



PEARL commemorates Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day and calls for justice and accountability for Sri Lanka's crimes

Washington, D.C.; May 18, 2022 – Amidst Sri Lanka's political and economic turmoil, PEARL joins Tamils worldwide in remembering the Tamil victims and survivors of the Mullivaikkal Massacre thirteen years ago, marked annually as Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day.

Since the final stages of the armed conflict, an estimated range of 70,000 to 169,796 Tamils remain unaccounted for in the North-East of Sri Lanka. They were either purposefully killed or disappeared by the Sri Lankan government, which is credibly accused of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. During and after the war, the Sri Lankan government has tortured, disappeared, arbitrarily arrested and detained, and committed extrajudicial killings of Tamils with complete impunity. This lack of accountability has enabled the brutality of the Sri Lankan state to flourish such that its violence – which has always targeted Tamils on the island – has now turned against the recent Sinhalese protests in the south. Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, which is the root cause of the conflict, has permeated all post-independence Sri Lankan government policies, resulting in abuses from wartime mass atrocities to the economic and political crisis today.

Despite the escalating crisis and accompanying shortages, the Sri Lankan government continues to allocate significant human and financial resources to monitoring Tamil remembrance activities. The Mullivaikkal memorialization site remains under heavy military surveillance, and police harass and threaten Tamils who have come together to remember their loved ones. Members of the international community must condemn this violation of the Tamil people's right to memorialization and ensure their safety.

Furthermore, in response to Sri Lanka's failure to address impunity and political instability, members of the international community must push the Sri Lankan government to take meaningful steps toward achieving justice and accountability for its past and ongoing crimes, demilitarization, and a sustainable, long-term political solution for the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. UN Member States must ensure that Sri Lanka faces consequences through: the renewal of the crucial OHCHR mandate at the UN Human Rights Council's September session; the use of bilateral levers such as targeted sanctions, human rights conditionalities on trade, and the immediate suspension of military partnerships; and the pursuit of international justice at the International Court of Justice, International Criminal Court, and/or ad hoc tribunals. Focusing on the current economic and political crisis, without addressing the root causes of conflict or the longstanding grievances of the Tamil people and minority communities, will merely maintain the status quo and perpetuate repression, violence, and genocide. Moreover, allowing impunity to persist sends a message to perpetrators around the world that human rights and justice are not true global priorities.

Tamil resistance in the face of state oppression and genocide has been a bulwark against the brutality and erasure of the state, regardless of economics or international attention, and it has guided PEARL's work to date. We will continue to honor those who were killed or disappeared during Mullivaikkal in the fight for justice and self-determination for the Tamil people.