



### **PEARL commemorates Maaveerar Naal; condemns crackdown in North-East**

Washington D.C.; November 27, 2020 – Today is Maaveerar Naal - Tamil National Remembrance Day. Eelam Tamils in the homeland and diaspora come together on this day to commemorate those who died fighting for liberation. Maaveerar Naal has taken on a special significance since the end of the armed conflict in 2009. Each year, more and more Tamils gather across the sites of LTTE cemeteries destroyed by the military, to observe these rituals of remembrance, which are deeply rooted in the resistance to the oppressive Sri Lankan state. While repression of memorialization was common in the past, this year, Tamil efforts to memorialize their dead have been met by an exceptionally vicious response.

Today, even Tamils remembering in the confines of their homes have been targeted by the military and the police, despite the court rulings allowing private commemorations. We are deeply concerned about the numerous reports of arrests and are closely monitoring events. As we outlined in our statement on November 23rd, PEARL condemns the increased suppression of Tamils' right to remember and stands in solidarity with organizers and the community. While the heightened repression is a consequence of the strengthened authoritarian regime under Rajapaksa, this didn't start with them. It is crucial to understand the structural causes, rooted in the Sinhala-Buddhist supremacist nature of the state, that enables the state to perpetrate repression and genocide – across decades and across governments.

The very idea of Sri Lanka is built on the supremacy of Sinhala Buddhists. It is the state's role to uphold the premier place of the Sinhalese in the country and ensure their continued dominance. The long-running Tamil resistance to Sinhala hegemony, which predates the LTTE by decades, has always been an obstacle to the Sinhala state-building project. Anything that is a challenge to the Sinhala supremacist narrative, be it the protests by the families of the disappeared, or as small a symbol as the lighting of a candle in remembrance, is a threat to the state's narrative and therefore subject to repression. It is this inherent contradiction – the clash between Tamil nationhood and the Sri Lankan idea of Sinhala hegemony – that is at the heart of the conflict.

The mass courage shown by Tamils again puts them at the forefront of the fight against hegemony and authoritarianism. This must be encouraged and furthered. Reforming the state in a way that respects the rights of all communities, including the Tamil nation's right to self-determination, lies at the core of what is sought – an island that is sustainably peaceful and stable, respectful of its pluri-national character and the rights of all its peoples and communities. However, Sri Lanka's history till date shows that this will not be possible through domestic processes alone. Without external intervention in support of Tamil people's aspirations for justice, accountability and a sustainable political solution, the prospects for progress are dim. The international community's tacit and overt support for Sri Lanka's ethnocratic state, since colonial times and continuing till date, has enabled and encouraged Sinhala supremacism. In the interest of sustainable peace, international engagement with the Sri Lankan state must be recalibrated.

Maaveerar Naal has over the years become a day that feeds Tamil people's commitment to the struggle for self-determination. Eleven years following the end of the armed conflict and thirty-one years since Maaveerar Naal was first observed by the LTTE, November 27th marks the Tamil people's unwavering commitment to honor their dead and reject the Sri Lankan state. Today, we remember the thousands of lives sacrificed in the struggle for liberation and actively reaffirm their demands for Tamil sovereignty, freedom, and justice.