



CANADIAN TAMIL CONGRESS ■ CONGRÈS TAMOUL CANADIEN

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TAMIL CANADIANS CALL FOR RELEASE OF DISPLACED CIVILIANS FROM INTERNMENT CAMPS ON WORLD REFUGEE DAY

A month after Sri Lanka announced its victory over the Tamil Tigers, the situation of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in internment camps remains abysmal.

The UN recognizes June 20 as World Refugee Day. More than 280,000 internally displaced people are currently living like refugees in Sri Lanka, confined in government camps in the north. Many were entrapped during the final phase of the armed conflict.

The Internally Displaced Monitoring Centre reports that around half a million people are internally displaced within Sri Lanka, with the vast majority being forced to move multiple times during the conflict.

“Sri Lanka promised to release the bulk of IDPs from these internment camps within six months but based on previous actions, it’s feared that the government does not show the will to meet this timeline,” said David Poopalapillai, National Spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress.

It took Sri Lanka two and a half years to recently return 2,000 Tamil and Muslims, who were displaced, to their areas of origin.

International human rights groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have strongly criticized the Government of Sri Lanka’s treatment of IDPs in the more than 40 camps and have called their detention “illegal.”

“In this post-conflict phase, the government’s priority should be to dismantle the high security zones throughout the northern peninsula, and begin to resettle IDPs into their traditional villages,” said Prof. Sri Ranjan, president of the Canadian Tamil Congress. “In the interim period, the government should allow UN agencies to operate freely in these camps.”

Tamil Canadians call upon Canada to impose immediate sanctions on Sri Lanka for failing to abide by international norms. Canadians are urged to boycott Sri Lankan products and services, especially textiles and tea products, and avoid travel and tourism to the island until the condition of the displaced people is improved and they are allowed to return to their traditional villages.

For more information, contact the Canadian Tamil Congress at 416-240-0078

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