

## NEWS

# Tamils demonstrate in front of UNICEF

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Digital Journal

ON a cold autumn day, dozens of mortified Tamils protested in front of the UNICEF office in Toronto at Yonge & Eglinton to show their frustration of UNICEF's lack of action of the crises in Sri Lanka.

On Friday October 23, three simultaneous demonstrations occurred in the Greater Toronto Area by the Coalition To Stop The War In Sri Lanka. Dozens of Tamil activists rallied at the corner of Yonge and Eglinton, one of the busiest intersections in the Toronto area, to ask the question: "Why is UNICEF not using its mandate and its voice to save these children and their loved ones from Tamil concentration camps?"

New photographs emerged on the Internet on the same day as the protest. This time of Tamil men brutally fatally wounded. A young anonymous protester said that many of the Tamils at the demonstration were mostly there because of these latest images and to show the growing outrage among the public of the conditions in the displacement camps.

Jeevan Kumar, a spokesperson at the event, told Digital Journal that the most vulnerable people in the camps are children and that is one of the primary reasons that UNICEF needs to intervene. "A lot of them are suffering from diseases, malnourishment and now even abductions have been going on," Kumar explained.

Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, recently stated, according to a press release that was e-mailed to Digital Journal, "The government has detained people in these camps and is threatening their health and even their lives by keeping them there during the rainy season floods. This is illegal, dangerous, and inhumane."

One of the most pressing issues within the "death camps" in Sri Lanka are kidnappings and ransom because a lot of people try to flee the barbed wire facilities.

"The government of Sri Lanka, troops, paramilitaries that operate, if they know you have relatives back home in a foreign country, they're kidnapping the kids so they can get a ransom. Eventually those parents communicate to relatives in foreign

countries and say, 'You know what, these kids are being kidnapped and they want a ransom.'" He further added that the United Nations has actually confirmed these incidents.

A lot of children, as many images show at these protests, are being raped, tortured and even killed by hanging. A large of number of children over the age of nine are separated into different torture camps and are slaughtered by the government of Sri Lanka.

There are 85,000 children in the camps and many of them, as Kumar touched upon, are experiencing psychological torment and need to be assisted as soon as possible. Children have to walk through dead bodies just to reach help and get to safety, "they're traumatized."

History has shown that foreign occupiers or rebel groups, such as the ones in Africa, try to manipulate children and re-educate them in order to abide by their way of thinking and train them to be child soldiers. Kumar told Digital Journal that a lot of these kids are being fed propaganda not just by the Sri Lankan government but by Singhalese. "The ultimate aim is to have the kids, when they grow up, to lean towards the government." And later adding, "What is UNICEF going to do for these kids?"

Last month, as reported by The Times Online, James Elder, the official spokesperson for UNICEF, was ordered to leave Sri Lanka by the government. Therefore, like the two Canadian Members of Parliament who were denied visas to visit the former war-zone, this has made Tamils worldwide very suspicious of what the Sri Lankan President has to hide.

In June, Elder told The Australian, "The nutritional situation of children [in the camps] is a huge concern for UNICEF, and restrictions on access hinder our ability to save lives."

Another important challenge facing the 300,000 Tamils in the internment camps is the upcoming typhoon season, which would cause serious disease and deaths. Kumar explained that money given by foreign governments



would not go to potential victims in the camps, such as Norway's recent aid of 77 million Kroner, which many Tamils feel would be kept by the Sri Lankan government and not given directly to the people who are most in need of drastic assistance.

This week, Digital Journal reported that the Sri Lankan economy is starting grow and the government stated that they can decrease their military spending because the 28-year civil has come to an end. However, Kumar stated that military expenditures are actually increasing.

"They've raised the military expenditures by another per cent [or so] but at the same time, they have declared the war over. And yet they're still housing the people in camps."

There are 1.2 million Tamils inside Sri Lanka, however, majority of them are being oppressed and are unable to function normally in everyday society, according to Sahabthan Jesuthasan, a Toronto Tamil demonstrator.

All three men, including Shoban Jayamohan, another Tamil demonstrator in the GTA, are not at all surprised by any measures,

past, present or future, taken by the Sri Lankan government against the Tamil people. But they demand action by UNICEF, UN, European Union, United States and Canadian government to stop the "genocide" and want the appropriate and affective diplomatic steps to take place.

"This is why they are rallying again for the 2nd time to remind UNICEF of their responsibilities and request that they will protect the Tamil Children and their loved ones from the Sri Lankan brutal regime and uphold the human rights for these children."

## Politically active ...

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friendly - and, they hope, successful - phase.

He has recently set up the Tamil Solidarity Movement, a campaigning group that rejects violence. The movement hopes to rely on "networking" with MPs and discouraging western companies from investing in Sri Lanka, rather than on "chanting in Parliament Square," the article said on Muhunthan's new approach to Tamil activism.

"Articulate and driven, Jananayagam confirms the stereotype of the Tamil diaspora: she used to work as a bond trader at the investment bank Credit Suisse and ran her own hedge fund. She is now busy planning for next year's British general election; she hopes to persuade MPs to show a commitment to the Tamil issue, and the Tamil community to use their -voting power accordingly," the paper said.

Ms Jananayagam campaigned as a candidate to the European Parliament on not only a two-state solution in Sri Lanka but also on more transparency in

derivatives markets.

"I am very positive about the second generation," Jananayagam says of the Tamil diaspora's chances of securing more western intervention.

"They are so sure of their status in their country - they were born as citizens there - and they will just ring their MPs or senators to ask for these things," the paper said quoting Jananayagam.

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While the first generation think there is no more hope, they also recognise that their children's "new way" presents a ray of hope.

"The young ones are passionate about the struggle in a way that has surprised their parents," an engineer who wanted to remain anonymous told the paper.

"And their approach is very different - they want to use democratic and diplomatic means. It's good. They should not make the mistakes that we did."

## Execution video ...

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shot, and then slowly drops to its former position. This reaction appears to be from the bullet that passed through the first victim and then striking the down range victim and would be consistent with a victim that was very recently shot that has not died yet.

TAG officials told TamilNet that the official copy of the preliminary findings will be released as soon as the draft for the final report is complete. TAG also intends to issue a separate supporting document containing the background technical information necessary to understand the ongoing dispute raised by the Government of Sri Lanka on the authenticity of the video.

Earlier, Philip Alston, the UN Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions, dismissed Sri Lanka's investigations as not independent.

"The only way to do this [authenticate the video] is for an independent and impartial investigation to take place," he said.