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**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related
forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation
of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

Written statement* submitted by Jeunesse Etudiante Tamoule, a non-governmental organization 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]

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



TAMIL MAYOR OF JAFFNA ARRESTED BY SRI LANKA'S TERRORISM DIVISION AND ACT OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION BY SRI LANKAN SINGHALA REGIME

The Mayor of Jaffna, Viswalingam Manivannan, who is also an attorney-at-law, was arrested on charges of attempting to resurrect the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and taken to Vavuniya for 'further investigation' by Sri Lanka's Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) at around 2.30am on Friday morning. An example of systematic Singhala racial discrimination against Eelam Tamils.

The arrest follows an investigation into the uniforms of a Jaffna Municipal Council task force which was launched this week to enforce penalties against environmental infractions such as littering and spitting. Sri Lankan police alleged that the uniforms worn by the task force were similar to those formerly worn by the LTTE's police force.

The Jaffna Municipal Commissioner was summoned by police on Wednesday 7th April night and interrogated for around 3 hours regarding the uniforms. Police also told the Commissioner to halt the task force's duties and to hand over its uniforms, which the commissioner carried out the following day. Police said at the time that the uniforms and the remainder of the investigation would be handed over to Colombo.

At around 8pm on Thursday night, Manivannan, along with another council member, Varatharajah Partheepan, were summoned to the Jaffna police station. After a lengthy interrogation, the Mayor was handed over to the TID and arrested. Partheepan continued to be interrogated and was released around 3am.

Earlier on Thursday 08th April 2021, evening, Hon. Manivannan held a press conference to address the allegations and explained that the uniforms were in fact the same as those worn by a similar task force ran by the Colombo Municipal Council. The Mayor said that the uniforms held no further connotations and that the police were making allegations based on social media conspiracy theories.

The arrest of Mayor Viswalingam Manivannan gives food for thought. On last 8th of April 2021 a "B" Report is said to have been filed in the Chief Magistrate's Court against me. I still do not know what the contents of the B report are. An arrest is possible. Then there were the questioning of Tamil Journalists. In Parliament whenever Tamil perceptions are aired by Tamil Representatives immediately there are vicious and loud protests from Government ranks and sometimes from the Opposition ranks too.

Tamil Members of Parliament are always ridiculed and disturbed when they refer to Tamil perceptions or Tamils' sufferings or governmental excesses. Today a young Tamil Parliamentarian took up a privilege issue in Parliament against a Sinhala Parliamentarian who had said that the former must be interrogated by Police for declaring certain Tamil sentiments in Parliament! Now Mayor Manivannan, a popularly elected Mayor, who is a successful lawyer by profession, has been taken into custody for embellishing some Municipal Employees with uniforms which to the authorities resemble Tiger Uniforms!

All these are centered around some purported connection to the LTTE. LTTE was officially destroyed in 2009. Even those who surrendered to the Military in the presence of witnesses simply disappeared! So they do not exist or their whereabouts are known only to the government forces. The government has said many times that there is no evidence at all of the LTTE regrouping. If so why this irrational distrust of the Tamils or paranoia about LTTE and Tiger uniforms? Are the ghosts of brutally killed Tamils disturbing our powers that be?

Mayor Manivanan when he officially functioned as a Mayor and took certain steps in the course of his duties he is being subjected to questioning by the TID. What Mr. Manivannan did was very similar to what the Colombo Municipal Council did.

We are told that the uniform given to the Municipal Workers in Jaffna resemble the uniform used by the LTTE police force. But in fact it resembles the uniform given to similar workers in the Colombo Municipal Council.

If there is similarity between the uniform of the LTTE and the uniform given to the Jaffna Municipal workers and if the powers that be in Colombo are mentally disturbed about it, then the proper thing to do would have been for the mentally disturbed authorities to advise the Mayor to withdraw those uniforms and replace them with uniforms more plausible to their tastes. Making such a fuss about uniforms used 12 years ago shows the extent to which the Government has become paranoid with regard to the LTTE.

Such light blue uniforms are common among security organizations in many countries. If there be any differences between the CMC uniforms and MC uniforms the powers that be could resort to a “standardization” process among the uniforms and set the specimen uniform for use by all Provinces.

The arrest of Mayor Manivannan may have other implications. Sometime ago the Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka visited Jaffna. He met Mayor Manivannan and discussed power sharing and other similar matters.

Are there hidden agenda being worked out by the Government after its poor performance in Geneva? Let us wait and see. The TID arresting under the PTA the Mayor and questioning him, a Lawyer, for over six hours, spells doom for the Government. It was I who alluded to the Ides of March quite some time ago. They have come and gone. The Government is no more in good terms with the Free World. Let the Government rethink about its activities and mend its ways. Economically it is in dire state. May be that fact needs to be covered by gimmicks of this nature from reaching the People!

If the Government thinks that such questioning and incarceration of Tamils in important positions in society would prevent Tamils from asking for their lost rights it would be sadly mistaken. Already the repression by various Sri Lankan Governments against its minorities is quite well known internationally. In 1983 Chief Justice Neville Samarakoon returned from the Middle East and said Sri Lanka has become a pariah State. He had witnessed many incidents that took place in Sri Lanka on TV live. These recent activities will corroborate the facts already known the world over. The more the repression the determination of the Tamils will grow ten-fold.

For last 12 years Tamil memorialisation activities, linked to the war and the armed resistance, also remain restricted. Last year’s Tamil Remembrance Day commemorations faced severe restrictions by the government, and this past January and May, the Mulliavaikkal memorial was demolished – the latest among dozens of Tamil memorials and war cemeteries destroyed by the Sri Lankan racial state.

Tamil Human rights activists and international Human rights groups have been calling for the repeal of the PTA since the 1980s. Yet, the draconian legislation, first said to be a temporary measure, remains in place.

Sri Lanka recently passed regulations allowing detention without trial for two years for those suspected to have caused “religious, racial or communal disharmony”. This is a significant expansion of the already notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), which has historically been used to target Tamils and Muslims.

The greatest opportunity for repeal was during the 2015-2018 “good governance”, but instead of holding Sri Lanka to its commitment to do so, the US and the EU prematurely rewarded Sri Lanka with increased political, trade and military links, reinforcing the ethnocratic structures that are so easily leveraged against minority communities.

And notably, despite the recent uptick in violence against Tamils, the EU has agreed to fund capacity-building for Sri Lanka’s counterterrorism efforts and its war crimes-accused security forces, together with the UN and Interpol, in a project worth \$5m.

Jeunesse Etudiante Tamoule with Global Tamil Movement and its partner organizations strongly condemn the arrest of Mayor of Jaffna V Manivannan by the Sri Lankan government, and call for immediate actions from international community to preserve Eelam Tamils identity and help Eelam Tamils to have their freedom.

We call parliamentarians and elected members around the world to condemn those continued harassment and arbitrary arrests of members of the Tamil Eelam including elected officials, journalists & human rights defenders must end, and their immediate release.

We ask to United Nations Human Rights Special procedures mandate holders and United Nations Treaty Bodies Expert to make an urgent appeal regarding that.

We invite OHCHR special procedures mandates holders and Treaty bodies expert to have a Commission of inquiry on that occupation of Eelam Tamils land it effects on Eelam Tamils.

We ask to EU to :

- stop their collaboration on Eelam Tamils extermination project of Sri Lanka.
- Provide support and protection to Eelam Tamil activists challenging patterns of militarisation in the North and East of Sri Lanka.
- Recognize the occupation of Eelam Tamils land by Sri Lankan unitary State

To donors and civil society organisations:

- Refrain from supporting initiatives and programmes which contribute to the Military occupation of Eelam Tamils Lands.
- we ask to support Tamil rights activists and victims to seek Justice with Human Rights Council and international criminal court.

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.