



Canadian Tamil Congress
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Congrès Tamoul Canadien
“Voice of Tamil Canadians”

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June 23, 2025

Your Excellency Volker Turk
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Urgent Request: Include Chemmani–Sindhubathi Mass Grave in OSLAP and Urge Independent Investigation

Dear High Commissioner Volker Turk,

On behalf of the Canadian Tamil Congress, I extend our appreciation for your current visit to Sri Lanka in connection with the Sri Lanka Accountability Project (OSLAP), and your dedication to advancing accountability and human rights within the country. While we understand that your visit focuses on discussions related to OSLAP, we respectfully urge that mass graves particularly the Chemmani–Sindhubathi site be directly addressed in your final report.

We strongly request that you include a visit to the Chemmani mass grave site in Jaffna during your time in Sri Lanka. Your presence there would send a powerful message to the Sri Lankan authorities and the international community, reinforcing the seriousness of the issue. We also urge you to impress upon the Sri Lankan government the critical necessity of conducting a comprehensive, impartial, and internationally supervised investigation into this site, as well as all other known mass grave sites.

The recent excavation at Chemmani, which uncovered the remains of at least nineteen individuals including children, is a stark reminder of the grave human rights violations that occurred during Sri Lanka’s past war. However, given the government’s history, there is a justified concern that this investigation will be superficial or intentionally obstructed, denying justice to the victims’ families and allowing impunity to persist.

It is important to highlight that Chemmani is not an isolated case. The mass grave uncovered in Mannar, containing over three hundred human skeletons, has seen little progress toward explanation or accountability despite being discovered several years ago. Similarly, the mass grave site in Trincomalee discovered in 2020 remains inadequately addressed. Additional sites such as Kalavanchikudy in Batticaloa, Mirusuvil in Jaffna, Sathurukondan in Batticaloa, and Kokkuthoduva in Mullaitivu have either been neglected or subjected to investigations lacking transparency and thoroughness. These examples illustrate a persistent pattern of ignoring or minimizing evidence of serious violations, which is unacceptable under any human rights framework.



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The Chemmani site is historically associated with grave allegations of extrajudicial killings carried out by government forces during the 1990s, and it has already taken over three decades for this investigation to finally reach its current stage. There can be no more delays, no more excuses, and no room for half-measures. We respectfully request you to urge the Sri Lankan government to commit to an investigation that is not only thorough and complete but also fully transparent and subject to independent international oversight.

The families of the victims and the wider Tamil community deserve nothing less than full truth, justice, and accountability. It is essential that these investigations include meaningful consultation with survivors, affected families, and credible civil society organizations, ensuring that their voices and concerns are fully recognized and addressed without compromise. Your visit to the Chemmani mass grave and your strong expression of concern would significantly underscore the urgency and gravity with which these investigations must be carried out.

We further appeal to you to ensure that Chemmani and other mass graves are included in the final OS LAP report. We respectfully urge you to recommend that member states take appropriate independent international actions based on the report’s findings, and to call on the Sri Lankan government to uphold its obligations under international human rights law.

Your role and presence in Sri Lanka at this critical juncture provide a unique and vital opportunity to help deliver long-overdue justice. The Canadian Tamil Congress stands ready to support your efforts and appeals to you to use your mandate to insist that the truth be uncovered, and accountability be achieved in Chemmani and all similar cases.

Thank you for your commitment and attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Danton Thurairajah
Executive Director
Canadian Tamil Congress