



### **Eelam Tamils continue to resist state repression and reaffirm their commitment to self-determination**

**Washington D.C.; November 27, 2023** — Thousands of Eelam Tamils in the North-East of Sri Lanka and the global diaspora gather today, on Maaveerar Naal (Great Heroes' Day), to remember those who fought for Tamil liberation from Sinhala Buddhist nationalist state oppression. The day marks the death of Lt. Shankar, the first fallen LTTE cadre, and commemorates all those who died in the armed resistance against the Sri Lankan state. In the face of continued legal attempts to ban commemorations and the violent destruction of make-shift memorials by the security forces, Tamils stand for their right to memorialization as boldly as ever, resisting yet another year of state-led intimidation, surveillance, and harassment.

Nearly 15 years after the end of the war, the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist state-building project continues in full force. The traditional Tamil homeland faces an onslaught of Sinhalization attempts, with increasing reports of land grabs, destruction of Tamil places of worship, and the illegal construction of Buddhist viharas. Increasingly violent Sinhala Buddhist nationalist rhetoric continues to be popularized by Sinhala policymakers and Buddhist monks alike. The Sri Lankan state, on the one hand, feeds promises of reconciliation and progress on Tamil issues to the international community and, on the other hand, explicitly promotes credibly accused war criminals into senior positions of power. Sinhala Buddhist nationalist policies of past and present governments continue to wreck the country, with a bloated defense budget and a disproportionate amount of militarization in the Tamil North-East compared to the rest of the island. Tamil resistance remains a strong and sustainable opposition to the Sinhala-Buddhist majoritarian framework that affects the whole island.

The struggle for Tamil self-determination started decades before Tamil youth took up arms. If only for a few years and despite the complexities, Tamils experienced liberty and grassroots-supported state-building with their de-facto state prior to 2009. Undeterred by the destruction of these structures, the Tamil struggle for liberation carries on, with Maaveerar Naal being the most prominent commemorative event in the Tamil national calendar. Maaveerar Naal is not only a day for Tamils to remember their fallen kin but also to reinforce their nationhood and the shared understanding of the political paradigm where they choose their own future and live free of state oppression.

The Tamil people have received no redress from the Sri Lankan government regarding its culpability in war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Furthermore, Sri Lanka's unitary state has consisted of ethnocentric, irrational, and destabilizing governance on the island, harming the Tamils in the heavily militarized North-East the most. A pluralistic, demilitarized, and decentralized vision of the island's future is needed to remedy the economic and political crises. It is clear that the only pathway to a sustainable political solution for the Tamils is through devolution and meaningful self-determination, which includes the Tamil nation's own political and economic ties to the world, escaping Colombo's failed policies. As Tamils around the world gather today in remembrance, the struggle for liberation continues.