



P.O Box 33494
Raleigh, NC 27636
919-230-4279

January 22, 2023

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative,

Self-determination and Justice for the Tamil people in Sri Lanka

On behalf of Tamil Americans, we jointly wish you a Happy New Year!

As the New Year brings fresh hope, we urge our leaders in Congress to take critical initiatives to advance justice, foster democracy, and promote freedom in Sri Lanka, through resolution of more than seven decades of ethnic strife on the island.

The armed conflict in Sri Lanka had a devastating impact on the Tamil people, resulting in more than 300,000 people killed or disappeared, with at least 146,679 Tamils unaccounted for during just the final months of the war, which ended in May of 2009. President Obama, in his presidential memoirs, deemed the final stages of the conflict as a failure by the United Nations “to prevent an ethnic slaughter.” While Sri Lanka will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of its independence from Great Britain next month, it will be a somber occasion for Eelam Tamils on the island. It serves as a reminder of colonial rule, a Sri Lankan state amalgamated through improper decolonization, unfair power distribution, and continuing oppression under successive Sinhala Buddhist Nationalist Governments since independence, to such an extent that even freedom of expression is denied to Tamils by the Sri Lankan state.

The Tamil people have consistently demanded a referral of Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed against them by the state. In September 2022, a bipartisan congressional letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, led by Congresswoman Deborah Ross and Congressman Bill Johnson, encouraged the State Department "to leverage the United States' position on the UN Security Council to pursue a referral of Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court, as outlined in the February 2021 report on Sri Lanka from the

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights." The UN has made little, if any, progress on justice and accountability for these atrocities over the last fourteen years, despite US support for action. In 2015, Sri Lanka even served as a co-sponsor of a UNHRC Resolution to address calls for accountability. However, emboldened by support from China and Russia, Sri Lanka has subsequently rejected any meaningful accountability efforts, ultimately withdrawing from the resolution they co-sponsored, and demonstrating ongoing obstinance to continued UNHRC efforts to advance justice. The growing presence and influence of China in Sri Lanka since the end of the armed conflict is of great concern not only to the future of the island, but to broader US strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Tamil people have also been demanding a permanent political solution via a UN-monitored referendum. In remarks from December of 2022, Dr. Alfred-Maurice de Zayas, the former UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order, stated that the "UN should demand that a referendum on the issue of self-determination of the Tamil People be held in Sri Lanka."

Under international law, the Tamil people are a nation, sharing a common language, culture, history, and geography. The Tamil people have long demanded that their right to self-determination be recognized and respected. To these ends, the Tamil American community urges the US to take leadership to ensure international law is adhered to, and that the Tamil people are given the ability to exercise their right to freely determine their political status. As you know, Sri Lanka is strategically located by the busy East-West shipping lanes between the Suez Canal and the Malacca Strait in the Indo-Pacific region. Permanent peace and stability is vital not only for the region, but to the wider world. We strongly believe that Sri Lanka's stability can only be achieved by solving the long-standing Tamil issue in a way that is acceptable to the Tamil people.

We, therefore, jointly call upon the Congressional leaders to:

1. Urge the US administration to support Eelam Tamils' rights to self-determination.
2. Take initiatives towards conducting an Independence Referendum for Eelam Tamils to determine their political status democratically and peacefully.
3. Urge the US administration to leverage the US's position on the UN Security Council to pursue a referral of Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court.
4. Formally recognize the genocide carried out against the Tamil people by the Sri Lankan state

We appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to continued engagement with you in the New Year.

Sincerely,



Meena Ilancheyan

President, Tamil Americans United PAC

On behalf of the following US Tamil American organizations:

1. Federation of Global Tamil Organizations (FGTO); New York, New York info@fgto.org
2. Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America (FeTNA); Coppel, Texas contact@fetna.org
3. Ilankai Tamil Sangam; Maryknoll, New York president@sangam.org
4. People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (PEARL); Washington, D.C. contact@pearlaction.org
5. Tamil Americans United PAC; Raleigh, North Carolina info@tamilamericansunited.com
6. World Thamil Organization; Cary, North Carolina wtogroup@gmail.com