



### **Tamils and their elected representatives remain oppressed and marginalized under the Sri Lankan government**

**Washington D.C.; June 9, 2023** – PEARL strongly condemns the unlawful [arrest of TNPF leader Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam](#) on June 6, 2023, despite his release on bail on the same day. This incident follows decades of violence, harassment, and intimidation by security forces against those advocating for justice, accountability, and self-determination for the Tamil people.

The TNPF explicitly calls for justice and accountability for the GoSL's crimes committed during the armed conflict, including genocide. The party speaks out against state-sponsored land grabs, the destruction of Tamil places of worship, and militarization in the North East. It calls for a secular, plurinational constitution that respects the Tamil right to self-determination.

In recent months leading up to MP Ponnambalam's arrest, numerous other Tamil MPs and activists have also been unjustly arrested by the Sri Lankan government, while [peacefully and democratically protesting against the growing Sinhalizization of the North-East](#). These intimidation tactics used by security forces, led by Ranil Wickremesinghe, who heads the government for the sixth time, are a stark reminder of the broken, oppressive, and failed state. For example, MP Ponnambalam's arrest is in direct contrast to the treatment of Sinhala MPs [who actually attacked the police](#) with no repercussions, due to a Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist judiciary and governance system.

Sri Lanka continues to suppress the voices of the Tamil community, especially using the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), and maintains a culture of impunity for decades. It is by no coincidence that MP Ponnambalam's father, [MP Kumar Ponnambalam, was assassinated days after writing to the then-President Chandrika Bandaranaike](#) about her anti-Tamil policies and oppression from successive Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist governments.

The current climate of oppression from state structures highlights the problematic nature of internationally accepted domestic initiatives, such as the Sri Lankan government's recently approved South Africa-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Any form of domestic truth and reconciliation mechanism is and will be severely compromised by broken domestic state institutions upholding virulent Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism at the expense of the Tamil people.

PEARL calls upon the international community to play an active, sustained role in ensuring the safety and well-being of those who are courageously striving for a sustainable political solution for the Tamil people in the North-East. The international community should support Tamil demands for an internationally-led process to ensure true justice and accountability for all victims and their families. It should call for an end to state-sponsored Sinhalizization, release all arbitrarily-detained individuals, and repeal the PTA. International justice processes must be established, and the Sri Lankan state must be restructured in order to abolish Sri Lanka's culture of impunity and deliver a political solution that meets the aspirations of the Tamil people.