



# Tamil Information Centre

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Committed to Human Rights and Community  
Development  
PRESS RELEASE

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## **A long-awaited and important progress against Torture in Sri Lanka**

The Tamil Information Centre (TIC) welcomes the proposed visit of the UN Committee against Torture established under the Convention against Torture to Sri Lanka in January 2000 to investigate allegations of torture.

This is undoubtedly the outcome of the tireless work of human rights NGOs and lawyers and representations by them to the Committee against torture in the face of challenge and counter-lobbies.

The United Nations has long been campaigning for the eradication of torture. The single most important UN instrument in the fight against torture is the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which the government of Sri Lanka formally ratified in January 1994.

Freedom from torture is a non-derogable right of a person. But, torture remains a pervasive feature of criminal justice and law enforcement and political repression in Sri Lanka. In the northeast Tamil homeland, where the military is in occupation, the situation remains as grim as ever. The unending cycle of repression, torture, and summary executions continues. Control on all aspects of Tamil life has been tightened and the Tamil people in Sri Lanka have become a powerless community. The international community has witnessed cries for justice for the Tamil people in Sri Lanka for over two decades. Lack of justice leads to lack of forgiveness and for justice to be meted, the perpetrators must be identified. Where there is no forgiveness there cannot be reconciliation. Justice must be done in full for forgiveness to be unconditional; for all desire for revenge to disappear and violence to end.

The Tamil Information Centre along with other non-governmental human rights organisations has on several occasions called on the government of Sri Lanka to abide by international law and take appropriate action under domestic law against torture, killings, "disappearances", and other human rights violations. The TIC has helped to increase public awareness throughout the world on the grave consequences of such violations.

The civic rights, socio-economic rights, and the right to development are universal, indivisible, inter-dependent and inter-related. However, if there is no `freedom from torture' none of the other rights will materialise. Torture is the strongest weapon against democracy. One of the most important preconditions for the creation of a stable democracy is freedom from torture. The TIC continues to assert that torture does not only destroy the victims, but also terrorises their families resulting in destabilisation of the entire fabric of society. The TIC believes that victims of persecution are in grave need of public acknowledgement of their suffering. Only then, do they have a chance for mental healing, social restitution, and integration into society.

The visit of the Committee against Torture to Sri Lanka is an important success to human rights organisations involved in Sri Lanka and will no doubt be an encouragement to them. We hope that the proposed visit of the Committee, among other things, will reaffirm faith in the dignity of the human person, improve the human rights record of the country, promote transparency and accountability, contribute to peace, and strengthen democracy.

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