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Mr. Donald Lu
Assistant Secretary of State for South & Central Asia
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

March 16, 2022

Dear Asst. Secy. Lu,

Re: Your upcoming visit to Sri Lanka

We are very grateful that you are taking the time to visit Sri Lanka, considering all the crises in the world today. We know that Sri Lanka also has financial, governance and human rights crises to handle and we are very appreciative that the US will be involved in helping to solve those crises.

During your visit we trust you will take the time to meet with all Tamil Parties, Tamil Parliamentarians, and Civic Society personnel. We especially hope you will have the time to visit the North-East and meet with the “Mothers and Families of the Forcibly Disappeared” to understand first-hand the daily nightmare and trauma they undergo in their vigil and fast for the past 5 years (1,854 days on March 16, 2022, to be exact) wanting nothing more than to know from the Sri Lankan government, the fate of their loved ones.

The issues in Sri Lanka of special concern to us as Tamil Americans may be identified as follows:

- Sri Lanka’s financial crisis is in no small way due to its enormous military expenditure, which is higher than during the war. In 2022, Sri Lanka appropriated 306 billion rupees (\$1.5B), which is 12.3% of the government budget for direct military allocation for the Army, Navy and Air Force. In 2020 Sri Lanka was second in the world in military expenses as a percent of government expenditure.¹ The military budget has risen by a third since the end of the war in 2009 giving rise to a military force larger than the UK’s or Ukraine’s.

The vast majority of the military forces are stationed in the former war zones of the predominantly Tamil North and East, where they, with the help of Sinhala settlers from

¹ <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/defense-expenses-in-sri-lanka/>

the South, usurp the traditional farming, fishing, commerce, and industrial livelihood of the local people. Moreover, given the free rein to a subjugated civilian population in the North-East, the military and security forces kidnap, pillage, torture, rape, and forcibly disappear, a terrorized civilian population.²

- Sri Lanka is discussing changing its Constitution, a perennial exercise on the island due to extreme political dysfunction. Since independence, a federal form of government to accommodate the diversity in the population has been discussed, originally by the Kandyan Sinhalese and later by the Tamils. The main Tamil party for decades was called the Federal Party. Notwithstanding, due to numerous failed attempts at some form or other of “Federation”, the Tamil People overwhelmingly voted for the combined Tamil Parties’ Vaddukoddai Resolution of 1976 for the restoration and reconstitution of the state of Tamil Eelam based on the right to self-determination. Not even the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord which committed Sri Lanka to a more decentralized form of government, has been implemented. The Tamils fought a war to extricate themselves from the very centralized government under the total control of Sinhala Buddhist hegemony. This control has always been the root cause of dysfunction of the government and society in general.
- The response of successive Sinhala Buddhist controlled governments to Tamil’s demand for decentralized form of government is to actively change the demographic composition of the traditional Tamil areas in the North and East. This is achieved by State sponsored and encouraged colonization of the areas by Sinhala settlers from the South ever since the time of independence. The recent acceleration of this program of “land grab” by the current regime in using the organs of government such as the Archeology Department, the Forest Department, and the Mahaweli Authority, with enactment of new laws, has given a new urgency and instilled in the Tamils an existential threat to their very identity and survival as a People in Sri Lanka. The Government is looking further into the possibility of gerrymandering and merging the current provinces to erase the Tamil majority provinces in the country.

All of the above and more have galvanized the major US Tamil Diaspora organizations to join together in establishing a set of “Common Principles”. Based on which, there is a call for an “internationally sponsored “Referendum” for the Tamil People; international “Protection Mechanism” in the North-East; Repeal of the Sixth Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution enabling expressions of self-determination by the Tamil People; and, referral of Sri Lanka to the ICC, ICJ, and other international jurisdictions for prosecution of “Atrocity Crimes”.

² [Endless War: The Destroyed Land, Life, and Identity of the Tamils in Sri Lanka | The Oakland Institute](#)

Asst. Secy. Lu, cognizant of the parlous state of human rights in Sri Lanka, it is our expectation that the lenders such as the IMF and World Bank stipulate the following minimum conditions for bailing out Sri Lanka from its current catastrophic economic free fall:

1. Removal of the military and its subjugation of the people of the North and East
2. Elimination of the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) which is one of the key instruments of subjugation
3. Cessation of all land grabs, of encroachment of Sinhala settlers from the South, and of the artificial implantation of Buddhist artifacts and temples in the North and East
4. Disclosing the fate of the forcibly disappeared
5. Removal of the Sixth Amendment in the existing Constitution or in the framing of any new Constitution to be in keeping with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, enabling expressions of self-determination for the Tamil People

We hope that we will have the opportunity to meet with you in person or virtually, preferably before your trip, to discuss these issues and more.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

Anandaraj L Ponnambalam
President, USTAG

On behalf of the following US based Tamil Diaspora Organizations:

1. United States Tamil Action Group (USTAG); info@theustag.org
2. Ilankai Tamil Sangam; president@sangam.org
3. Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE); pmo@tgte.org
4. Tamil Americans United PAC; info@tamilamericansunited.com
5. Tamil Sangams of North America (FeTNA); contact@fetna.org
6. World Tamil Organization; wtogroup@gmail.com