



CANADIAN TAMIL CONGRESS ■ CONGRÈS TAMOUL CANADIEN

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For Immediate Release

May 27, 2009

Special Session on Sri Lanka Fails on Humanitarian Crisis in Sri Lanka

Geneva - The conclusion of the 11th Special Session of the Human Rights Council examining Sri Lanka's situation was a disappointing blow to Tamils around the world who counted on the international community to take a strong stance against Sri Lanka's flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and poor human rights record.

"What transpired in Geneva at the Human Rights Council today was more about politics than about the humanitarian catastrophe that is taking place in Sri Lanka," said Harini Sivalingam, policy director for the Canadian Tamil Congress. Ms. Sivalingam was part of a group of Tamil Canadians who went to Geneva to make a presentation to the UN on the plight of Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka.

Countries such as China, Cuba and Pakistan supported Sri Lanka's version of the resolution and opposed important amendments suggested by a cross-regional group of States led by Canada, Germany and Switzerland.

"There is nothing in this resolution about investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity that have occurred during the armed conflict. There is no accountability and no follow-up for human rights violations," said Ms. Sivalingam. "In addition to inadequate language on the gravity of the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka, the resolution lacks any substance on a long-term political resolution to the underlying issues that give rise to the armed conflict." The resolution adopted by the Council by a vote instead of a consensus, is a reflection of how polarized and paralyzed the Human Rights Council and UN mechanisms are in addressing serious human rights situations.

"While we welcome the efforts of Canada and other Western nations in Geneva, Tamil-Canadians are deeply disappointed in the outcome of this special session," said David Poopalapillai, spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress. "The UN High Commissioner had said establishing the facts is crucial to setting the record straight regarding the conduct of all parties in the conflict. Unfortunately, that effort was derailed today."

The Canadian Tamil Congress continues to support the call by Navi Pillay, the UN's high commissioner for human rights, for an independent investigation into alleged atrocities.

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