



Tamil Information Centre

தமிழ் தகவல் நடுவம்

THULASI

Bridge End Close (Off Clifton Road)
Kingston Upon Thames KT2 6PZ, (UK)
Telephone: + 44 (0) 20 8546 1560
Fax: + 44 (0)20 8546 5701
E-Mail: admin.tic@sangu.org

Committed to Human Rights and Community Development

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Sri Lanka should break silence on Tamil youth in their captive

The Tamil Information Centre (TIC) has called on Sri Lankan government to break its silence over the details of 12,000 Tamil youths in its custody.

A year on, the TIC has also called on the human rights community and, in particular, the Sri Lanka diaspora and groups, to focus their efforts to insist on the government of Sri Lanka to release the details of the detainees who have been held incommunicado detention. The government, continues to deny, refuse to confirm and actively conceals information about the fate or whereabouts of the detainees. Incommunicado detention violates rights of detainees that are essential to a fair trial, such as the right of effective access to a lawyer of one's choice.

Families are unable to visit their relatives who are detained, and medical care are withheld as a means of putting pressure on detainees.

The Red Cross complains that it has had access only some of these youth. In an attempt to appease the popular anger among Tamils over their treatment, the government has released a few dozens of these youth in recent months.

The ICRC is mandated by the international community, under the Geneva Conventions, to visit prisoners of war to verify whether they are being treated according to relevant international standards, has no access to these detainees.

Prolonged incommunicado detention contributes greatly to the likelihood of detainees being tortured or ill-treated. One of the effects of the current State of Emergency in Sri Lanka has been the application of longer terms of custody and thus an increased risk of torture, disappearances or extrajudicial executions.

Diverse and complementary action is required to abolish incommunicado detention and clear guidelines should be introduced to ensure that all detainees have immediate access to independent legal counsel.

The TIC has been receiving several appeals from parents and spouses who are desperately looking for the whereabouts of their children and husbands. "Please help! We want to know what happened to our dear ones. If they were killed, let the government confirm they were killed, we will console ourselves," were their cries.

We urge you to stand with us to protect the rights of people in detention in Sri Lanka.

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