

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary, U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to bring to your attention the ongoing and unresolved plight of the Eelam Tamils in Sri Lanka. As you are well aware, this year marks a poignant milestone: the 15th anniversary of the conclusion of the Sri Lankan war on May 18, 2009. This devastating conflict, which spanned over a quarter of a century, has left deep and lasting scars on the nation, its people, and particularly on the Tamil community.

The war, initiated in 1983 and ending in 2009, witnessed appalling atrocities against civilians, including the estimated death or disappearance of up to 170,000 Tamils and widespread human rights violations by all parties involved. President Maithripala Sirisena, elected in 2015, committed to cooperating with international bodies for independent inquiries into these violations, even co-sponsoring UN Human Rights Council Resolutions 30/1 and 40/1 to facilitate such investigations. The country has since retracted its support, withdrawing from these commitments in 2020 after Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who had served as Defense Minister during the final stages of the war, was elected President. Current land appropriations in traditional Tamil areas are further eroding the Tamil homeland, which remains a non-self-governing territory. The government's use of the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act against political critics, dissidents, and human rights defenders continues to violate the rights of Sri Lankans, including Tamils.

Sri Lanka's strategic position in the Indo-Pacific, adjacent to major global shipping routes, underscores the importance of regional stability and peace to U.S. national interests. Addressing past human rights abuses and tackling the root causes of conflict is vital to prevent future violence. Holding perpetrators accountable and enabling the Tamil population to democratically determine their future in line with the United Nations Charter and U.S. principles is essential for reconciliation and progress in Sri Lanka.

The UN accountability process has unfortunately fallen short in providing truth and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government has shown a lack of willingness and capability to resolve this matter independently. The U.S. must seek a solution to this lingering issue. In line with our support for self-determination in Ukraine, Kosovo, East Timor, South Sudan, etc., it is imperative that we consistently apply our principles worldwide. We urge the State Department to consider the following actions:

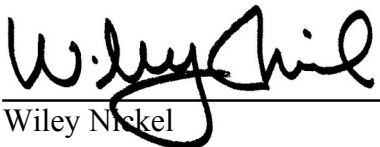
1. Advocate for the rights of the Eelam Tamils to self-determination and back a universally accepted democratic process of referendum to resolve the issue based on their rights as per international laws.
2. Support comprehensive international investigations and accountability for war crimes and human rights abuses against civilians during the war, following recommendations from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Such an investigation could include an examination of whether genocide was committed.
3. Leverage U.S. leadership within the United Nations—including the General Assembly, Security Council, and Human Rights Council—to promote independent judicial proceedings and potentially refer allegations to the International Criminal Court for prosecution.

We appreciate your consideration of this critical issue and anticipate your leadership in championing justice and self-determination.


Sincerely,



Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress



Wiley Nickel
Member of Congress



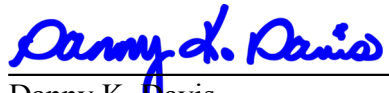
Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



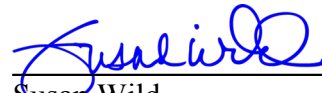
Jeff Jackson
Member of Congress



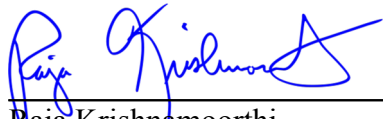
Summer Lee
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



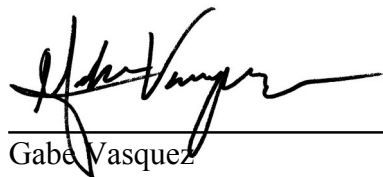
Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress