



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

## **Written statement\* submitted by the Association Bharathi Centre Culturel Franco-Tamoul, 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.

[13 February 2017]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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## **A plea to restore the Rights of the Tamils and investigate the genocide in Sri Lanka**

***Roja Selvamani, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh, India.***

I am Roja Selvamani, of the YSR Congress party which is the leading Opposition political party in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. I am an MLA representing the Nagiri assembly constituency. I won the 2014 general elections to represent the people of this constituency.

I am also a leading film actress in South India having started my career way back in 1991. I have acted in 51 Telugu, 71 Tamil, 10 Kannada and 03 Malayalam movies. I continue to act in movies and television serials along with serving the people of my constituency.

As a person who has traveled across the world and the different states of India, I have had the opportunity to discuss the Tamil issue and see the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamil people living around the world as the Tamil Diaspora, the Tamils in the North and East of Sri Lanka apart from the Tamil refugees living in the Indian state of Tamilnadu.

As a student of Political Science, I have taken keen interest in the Sri Lankan issue and found that from the time the country, then known as Ceylon got independence from the British in 1948, the Tamils have been subjected to severe brutalities. Initially, one million Tamils of the Indian origin were disenfranchised and decitizenized in 1948, in 1956, the Sinhala Only Act was passed followed by anti Tamil riots. The Tamils protested peacefully till the 1970s when the Sinhala government imposed the Standardization of education which affected the entry of Tamil students into the University.

It is only after the burning of the Jaffna library in 1981, known as the treasure house and cultural symbol of the Tamils that the struggle for justice took a violent turn as many Tamil militant groups trained by India started to fight against oppressive Sinhala government. The 1983 state sponsored pogrom was the beginning of the violent genocide against the Tamils. It culminated with the most horrible gruesome genocide of our times. Things have not changed for the better for the Tamils,

I present to you just a glimpse of the ground realities to reiterate that Sri Lanka can never be reformed unless the International community interferes to restore the rights of the Tamils

### **Political marginalization of the Tamils**

In 2009, the number of registered voters in Jaffna electoral district that comprises of the administrative districts of Jaffna and Kilinochchi was 816,005. This figure has dropped to 481,791 entries in the register of the electoral district of Jaffna. SL Election Department has removed 331,214 names from the list.<sup>1</sup> There is no clarification for these missing voters. Elections commissioner's department officials said that the Jaffna district will have just six MPs representing the voters as opposed to the current number of nine MPs.<sup>2</sup>

### **Militarisation**

Out of a total land mass of 65,619 sq kms of land, the Tamils inhabit 18,880 sq kms of land in the north and east, after May 2009, the defence forces have occupied more than 7,000 sq kms of land.<sup>3</sup> This shows that the Tamil dominated areas have been used by Sinhala forces for their occupation in the name of security concerns utilizing water,land,forests,fish apart from polluting the peaceful village environment. Apart from this it also prevents the locals

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.infolanka.com/news/2011/june/index7.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/article2332290.ece>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.island.lk/index.php?page\\_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code\\_title=38085](http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=38085)

to lead a normal life when they are under the scanner of the occupying defence forces. It has also prevented the return of thousands of displaced people who are still living in camps, with friends and relatives.<sup>4</sup>

A ratio of 1 security personnel for every 5.04 civilians in the Northern Province or a force density of around 198.4 security personnel per 1,000 civilians' cannot be defended in any circumstances, and is simply for the purpose of the Sinhalization and militarization of the Tamil nation.<sup>5</sup> This is without counting the police who are also used for security purposes. Military cantonments represent a novel form of state-managed colonisation of traditional Tamil areas, with military personnel and their families substituted for landless Sinhala peasants.<sup>6</sup>

### **Sinhalisation**

It is also estimated that 2500 Hindu Kovils and 400 Christian churches have been destroyed.<sup>7</sup> Many times the forces do not permit the people to reconstruct these places and lack of resources have left them in dilapidated conditions. On the other hand in these Tamil areas where Buddhists are found only in the form of uniformed men, nearly 2500 Buddhist stupas and statues have come up.<sup>8</sup>

The real beneficiaries of this so called development programme is the Sinhala jobless youth who will get a chance to live and work in the north. Along with this, the Sinhala contractors will be the financial beneficiaries and the defence forces will be the ones who will be utilizing these entire newly developed infrastructures as a major chunk of the funds will be allocated towards road development which will facilitate easy troop movement. It is estimated that three decades of civil conflict in the north and east of Sri Lanka destroyed about 160,000 houses including 100,000 in the Northern Province.<sup>9</sup>

### **Rehabilitation**

Any meaningful rehabilitation and return of normalcy necessitates the process of building permanent houses for those who were displaced and whose houses were ravaged. These displacees need to live in their original places of habitat, the Sri Lankan Tamils who are rehabilitated are doled out a sum of Rs.25,000 (SLR), 6 bamboo poles, 6 tin roofs.

On the contrary the Sinhala re-settlers are allowed build permanent houses by the state. This clearly indicates the double standards of the government not to develop the Tamils into an economic force.<sup>10</sup>

Compounding this is the presence of high security zones in paddy fields and fishing areas where the Tamils cannot return. Some 70,000 members from 26,000 families have been living as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in 23 Grama Niladari Divisions in Valikamam DS Division alone for more than a decade. While the pleas of these Tamil people who keep demanding their right to return to their ancestral lands has been conveniently neglected, programs for the Sinhalization process have been speeded up.<sup>11</sup>

### **War Widows**

Single women headed families fear the most for the safety of themselves and their children in the presence of large number of armed personnel. There have been many instances when their doors have been knocked in midnight and at times sexual favors sought as more than 50,000 of the 90,000 widows in the war zone are below 40.

### **Destroying the Tamils economically**

<sup>4</sup> "Given that 75% of the army's divisions are stationed in the Northern Province, in addition to other formations such as task forces and independent brigades and regimental units, it is not unreasonable to assume that at least 60% of the army, i e, approximately 1,80,000 personnel, are stationed across the Northern Province." - *Notes on the Military Presence in Sri Lanka's Northern Province | Economic & Political Weekly, July 14, 2012*

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dailynews.lk/2012/08/11/pol03.asp>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.theweekendleader.com/Causes/615/Exclusive:-Inside-Lanka.html>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2011/9/70769\\_space.html](http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2011/9/70769_space.html)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.unhabitat.lk/news28.html>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.theweekendleader.com/Causes/637/Inside-Lanka-\(Final-Part\).html](http://www.theweekendleader.com/Causes/637/Inside-Lanka-(Final-Part).html)

<sup>11</sup> Nirmanusan Balasundaram, Sri Lanka: Militarizing the land and terrorizing the minds  
JOURNALISTS FOR DEMOCRACY IN SRI LANKA, 16 JULY 2012

The Sri Lankan state is not just unleashing its physical strength on the Tamils, it is also destroying the self-reliant local economic structures built over the years to make the Tamils completely dependant on the south.

Sinhala and Muslim families who have been resettled here along with the army men have also started fishing in the sea, lakes and ponds depriving the traditional Tamil fishermen of their livelihood.

People from traditional fishing villages like Pesalai are getting fish from Colombo to sell in the local market as the government does not allow the locals to use small trawlers into the sea, whereas at the same time one can see large Indian trawlers fishing.

The Murunkan – Nanattan belt was once famous for banana cultivation and export, the war has left the land barren to such an extent where the locals are forced to buy banana from Africa.

The looting of the jungles in the interior areas of the Tamil heartland continues unabated, this is in connivance with the local military officials who allow the Sinhalese from the south to log timber.

Army stores and stores belonging to the Sinhalese which have come in large numbers have eaten the small business ventures of the Tamils apart from considerably ruining the local economy.

Jaffna is always identified with palmyra trees. The leaves are used for roofing, fencing, thatching, mats, baskets, fans, hats, umbrellas, and as writing material. The stem is used for roofing and demarcating boundaries. About 4 million Palmyra trees have been destroyed due to the war in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.<sup>12</sup> There were more than 300,000 people whose life survival was based on the products of the Palmyra.<sup>13</sup>

Under these circumstances, the UN should:

1. Conduct a referendum in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka
  2. Undertake full rehabilitation of Tamils
  3. Provide compensation to the Tamils
  4. Investigate the genocide
  5. Fully restore the Right to self-determination of the Tamils
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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.dailynews.lk/2012/08/11/pol03.asp>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2010/02/20/call-restructuring-palmyra-development-board>