



**Unrestricted remembrance essential for peace**

(Washington, DC; May 18, 2017) On May 18, Eelam Tamils across the North-East and the diaspora stand together to commemorate Tamil Genocide Day. The day is spent remembering the victims of Sri Lankan state violence, particularly those killed in the deliberate and systematic attack on the population of the Vanni during the last phase of the war. The grief and sorrow felt by the Tamil nation remains as strong as it was when the atrocities occurred in 2009. Every year more and more people gather to mark this day.

However, our grief is not just for the tens of thousands of lives lost. An irreparable sadness permeates the Tamil nation's psyche for the loss of a future, imagined for decades and in palpable reach for many years. A future free from the oppression of a Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist state. It was the impossibility of such a future within Sri Lanka that fuelled demands for a separate state.

But eight years after the end of the armed conflict, this future remains as elusive as ever. The constitutional process has stalled, but reform efforts thus far clearly suggest a new constitution is unlikely to address the legitimate grievances of the Tamil-speaking people.

Sri Lanka can only be credited with forward movement on justice and accountability if hollow promises constitute progress. While Sri Lanka has faced criticism for its inertia, unfortunately too many in the international community take Sri Lanka's wildly-implausible claims at face value and reward them. The European Union's [recent reinstatement of GSP+](#), despite Sri Lanka's failure to abide by its commitments, stands as an egregious example of the international community's credulousness of Sri Lanka's far-fetched promises.

As Sri Lanka fails to build confidence amongst the Tamil population, prospects for a sustainable and stable peace remain dim. Frustration at continuing impunity, pervasive militarization and the effects of state-sponsored moves to effect demographic change in the North-East continue to grow. Tamil confidence and trust in the state is necessary for any progress to be meaningful. But this will remain out of reach for as long as even basic issues like the unimpeded right to memory, such as on May 18, remain constrained. Our report "[Erasing the Past](#)", details the ongoing obstruction and repression of Tamil memorialization. Recent events, including yesterday's ban on holding a memorial event in Mullivaikkal, are a case in point. As we detailed in our report, although the state frames such bans as legitimate protection of national security, the affected community experiences it as gratuitous tyranny.

PEARL remains concerned about Sri Lanka's continuing repression of Tamil memorialization activities, including the recent harassment of civil society members. Unimpeded memorialization has been one of the fundamental demands of the Tamil people. However, the state, eight years since the war's end and over two years since the ousting of Mahinda Rajapaksa, persists in systematically and brazenly obstructing such efforts. This interference by the state is an unacceptable impediment to the Tamil right to memory. It is only through allowing unfettered observation of such events that the space will open up for difficult conversations to be had in the Sinhala South - a prerequisite for accountability and justice on the island.