



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

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Ocean Lady Newcomers Reach Out To Community

The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) is actively working to help many newcomers who risked their lives aboard the Ocean Lady to come to Canada. Seventy-four of 76 newcomers have contacted the CTC as have several of their families.

"The phones have been ringing off the hook as we work to help both the newcomers and any families they may have," said David Poopalapillai, National Spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress. With the help of the community, CTC has been calling for more translators and monitoring the legal process among other things. For those with no relatives or friends in Canada, CTC is arranging housing, if and when the newcomers are released, and is also looking after their legal needs.

"We are working day and night to help these newcomers who have fled persecution," Mr. Poopalapillai said. "Our organization is willing to do whatever it takes to ensure the newcomers are taken care of, particularly those with no friends or relatives in the country."

The Tamil Canadian community felt helpless for months as mass number of relatives and friends were killed in Sri Lanka and 270,000 more were confined in modern-day internment camps. "The arrival of the newcomers has galvanized volunteers in the community to channel their energy to help in any way they can."

In the wake of recent media reports, Tamil Canadians also believe any information given by the Sri Lankan government to Canadian authorities should be treated with caution.

Sri Lanka has brutally suppressed those who seek to tell the truth or question the government version of events. There is a reason that Reporters Without Borders ranked Sri Lanka 162 out of 175 countries in the world for press freedom.

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More than 13 journalists and media workers have been murdered under the current leadership's reign and 30 more have been forced into exile.

This year alone, Sri Lanka expelled an UNICEF worker, forced the Red Cross to scale down its operations, and restricted aid workers from speaking about internment camp conditions. Moreover, the U.S. State Department recently documented reports of Sri Lanka shelling in No Fire Zones, abducting and murdering Tamil civilians and depriving certain Tamil areas of food and medical supplies.

“The credibility of the Sri Lankan government is non-existent when it comes to telling the truth, and any information provided by its authorities should be treated with utmost caution and should be independently examined for its accuracy,” said Mr. Poopalapillai.

“Based on media reports, CTC feels the basic principle of refugee protection has been violated and the newcomers and their families have been put at greater risk since their information has been shared with the very government they are fleeing from,” said Mr. Poopalapillai. “It’s akin to sharing information with the likes of the Iran or North Korea.”

For more information, contact the Canadian Tamil Congress at 416.240.0078

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