

9th Year of our Human Rights (10th December) Fast and Vigil

SRI LANKA IS BLEEDING ITSELF TO DEATH!

Today - Friday, 8th December 1989, our fast, vigil and lobbying of the Department of Overseas Development, Stag Place, London from 8 am to 12 noon is to highlight the 70% killings of innocent Sri Lankan civilians perpetrated by vigilante groups believed to be connected to the government of Sri Lanka.

In the Sinhala south more than 20,000 have been brutally massacred by death squads and over 100,000 are held in government detention camps. The safety of Viraj Mendis whose communication with outside world is cut off, IS A PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE facing death squads and vigilantes in Sri Lanka. We who support him, appeal to the British Government who deported him from his sanctuary in the Manchester Church of Ascension, to protect him from any danger to his life or limb or to bring him back to UK. We remember him in our vigil.

Among the recently disappeared in Sri Lanka are Mr. Lionel of the Legal Advice Centre of the Free Trade Zone and Mr Ranjith, a Worker in the FTZ. Both are missing after an internal disciplinary inquiry.

London based charity "War on Want" that supports development programmes in the FTZ, has expressed grave concern for the safety of the lives of its representatives as they can no longer work in such danger.

While being condemned for such unabated killings internationally, Sri Lankan government receives substantial aid from Her Majesty's government. Last year the British Government gave £21678 million in aid to the Sri Lankan government. Over £200 million on the Electricity grid within the Mahaweli Project complex. The supply of electricity to the Tamil northern lands have been cut off deliberately in recent months and still the supply of electricity has not been restored even after appealing for the personal intervention of President Premadasa. We condemned the British aid support since 1980 to this project for it would endanger the Tamil inalienable rights to the homelands. We were right to point out at that time that human rights ought to be linked with aid. But the Tory government seems to have no respect to human rights, let alone Human Needs.

BRITAIN SHOULD THEREFORE SUSPEND AID to Sri Lankan government immediately until human rights are restored and death squads and vigilantes are disbanded!

Britain has failed to honour its legal and moral responsibility to the tea plantation Tamils in Sri Lanka, a million of them, languishing landless, illiterate and as bonded labour. Another 900 tea plantation Tamils who were chased by Sinhala thugs in 1979 to Tamil Nadu - are now freed bonded labour languishing between slaves to squatters; whom I saw in my recent mission to India **We call upon the British Government to transfer some of the aid given to the Oppressors, to these Oppressed people, through London-based Charities, to whom we have explained their plight; the Tea firms whom these Tamils made rich, to give out of their profits, and the overseas Tamils to commit wholeheartedly in their rehabilitation programme.**

Please refer to our advertisement in the 8th December 1989 New Statesman and Society and act immediately. We have pledged to protect them. If they are not free, no one in Sri Lanka will be free. Let us get together to enrich the lives of these Tamil women, children and men, who were in economic terms our breadwinners.

Please write to:

1. Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd CBE, MP, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs,
Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA
2. Rt. Hon. David Waddington, Secretary of State, Home Office,
Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1
3. Hon. Linda Chalker, Minister for Overseas Development,
Stag Place, London SW1.

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