



CANADIAN TAMIL CONGRESS ■ CONGRÈS TAMOUL CANADIEN

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Attention News Editors:

The Terror Posed By Sri Lanka's New Anti-Terror Laws

Ottawa, December 8, 2006 – The Sri Lankan government's newly adopted anti-terrorism laws risk pushing an already-volatile situation into complete civil war on the island.

The ruling allows state security forces to arbitrarily detain anyone without a warrant for 18 months, raid any home and even demolish properties. Furthermore, torture-induced confessions are deemed valid evidence in a court of law under new legislative provisions.

The government-run Sri Lankan Media Centre for National Security has insisted that Tamils need not fear the new legislation, which they insist was brought about to ensure security for all Sri Lankan citizens.

Tamils worldwide, however, feel terrorized by its enactment, which they perceive as a poorly veiled attempt to persecute their people without any legal restraint.

Canadian Tamils are equally fearful of the legislation and are imploring Ottawa to condemn the new law, which violates Sri Lanka's ceasefire agreement. For months, the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) has been asking the federal government to appoint a human rights observer to its embassy in Colombo.

"Discussing human rights with respect to Sri Lanka is pointless it seems," said Julian Francis, Ottawa Coordinator for the CTC. "They simply don't exist on the island at present."

Francis added that the new anti-terrorism laws are "couched in extremely vague terminology and the state security will use them as a free pass to persecute Tamils."

Other Canadian Tamils shared similar sentiments, recalling their own grim personal experiences in Sri Lanka. "The older generation here remembers what the 1979 Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) led to," explained CTC Spokesperson David Poopalapillai. "We watched dear friends and family members fall to indiscriminate arrests, torture and even violent death. Not surprisingly, that is when militarized Tamil rebel groups like the LTTE began to grow and gain widespread public support among Sri Lankan Tamils.

"I am a living survivor of the Government of Sri Lanka's ruthless oppression of Tamils. I bore the discriminatory brunt of the 1979 PTA and cannot bear to witness another generation of Tamils persecuted under the guise of such warped political decision-making.

"Suspending civil liberties in Sri Lanka is not the answer," Poopalapillai concluded. "There aren't enough civil liberties there to begin with."

The LTTE has been fighting the Sri Lankan government for over two decades in the hope of carving out a separate state for ethnic Tamils in the northeastern region of Sri Lanka, citing systemic discrimination by the majority Sinhalese. The conflict has claimed nearly 70,000 lives, while hundreds of thousands of Tamils have been internally displaced and face suffering and starvation on a daily basis.

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