



### Remembering the Mullivaikkal Massacre, 12 Years On

**Washington D.C.; May 18, 2021** – Today marks the twelfth anniversary of the Mullivaikkal Massacre, marked annually as Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day. PEARL joins Tamils around the globe in remembering the Tamil victims and survivors of the Mullivaikkal massacres in 2009. During the final stages of the war, the Sri Lankan government willfully committed war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity, killing anywhere between 40,000 to 169,796 Tamil people. Despite the torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and extrajudicial killings that took place during and after the war, the Sri Lankan state has not taken any genuine steps towards accountability and justice. The trauma of Mullivaikkal lies in our collective grief, alongside the sorrow associated with the end of the armed resistance against Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist oppression.

The state's vandalization and destruction of Mullivaikkal monuments, the most recent instance occurring a few days ago, demonstrates that the Sri Lankan government perceives the truth of its genocidal actions to be a threat to its own Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist narrative. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be misused by the government to prevent memorialization. PEARL condemns the military's restriction of commemoration through the isolation of three areas in the Mullaitivu district, despite a Mullaitivu court order permitting commemorative events. Increased surveillance and military presence on the island has consistently hindered remembrance events, such as Maveerar Naal last year. The international community must condemn this abuse of power and ensure the safety of the Tamil people from the growing repression by the Sri Lankan state.

The ongoing impunity in Sri Lanka allows war criminals responsible for such heinous crimes to enjoy authority and power on the island. Twelve years after the end of the armed conflict, the same government that committed mass atrocity crimes rules the country with fear, violence, and oppression. The election of Gotabaya Rajapaksa and the appointment of accused war criminals to high-ranking political, military, and diplomatic posts shows not only the absence of democratic processes, but the further emboldening of this genocidal regime. Furthermore, the international community has failed to bring justice and continues to engage with those who have been accused.

Earlier this year, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights outlined Sri Lanka's domestic failures and path towards recurrence of grave violations, resulting in the Human Rights Council passing a resolution to collect, investigate, and preserve information and evidence of crimes that occurred during the armed conflict. While these could be crucial steps towards gaining justice for the crimes committed against the Tamil community, the Sri Lankan government itself remains unrepentant and unthreatened.

The Tamil people's right to memorialization remains criminalized on the island, but this has done little to dampen efforts to defy authorities and hold remembrance events and activities. As PEARL continues to advocate for accountability for mass atrocities, genocide recognition, and self-determination for the Tamil people, we do so with the memory of the past – a central tenet to our struggle. Sri Lanka will remain a failed state until Tamil peoples' demands are addressed.