

NEWS



Tamils hold "Will Break the Obstacles!" rally in Berlin

TamilNet

TAMIL Diaspora in Germany gathered in Berlin on October 22 to stage a protest march in an effort to draw the attention of the international community to the pathetic plight of Tamils interned in Sri Lanka Army (SLA) camps.

Two youths, representing students in Tamil Nadu, T. Sreenivasa Rao and Iraa. Gnanasekaran, on their journey in Europe to take part in the UN conference on Global Warming Awareness in Denmark on 7 December, took part in the march and rally.

They have made it their duty to raise their voices for the

interned Tamils, in all the countries they pass through, sources in Berlin said.

The demonstrators marched four km through the main streets of Berlin and held a meeting in front of the world famous Brandenburger Gate.

Asia representative of the Society for Threatened People, Ulrich Dalius, Human Rights activist and German parliamentarian of Green Peace Party, Volker Beck and Ms. Shopia Deeg, Palestine journalist and writer of International Solidarity Movement spoke at the meeting.

Both Seenuvas Rao and Gnanasekaran addressed the meeting in Tamil and English condemning the Sri Lankan gov-

ernment for the atrocity committed against innocent Tamils interned in camps surrounded by barbed wire.

At the beginning of the march the student representatives from Tamil Nadu and Ulrich Dalius submitted a memorandum to Manuel Muller, the Foreign Ministry Officer in charge of Sri Lankan affairs, which requested urgent assistance to provide the needs of the inmates in the internment camps.

Manuel Muller said that German government is not wholly satisfied with Sri Lanka in treating the Tamils detained and that it is carefully observing the conditions in Sri Lanka and the attitude of its government, the sources added.

Politically active Tamil diaspora youths under British spotlight

TAKING a look into the new political activism of the current generation of diaspora Tamil youths, Financial Times, a premier British Daily, said the "ending [of the war] in Sri Lanka was also a beginning," and many youths experienced a political awakening after devoting a lot of time to the protests and some missing a year of their college.

"As one generation of the Tamil diaspora sees its struggle for Eelam, an independent homeland, end in failure, their sons and daughters, who have spent their formative years in the west, are taking up the struggle. But they will fight it on their terms, using their strengths, fomenting a

BlackBerry revolution," the paper said.

The paper profiled two new generation expatriate Tamils, Bala Muhunthan, 22, a Tamil youth privately educated in Denmark and attending a leading business school in England, and Jan Jananayagam, a second generation Tamil activist who received a computer degree in England and a post-graduate business degree in Paris, and who ran as an independent candidate for London in last June's European parliamentary elections.

"Muhunthan, the son of an accountant and a doctor, had responded to the Tigers' apparent defeat with optimism - seeing it

as a second chance. While disappointed to have lost a powerful ally, he now felt free to pursue the non-violent means he had always preferred. He also saw an opportunity to present his ethnic group as something other than terrorists, a label he found frustrating when dealing with fellow students," the paper said.

"You always have to explain: 'Look, Tamil -people are suffering,'" the paper said quoting Muhunthan.

"Muhunthan is one of a group of young -people who now want to move the separatist struggle into a more diplomatic, PR-

Time to support the Tamils, say British Conservatives

TamilNet

INCREASING involvement in British politics and reciprocal openness of the British political parties was marked by a part-televised event held in Essex Sunday where several incumbent and prospective parliamentarians from the British Conservative party reached out to their Tamil constituencies and articulated their positions on the conflict and its consequences in Sri Lanka.

The event was the first one in a series planned by the recently formed British Tamil Conservative Association (BTCA).

Members of Parliament from the British party were keen to stress both their sense of fairness as well as their orientation towards action over rhetoric, according to a BTCA attendee.

Conservative candidate, Robert Halfon, echoed in his website, the sentiments expressed Sunday stressing the need for autonomy for the Tamils saying they deserved nothing less.

The event reflects the growing confidence with which this once-immigrant Tamil community is engaging with the domestic political space, a trend picked up last weekend by the cover story of the Financial Times magazine edition in London, a Tamil activist youth attending the event said.

Traditionally, it has been the Labour party in Britain that has positioned itself as the "party of immigrants" - at least in the eyes of many first generation British Tamils. However, as the Financial Times pointed out the Tamil Diaspora for historic reasons fits a middle class stereotype, its members largely consisting of professionals and entrepreneurs.

As the Diaspora integrates in their adopted countries and with the emergence of a confident and assertive second generation, British Tamils are increasingly confident in looking for political parties that fit their values and most importantly their sense of justice and fairness with respect to foreign policy on Sri Lanka.

With general elections scheduled for next year and the political conference season over, the campaigning has commenced with some vigor.

The Labour party in its annual conference passed a resolution that condemned "the detention by the Sri Lankan government of 300,000 men, women and children" as inhumane. Tamil political analysts say the British Tamil community is watching closely for the parties to clarify a party-wide policy towards Sri Lanka, a

conference resolution was an important first step.

While individual members of parliament have built close relationships with their constituents a broad policy change is required for effective action, BTCA said.

A traditional British dinner of roast lamb was preceded by a toast to the Queen, and a one minute silence in memory of those who had lost their lives in the recent conflict in the Vanni. Raffle prizes included a book signed by Conservative leader David Cameron, and afternoon tea at Westminster, BTCA said.

After dinner the candidates and members, in a series of speeches, outlined their views on the Sri Lankan conflict and on the pressing issue of the internment camps.

James Brokenshire, the Shadow Minister for Home affairs spoke of the unacceptable nature of the internment camps in Sri Lanka. He said that the past six months of internment is six months too long. He spoke of the need for a long term solution to the ethnic conflict and in support of Tamil autonomy and stressed that while the present British government had been long on words it had been short on action.

Lee Scott, MP for Ilford North reiterated the stand that he has consistently taken in parliament describing what was taking place in Sri Lanka as genocide. The internment camps were particularly on his mind, he said, in view of his upcoming visit to Auschwitz. Andrew Charalambous, prospective member for Edmonton shared this view and supported a two state solution to the ethnic conflict. He was keen to rename the British Tamil Conservative Association as the "Conservative friends of Tamil Eelam".

Robert Halfon, candidate for Harlow said of the internment camps "This desperate situation cannot continue. It does nothing to bring about peace, and if anything exacerbates long held grievances felt by the Tamils." He too stressed the need for autonomy for the Tamils saying they deserved nothing less.

Andrew Rosindell, Member of Parliament for Romford, said his party stood for fairness and human rights. All of the speakers deplored the internment camps and the discrimination against Tamils in Sri Lanka. These included Tony Boutle parliamentary candidate for Ilford South and Gavin Barwell, candidate for Croydon Central among others.

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