



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

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Tamil Canadians Urge International Community to Intervene and Save Lives of Tamils on Boat in Merak

In the wake of a Tamil migrant's death on a boat in Indonesia, Tamil Canadians strongly urge the international community, particularly Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, to show compassion and allow the Tamils on board a fair chance to get their cases heard within the Australian justice system. In the meantime, Australia and Indonesia should ensure the boat people receive the medical attention, accommodation, and processing needed at Merak. Their basic rights should not be violated.

Jacob Samuel Christin, 29, died on Wednesday, December 23, 2009. Mr. Christin had been vomiting blood and sources say he had not received adequate care or follow-up from the Indonesian Navy or the International Organisation for Migration despite repeated pleas for help. He wasn't taken to the hospital until his condition returned to a point of no-return. Mr. Christin's death has left his Canadian relatives in deep mourning.

"The Australian government and the international community must intervene to ensure this senseless tragedy doesn't happen again," said David Poopalapillai, National Spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC). "From what we have been told, this death was entirely preventable if only authorities had been willing to intervene before the very end -- the International Organisation for Migration's actions in this case should be condemned."

Approximately 250 people have been living in limbo for two and a half months aboard the boat in Merak.

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“The government of Australia has a chance to show to the world that it is indeed a compassionate, open and tolerant one, the first step starts with ensuring the boat people who fled for their lives are not denied their basic medical needs,” said Poopalapillai. “The next step would be ensuring their cases are properly, fairly and objectively examined within the Australian legal system.”

Another asylum seeker on the boat is also reported to have similar symptoms. The CTC urges the IOM to take measures to ensure that this individual, and all other asylum seekers on the boat, receive proper medical attention immediately. The UNHCR should be allowed to process the applications of the migrants within an acceptable time-frame. The migrants should not be deported to Sri Lanka and have proper legal assistance available.

For more information, contact 905.781.7034

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