international auspices was essential given that there are "profound concerns" regarding the independence, accountability and witness protection capacity of Sri Lanka's domestic inquiry, the 'Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission'. "I feel it is right, and after discussions with my shadow frontbench team, to say we are not convinced that this Commission can do its work even with international participation and there does need to be an international commission that looks into the evidence."

Addressing Labour Members of Parliament, Lords, Councillors, other party delegates and representatives from the Tamil community, Mr Alexander stated that there was a "

pressing need" to deal with this issue and voiced his concern that the United Nations Human Rights Council had not acted more promptly. "Frankly I



**Tamils for Labour fringe event at the Labor Party Conference on Wednesday 28th September**

am disappointed that it has not judged the need to go further than the steps that are already taken." Reflecting not only on "

what has happened but [what] is continuing to happen even many months after the conflict", Douglas Alexander said that the current human rights situation in Sri Lanka gave further impetus for action. He declared that it was difficult to determine "whether human rights are anyway capable of being upheld" on the island, in light of the Government of Sri Lanka's treatment of IDPs and alleged ex-combatants and the continuing cases of enforced disappearances.

Mr Alexander resolved to continue to voice the concerns of MPs and their constituents on this issue in Parliament. He also pledged to contact the British Foreign Secretary's office regarding the recent decision of the UK Border Agency to deport 50 Tamils to Sri Lanka."

We need to be clear that the British Government has done its job in ensuring that these people are not going to be subjected to torture". Thanking Tamils for Labour for "giving voice to the concerns of the community" and to Channel 4 for displaying "the best of British journalism" in making the 'Sri Lanka's Killing Fields' documentary, Mr Alexander stated that it was incumbent on everyone to stand up justice and human rights. "The British Government and all of us [need] to ensure that we are in a position where if harms are going to be perpetrated they are avoided and where harms have taken place they are investigated and the perpetrators of that violence face justice."

[http://www.lankanewsweb.com/english/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=291:labour-party-calls-for-an-international-commission-of-inquiry-into-war-crimes-allegations-in-sri-lanka&catid=1:general&Itemid=29](http://www.lankanewsweb.com/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=291:labour-party-calls-for-an-international-commission-of-inquiry-into-war-crimes-allegations-in-sri-lanka&catid=1:general&Itemid=29)



### Human Rights Watch Mobilises Canadian Parliament on Sri Lanka

Elaine Pearson, Deputy Asia Director at Human Rights Watch flew from New York to co-host a Parliamentary event at the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa where over 20 Members of Parliament from the main three parties watched the UK's Channel 4 documentary 'Sri Lanka's Killing Fields'.

"The Sri Lankan government needs to know that after two and a half years of denying abuses and taking no genuine domestic accountability efforts, time has run out. Canada should lead the way in pushing for an international independent investigation into alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka, and this means shoring up support from like-minded countries ahead of the next Human Rights Council session" said Elaine Pearson, Deputy Asia Director at Human Rights Watch.

The gathering was a significant step in the awareness campaign said Devaki, a Diaspora activist and a National Council of Canadian Tamils (NCCT) member. "This clearly sets the scene for an All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils (APPG-T) to be set up in the Canadian Parliament that will mirror the British set up" she further said.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank Human Rights Watch and my fellow colleagues NDP's Rathika Sitsabaiesan and Liberal's John McKay for co-hosting the event with me. I also would like to thank my Tamil constituents particularly Aran Sureshkumar who has been inspirational for me to take this worthy cause forward" said Patrick Brown - Member of Parliament for Barrie.

This new development comes in the wake of the Prime Minister of Canada Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper calling on the leaders of the Commonwealth member countries to boycott the 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which is scheduled to be held in Colombo, if Sri Lankan government doesn't show accountability for human-rights abuses and take steps to reconcile with the Tamil minority.

This being seen as a significant development in the diplomatic offensive by the Tamil Canadians, the Tamil Diaspora around the world and the rest of the international community. The rift between the Government of Sri Lanka and the international community seems to be widening and the government is now seen as being cornered.

External Affairs Minister Professor G.L.Pieris' meeting with the Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird in the last few weeks only resulted in the Canadian Foreign Minister raising the Sri Lanka's human rights record on the floor of the United General Assembly.

Canada so far has been a quiet observer in the Sri Lankan issue. However her sudden outspoken position, some believe, has been as a direct consequence of government of Sri Lanka's nativity of believing that denial and deceptions will some how make them weather the storm and the effective and efficient international lobbying of organisations like the **Global Tamil Forum (GTF)**.

[http://www.lankanewsweb.com/english/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=285:human-rights-watch-mobilises-canadian-parliament-on-sri-lanka&catid=1:general&Itemid=29](http://www.lankanewsweb.com/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=285:human-rights-watch-mobilises-canadian-parliament-on-sri-lanka&catid=1:general&Itemid=29)

#### Norway: From killing field to killing field

The airing of the controversial UK Channel 4 video titled Sri Lanka's Killing Fields in the state run TV-NKK has drawn an angry response from Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Norway, Rodney Perera. A day before the film was screened, he wrote a five page letter to Arne Helsing, Chief of the TV-NRK.

The letter went as the Channel 4 video was also screened last Wednesday in the Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada. It was organized by Conservative MP Patrick Brown and co-hosted by MP Rathika Sitsabaiesan, a Tamil politician of Sri Lankan descent. Mr. Perera has said that the programme "is completely biased and contains unsubstantiated allegations against the Government of Sri Lanka."

Among other matters, the letter states: "In the aftermath of the terrible terror attacks in Norway on 22nd July, Sri Lanka has drawn the attention of the Norwegian authorities to the fact that Anders Behring Breivik has closely followed the modus operandi of the terror tactics of the LTTE. Therefore, the Sri Lanka Embassy in Oslo is of the strong opinion that these facts be brought to the attention of the Norwegian public as they directly concern the safety and security of the Norwegian people."

<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/111002/Columns/cafe.html>



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In the past, only a fraction of Tamils have participated in politically active groups. Today the need is for a united and concerted action. We need to draw the silent majority and fresh blood into political awareness to convey the collective view of our community effectively.

We have some major projects and we cannot succeed without membership numbers and the funds that can generate! We are aware that a strong membership base is paramount to have a viable platform to make an impact. We earnestly request your help at this critical time to join our efforts. Being member of ATC, you will be entitled to participate in various ATC working groups and influence the direction.

You can contribute in various ways to our long-, medium- and short-term activities in humanitarian, legal, political, community, and communication fronts.

Please join us in our crusade for peace and justice by having your family and friends join ATC!

## Articles and feedback to the National Newsletter

Please send us your views and creations to be included in our Newsletters to

[newsletter@australiantamilcongress.com](mailto:newsletter@australiantamilcongress.com)

**Disclaimer :** *The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ATC*

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## *Australian Tamil Congress: On a Crusade for Peace and Justice*

### **Vision**

“Australian Tamil Congress is formed in order to create a congress of our people, for our people and by our people based on the principles of justice and peace amongst ourselves, and to provide for a common voice in promoting our general welfare, prosperity, independence, equality, security and peace”

### **Mission**

“The Australian Tamil Congress encourages the positive participation of Tamils in Australian society, highlights issues of importance to Tamils, upholds core Australian values and engages other communities, governments and organisations in addressing the socio-cultural and political concerns of Tamils.”

### **Objective**

“As part of an international Tamil human rights and political organization dedicated to generating change through ‘Collective Global Tamil’ action to institute and educate people on Tamils’ right to survival and self-determination, and to promote the safety, welfare, economic development of Tamils worldwide; and to teach the lessons of the Tamil Genocide in Sri Lanka for future generations.”

