



CANADIAN TAMIL CONGRESS ■ CONGRÈS TAMOUL CANADIEN

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ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS:

Canadian Tamils Endorse Foreign Affairs Minister's Call for Peace, Want Action

OTTAWA, August 16, 2006 - Canada's Tamil community has endorsed a call for peace in Sri Lanka by Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay, though calls on the federal government to take action and ramp up its current engagement on the file.

Following a horrific spike in violence that has claimed more than 500 lives over the past several weeks, MacKay called for a cessation of hostilities and a return to the negotiating table between national authorities and the LTTE administration.

"We welcome the Canadian government's involvement on this crucial file," said Piragal Thiru, Director of Political Affairs for the Canadian Tamil Congress. "Our relatives live in fear, under a daily threat of bloodshed. The federal government's silence to date has been deafening, and we welcome this belated call for peace."

Last month the CTC called upon Ottawa to take three simple steps that would make Canada a key player and international catalyst for peace. Their requests included naming an impartial human-rights expert to the Canadian embassy in Colombo as well as helping to oversee the equitable flow of foreign aid into Sri Lanka's Tamil areas.

"There are 300,000 of us in this country – the largest Tamil diaspora in the world – and we're looking to our federal government to lead on this file, which is of primordial importance to us," said Julian Francis of the CTC. "We've seen little reason for encouragement but we're now tilting toward cautious optimism."

Discussions with government aides in recent days have fuelled that optimism, as senior government officials have expressed a willingness to accommodate Tamil concerns.

In the meantime, Tamils from Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa are gathering on Parliament Hill tomorrow morning at 11:00 am to protest the escalating violence and urge their federal government to openly condemn the Sri Lankan government for the recent bombing of a Tamil orphanage that killed nearly 100 schoolchildren.

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