



British Tamils Forum

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“We want Tamil Eelam” – British Tamils Chant at the Candlelight Vigil

Over two thousand people, largely Tamils turned up with a relatively short notice outside the British Parliament last night (23 July 2008) between 8 pm and 10 pm holding candles to mark respect and as remembrance of over 3,000 Tamils who were slaughtered during Sri Lankan State sponsored riots, 25 years ago.

This show of strength and will of the Tamil Diaspora was organised by the British Tamils Forum in association with the Tamil Councillors & Associates. Age, Religion, Language or Gender were no barrier as from grand parents to babies in push chairs, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus to Tamils, Sinhalese were all present at the scene. People from all walks of life made an effort to participate. Through a series of chain mobile texts and emails people were contacted since last Sunday to inform of this candlelight vigil. To have reached over two thousand people in just over two days is a remarkable achievement and it also shows the feelings amongst the Tamil Diaspora wanting to show solidarity, resolve and strength with its brethren back in Sri Lanka.



Although the parliament was in recess for summer vacation since 22 July, a few members of parliament from the main political parties made an effort to show solidarity. The current and former Chairmen of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils (APPG – T) Hon Virendra Sharma MP and Hon Keith Vaz MP were accompanied by Hon Andrew Pelling MP and others.





Young and old, male and female joined together and stood in silence. This candlelight vigil was organised as part of a series of events to mark 'Black July' here in the UK. Starting with Pongu Thamil on 12 July, a photo exhibition depicting 60 years of oppression of Tamils in Sri Lanka within the British Parliament on 16 July and this vigil was to coincide to mark the 25 years anniversary since the 1983 riots.

Leaflets were handed out during rush hour at various points such as outside tube stations to raise awareness of the British Public of the continuous human rights violations carried out by the Government of Sri Lanka.

Crime against Humanity - Sri Lanka **Sri Lanka continues to commit genocide against Tamils**

25th Year Anniversary – Sri Lankan State Sponsored Genocide that Killed over 3,000 Tamils

1983 Riots: State sponsored pogroms against Tamils in Sri Lanka on July 23, 1983. 3,000 Tamil people were killed. More than 18,000 Tamil houses and numerous commercial establishments were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of Tamils fled the country to India, Europe, Australia and Canada.

53 political prisoners alone were killed inside the high security prison on 25th and 27th July 83. One Tamil Political prisoner Selvarajah Yogachandran alias Kuttimani had his eye gouged out because of the statement he made that he wanted to donate his eyes to someone so that he could see the birth of the Nation Tamil Eelam. Thangathurai had his tongue sliced for the statement he made at the Court that **"We are neither lovers of violence nor victims of mental disorders. We are fighters belonging to an organisation that is struggling to liberate our people"**

Other Significant State Sponsored Killings – Sri Lankan State has very strong tradition of state sponsored violence and ethnic riots against other communities for nearly a century

1915 Riots: Organised Riots in Sri Lanka were against the minority Sri Lankan Muslims

1956 Riots: Riots against Ethnic Tamil community

1958 Riots: Riots against Ethnic Tamil community

1977 Riots: The anti-Tamil Riots, targeting ethnic Tamils

1981 Burning of Jaffna Library, where over 100,000 books were damaged or completely destroyed

2001 Riots: Organised Riots in Sri Lanka were against the minority Sri Lankan Muslims

2006 Riots: Riots in Trincomalee and Galle

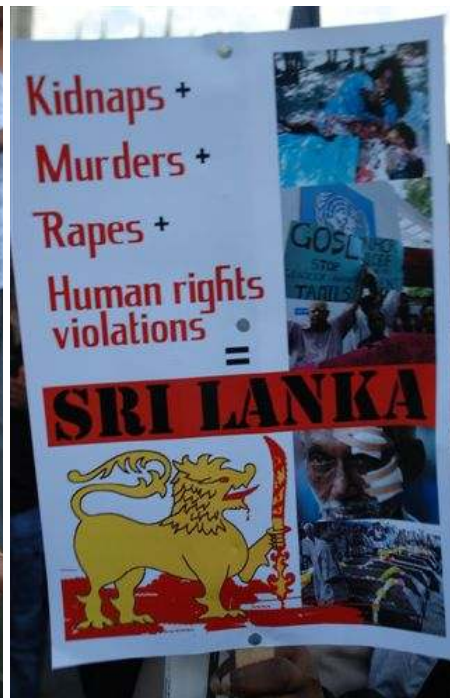
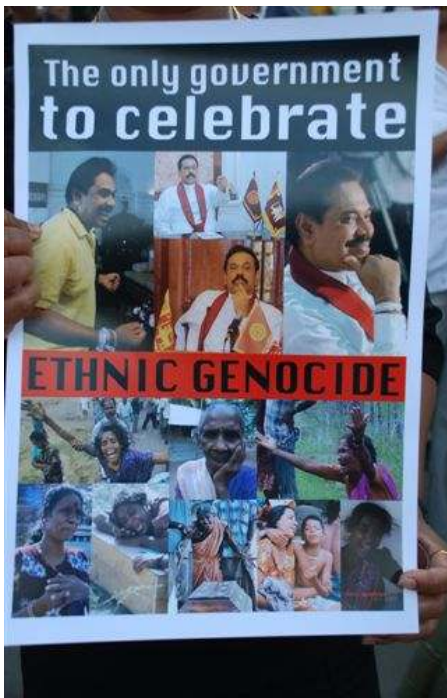




People spontaneously started chanting "We want Tamil Eelam"... "We want Tamil Eelam" nearer to the end at 10 pm.



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Notes to Editors:

British Tamils Forum exists to harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and significant others including mainstream decision makers in the UK with the aim of alleviating the sufferings of the Tamils community in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self determination within a democratic frame work under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. The forum was set-up in 2006 when, with the support 88 British Tamil community organisations, it also published an open letter in the Times newspaper. For more information admin@tamilsforum.com and/or visit: www.tamilsforum.com