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Federation of Global Tamil Organizations

உலகத் தமிழ் அமைப்புகளின் பேரவை

Jan 8, 2024

Her Worship Olivia Chow
Mayor, City of Toronto
100 Queen St. W. City Hall, Second Floor, West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Madam,

Re.: Tamil Street Fest

The Federation of Global Tamil Organizations (FGTO) is pleased to wish you and the councillors of the City of Toronto a Very Happy New Year.

We very much appreciate the many support services offered by the city to the Tamil community including the support for conducting the Tamil Street Fest event (<https://www.tamilfest.ca>) in Scarborough since 2016.

As you very well know the Tamil community has grown in numbers over the years and there are many Tamil organizations in the city serving the Tamil community, the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) being one but with limited membership. Obtaining membership in CTC for an ordinary Canadian is very restrictive almost next to impossible and as such CTC does not represent the majority of Tamils in the City.

Unfortunately, the privilege to organise the Tamil Street Fest is at present awarded by the City of Toronto solely to CTC thus depriving many in the community. We therefore kindly request the City of Toronto to award the privilege of holding the Tamil Street Fest to a coalition of Tamil organizations truly representative of the community instead of letting CTC monopolize the event.

Further reasons for our request are listed below:

1. Tamil Canadians denounce CTC for its recent engagement with the Sri Lankan government¹, including the genocide perpetrator sanctioned by Foreign Affairs Canada, Mahinda Rajapaksa. Due to the Tamil community's opposition, CTC postponed its annual dinner; however, it still failed to apologise for having met the sanctioned former Sri Lankan president who is considered by the Tamil Diaspora as a war criminal and committed crimes of genocide against the Tamil people. His Worship Patrick Brown, Mayor of Brampton and Hon. Gary Anandasangaree M.P. and Minister of Crown-Indigenous along with several prominent people condemned the recent act of CTC.

¹ "It is unfathomable that organizations who purport to be the voices of the Tamil community would sit at the same table with Sri Lankan war criminals responsible for grave atrocities."
<https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/betrayal-beyond-belief-tamil-canadians-vent-their-fury-ctc-after-meeting-rajapaksa>



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2. CTC's procedures to regulate Tamil participation in Fest are not transparent. Being the sole organizer of this event, it restricts access to non-profit organization event booths to prominent Tamil organizations and artists. Several other non-profit community organizations were also denied booths by CTC in the past.
3. Tamil Torontonians are deeply concerned about CTC's engagement not only with the Sri Lankan government but also with a misleading group, called Global Tamil Forum. Global Tamil Forum (GTF) was originally formed by 14 Tamil organizations from 7 continents, but all organizations, except CTC, have left GTF. CTC is the only organization that still is driving GTF². How much influence the foreign genocidal government Sri Lanka is wielding on CTC is not known, however, this is seen as a betrayal by many Tamils³.
4. A coalition of Tamil organizations, instead of just one organization, hosting the Tamil Fest annually will benefit the entire community and help the City reach a higher potential in the future. This will also ensure greater transparency in the commercial booth bidding process and the account keeping and also a proper process to assign booths to all the non-profit organizations fairly.

We strongly urge the City of Toronto not to allow CTC, an organization that has lost credibility in the Tamil Canadian community due to their active engagement with perpetrators of the Tamil Genocide, to organize Tamil Fest this year and we instead request you to allow a coalition of democratic and reflective Tamil community organizations to take a collective and unified lead on this initiative. We hope the City of Toronto will continue to stand with the Tamil Community.

Thanks

Federation of Global Tamil Organizations (FGTO)⁴ - <https://www.fgto.org/>

² "It was very shocking to see that the same CTC member also posed picture with war criminal and former president Mahinda Rajapakse who is banned in Canada for the most serious crimes against Tamil people." - Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown
<https://twitter.com/patrickbrownont/status/1740382569307230597?t=iYo2Y5tocBIPmjoeaqS2oQ&s=08>

³ "Posing for pictures with accused war criminals such as Mahinda Rajapaksa or Chandrika Kumaratunga is in their eyes a badge of honour, a recognition of their importance."
<https://www.ft.lk/columns/A-Himalayan-folly/4-756726>

⁴ Federation of Global Tamil Organizations calls for Canada's support for international prosecutions of Sri Lankan government <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TD460Q0mDF8>,
<https://www.press-presse.ca/fr/avis-aux-medias-2/95912-2023-01-26-510>