



**Centre for Peace
and Conflict Studies**



Press release from the Sri Lanka Human Rights Project, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

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SRI LANKA - LET IN AN INDEPENDENT UMPIRE

Sri Lanka should be banned from the International Cricket Council because of the island's ongoing human rights emergency, according to Associate Professor Jake Lynch.

The Sri Lankan touring team plays Australia in a One Day International tomorrow (Friday 5th) at the Sydney Cricket Ground in the penultimate match of their tour.

Associate Professor Lynch, Director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney says: "Until Sri Lanka agrees to an independent investigation into war crimes alleged to have been committed last year, it must be shunned by all international bodies".

"Up to 40 000 Tamils are said to have been massacred by the Sri Lankan military in the final months of the war last year, and more than 300 000 Tamils were imprisoned in barbed wire camps. Today, an estimated 26 000 are still incarcerated".

Associate Professor Lynch drew attention to the precedent of England calling off its proposed cricket tour of Zimbabwe, in 2009. The country's Cricket Board said at the time that it "share[d] the [UK] Government's concerns about the deteriorating situation and lack of human rights in Zimbabwe".

"Cricket is an important and cherished part of Australia's culture but while the Government of Sri Lanka continues to abuse human rights, and threaten journalists and aid workers who expose its excesses, the Sri Lankan Cricket team should not be welcome here or in any country", Lynch said.

One member of the Touring Party, spin bowler Ajantha Mendis, stepped straight from the military to the cricket pitch, having served as a Gunner in the Sri Lankan Artillery. He was later promoted to Sergeant, on the direct orders of then Army Chief, General Sarath Fonseka, in recognition of his sporting prowess.

The Australian Tamil Congress (ATC) has joined CPACS in its call to the ICC.

ATC spokesperson Dr Sam Pari said: "Last week the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, called for independent investigations into war crimes in Sri Lanka. Australia should follow suit".

"The pressure on Sri Lanka is gradually building and being kicked out of the ICC will send a very strong message to the Rajapakse Government - unless it starts to play by the rules, it will be shunned in international arenas," Dr Sam Pari added.

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The views expressed by Associate Professor Lynch are his own and not those of the University of Sydney