



Canadian Tamil Congress
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Congrès Tamoul Canadien
"The unified voice of Canadian Tamils"

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Tamil Canadians Call For Open and Fair Elections in Sri Lanka

In the wake of the violence, corruption and intimidation surrounding the upcoming vote in Sri Lanka, Tamil Canadians urge the international community to exert pressure to ensure open and fair elections on the island.

“With all the incidents of violence and intimidation leading up to today’s vote, we fear the chances for a fair and free election are slim,” said David Poopalapillai, National Spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress. “There have already been several indications that electoral rigging will likely play a role in today’s election and the voices of those in the traditional Tamil homeland will go ignored once again.”

On Monday, the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) denounced the election-related violence that had spread throughout the country. Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, a co-convener of the CMEV, said the blatant violation of election laws was visible everywhere. He further went on to note that the level of violence was worse than during previous elections, and that the state authorities had disregarded the orders of the elections chief to conduct a fair poll. In addition, Reporters Without Borders noted that the Sri Lankan state media outlets were primarily showing presidential propaganda. The organization also observed that 98.5 per cent of the news and current affairs on state-owned TV stations, *Rupavahini* and *ITN*, on January 18 and 19 was given over to the president and his supporters.

“Open and fair elections are essential in any country that values democracy, and if Sri Lanka wants to be a real democracy and not just pretend to be one, it must allow the will of the people to prevail,” said Mr. Poopalapillai.

“For the last four years, Mr. Rajapaksa terrorized the Tamil population in Sri Lanka through everything from extrajudicial killings to internment camps to enforced disappearances,” said Mr. Poopalapillai. “He has gone on the attack against human rights defenders, journalists and critics who seek to uphold the rule of law and basic rights in the country. In this climate, Tamils must do what they can at the election stations to get Mr. Rajapaksa kicked out of office.”

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As such, the Canadian Tamil Congress is urging all Tamil Canadians to actively urge their relatives and friends in Sri Lanka to vote en masse in this election.

Recently, the Jaffna University Students' Union appealed to Tamil voters in north-east Sri Lanka to actively partake in the election and not to boycott. The president of the union, S.Srirangan, also said that it would not be wise to support any Tamil candidate who had no chance of winning.

“Tamil leaders in Sri Lanka, like Rajavarothayam Sampanthan and Mano Ganesan who live with the day to day reality of the political situation in Sri Lanka, have made their decisions based on the situation on the ground and are working hard to defeat Rajapaksa through the election process and as such, we must help strengthen them in their efforts,” said Mr. Poopalapillai.

“At the end of the day, staying silent or boycotting the election will only directly play into Rajapaksa's hands.”

For more information, please contact CTC at 416.240.0078

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