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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Joint written statement* submitted by Action of Human Movement (AHM), ABC Tamil Oli, African Development Association, African Heritage Foundation Nigeria, Agence pour les droits de l'homme, Alliance internationale pour la défense des droits et des libertés, Association Bharathi Centre Culturel Franco-Tamoul, Association Burkinabé pour la Survie de l'Enfance, Association Congolaise pour le Développement Agricole, ASSOCIATION CULTURELLE DES TAMOULS EN FRANCE, Association des étudiants tamouls de France, Association des Jeunes pour l'Agriculture du Mali, Association mouvement pour la défense de l'humanité et abolition de la torture (MDHAT), Association of Youths with Vision (AOYWV), Association pour la Promotion de la Lutte Contre les Violences faites aux Femmes et la Participation au Développement de la Femme africaine, Association pour les Victimes Du Monde, Association Solidarité Internationale pour l'Afrique (SIA), Association Thendral, Campaign for Human Right and Development Sierra Leone, Comité des observateurs des droits de l'homme, Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, Edfu Foundation Inc., Fundación Latinoamericana por los Derechos Humanos y el Desarrollo Social, Jeunesse Etudiante Tamoule, Le Pont, L'Organisation Non Gouvernementale des Cercles Nationaux de Réflexion sur la Jeunesse - ONG CNRJ, Mijoro Mandroso (Mi.Ma.), Reachout and Smile Initiative for Social Empowerment, Safe Campaign LLC,

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



**Society for Development and Community Empowerment,
Tamil Uzhagam, Tourner La Page, World for World
Organization, non-governmental organizations in special
consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 May 2021]

Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) – Demands and Pledge from Several thousand people joined the march across the island nation’s north and east, with demands that linked Eelam Tamil civil society.

The five-day march for justice held across Sri Lanka’s north and east last february 2021 drew attention for more than one reason.

After months of restricted movement due to the pandemic and military restrictions, it was the first instance of several thousand people taking to the streets to assert their rights.

The ‘Pothuvil to Polikandy’ rally or ‘P2P’, began in the eastern Ampara district and ended in Jaffna in the Northern Province, covering several towns en route. Prominent Tamil politicians, activists, students, and residents took part in the march un Sri Lankan Military Harassment and surveillance.

Departing from past struggles in the north and east that focussed on grievances specific to war-affected Eelam Tamils, the rally included key concerns of all Tamils in Sri Lanka, in the list of ten demands put together by civil society groups.

It highlighted land grab in Tamil areas, “government-sponsored” Sinhalese settlements, enforced disappearances, persisting militarisation, intimidation of activists and journalists, the continuing use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the detention of political prisoners without trial. The activists also demanded that the government reverse its enforced cremations policy affecting Muslims, and ensure a fair wage to plantation labourers.

“It is 12 years since the war ended and the Tamil people’s problems remain unaddressed. Some in government want the provincial council system also abolished. We had to assert our rights, and we decided to do that in a democratic manner,” said Shanakiyan Rasamanickam, a legislator from the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), from the eastern Batticaloa district.

“Contrary to some reports, the protestors did not defy a court order, although the police tried to stop us in many places. Whenever they showed us orders restraining individuals, we respected that and did not join the rally in those specific areas,” he said.

Social media was flooded with images of scores of people, wearing masks and black headbands saying “#P2P”, as they marched braving heavy rains in some areas and large police presence everywhere. The large turnout reflected the widely shared concern about how the Rajapaksa government is treating the country’s Tamil-speaking people, according to S.C.C. Elankovan, civil society activist and one of the organisers.

“The government is being extremely insensitive, very unreasonable, and is shutting out any space there is for dialogue. A totalitarian government like this endangers the rights and freedoms of not just minority communities. It will also threaten the Sinhalese majority,” he said, adding: “I hope this struggle inspires people in the south to raise their voices.”

Demands and Pledge from P2P

1) We Tamils have been fighting for over seventy years for self Determination. We are a nation of people living in the merged North and East in the island of Ceylon. We have our right to determine our own destiny.

Successive Sri Lankan Sinhala – Buddhist Governments have continually suppressed our right to self-determination and govern us employing brutal military force to annihilate, which amounts to Genocide.

2) Since the independence from the British in 1948, Tamils have been waging peaceful non-violent struggles for our self-determination. These peaceful struggles were brutally suppressed by the use of force by the successive Sinhala – Buddhist Government, resulting

in Tamil youths turn to armed struggle, which was suppressed by Sri Lankan Security forces killing tens of thousands of Tamil civilians and sexually assaulting and raping Tamil women.

3) According to the November 2012 Report of the UN Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on UN Action in Sri Lanka, over 70,000 people were killed during the final six months of the war that ended in May 2009.

4) Several were killed when Sri Lankan forces repeatedly bombed and shelled an area designated by the Government as No Fire Zones (Safe zones). Even hospitals and food distribution centers were bombed. Several also died of starvation and bled to death due to lack of medical treatment.

5) International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) in February 2017 handed over details to UN of Sri Lankan Military run "Rape Camps", where Tamil women are being held as "sex slaves."

6) According to a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Foreign and Commonwealth Office report in April 2013, there are over 90,000 Tamil war widows in Sri Lanka.

7) Thousands of Tamils disappeared including babies and children. The UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances stated that the second-highest number of enforced disappearance cases in the world is from Sri Lanka.

After the war ended eleven years ago in May 2009, Tamils are facing the following hardships, and we who Walked for Tamil's Justice from Pothuvil to Polikandy demand that the following abuses to stop:

1) Militarization of Tamil's traditional homeland is continuing, and Tamils' historical identity is destroyed with the aim to change demography in favour of Sinhalese, using several government departments, including archaeological, forest, survey departments, and Ministry of Buddhasasana as well as Mahaveli River Development Agency. Also, Government-sponsored Sinhalese settlements are continuing.

2) Continuing land grab in Tamil's traditional homeland by the Security Forces and the Government converting Tamil's traditional and historical places into Sinhala-Buddhist areas by establishing numerous Buddhist temples in Tamil areas, including after destroying Hindu temples. As of now, around 200 Hindu temples were affected by this act of the Government.

3) Sri Lankan Sinhalese Security Forces stationed in Tamil's traditional homeland should be removed and civilian life return to normal. Also, calling for the immediate stop of appointments of Military officers to civilian administrative positions and immediately remove all the officers who are already in civilian administrative positions.

4) Sinhala – Buddhist Government continues to intimidate and abuse Tamil journalists who cover abuses against Tamils and Tamil Civil Society activists who protest these abuses. This not only violates their constitutionally guaranteed rights, it is being used to suppress Tamil's calls for fundamental rights, including self-determination.

5) Tamil cattle owners are facing numerous problems, where their grazing areas are being occupied by Sinhala – Buddhists and their cows killed. For example, In the Batticaloa district, Mayilathamadu and Mathavani grazing lands for cattle were forcibly occupied with the aim to create Sinhala – Buddhist settlements. Cows belonging to Tamil's were killed with the aim to destroy Tamil's livelihood. As part of this plan forests in Tamil areas were destroyed and cleared to establish Sinhala – Buddhist settlements.

6) All the lands that were confiscated by the Government / Sri Lankan Sinhalese Security Forces from Tamil civilians should be returned immediately.

7) Tamils have been denied the Right to Remember their war dead, as demonstrated by denying remembrance events, destruction of cemeteries of the war dead, and demolition of memorials by the Sinhala – Buddhist Government.

- 8) Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) has been used to imprison Tamils without charge or trial for over 40 years and is now being used against Muslims.
- 9) Tamil Prisoners of War (POW) / Political Prisoners have been imprisoned for several years without trial. The Sinhala – Buddhist Government has pardoned Sinhala – Buddhist prisoners on a regular basis, but none of the Tamil POW's / political prisoners were pardoned.
- 10) Families of the enforced disappeared have been protesting to find their loved ones, including babies and children, but the Sinhala – Buddhist Government refuses to give them any answer.
- 11) Muslims who died due to COVID are cremated against the wishes of the families and against Islamic teachings. Muslims who peacefully protest against this policy are suppressed.
- 12) Tamils in the upcountry have been urging for a pay raise of 1,000 rupees and other grievances but successive Sinhala – Buddhist Governments have ignored their demands.

In addition, we request:

We urge to implement Tamil's Joint Appeal to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and to UN Human Rights Council the Member States, which includes a request to Refer Sri Lanka to International Criminal Court (ICC) for War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide committed against the Tamil people by the Sinhala – Buddhist Sri Lankan State.

Furthermore, as a guarantee that the Genocide that took place against Tamils is not repeated, a permanent political solution should be found by getting the wishes of the Tamil people through internationally conducted and monitored referendum.

Pledge:

We, with the clear understanding and historical knowledge that successive Sinhalese-Buddhist Governments have pursued as a State policy to destroy Tamil's identity and survival by employing actions amounting to Genocide, Pledge that:

We who walked from Pothuvil to Polikandy call upon everyone to join hands and work tirelessly and with determination to achieve our just goals, including international justice for Genocide we faced.

North East Civil Societies, Gouvernement en Exil du Tamil Eelam, GLOBAL TAMIL MOUVEMENT, ASSOCIATION DES CHRETIENS TAMOULS POUR LA PAIX ET JUSTICE, Centre Bishop Rayappu Joseph pour la Justice et la paix, ASSOCIATION DES ANONYMES ET PERSÉCUTES DU GÉNOCIDE TAMOULE, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.