



# Tamil Information Centre

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Committed to Human Rights and Community  
Development

PRESS RELEASE

## **Sri Lanka: A Step forward for the protection of Human Rights**

The Tamil Information Centre (TIC) welcomes the Colombo High Court judgement in the well-publicised human rights case of the 18-year old school girl, Krishanthi Kumarasamy, which has shown greater sensitivity and assertiveness. The High court has found the six security force members guilty of rape, murder and "disappearance" of Krishanthi Kumarasamy, her mother, 16-year-old brother and a neighbour on 7 September 1996 and sentenced them to death.

The judgement which has been referred to as the "Landmark judgement", by Amnesty International and other human rights organisations and activists has come in the wake of constant pressure on the Sri Lankan government by the international community to protect human rights and end the climate of impunity widely enjoyed by the security forces. Sri Lanka ranked second highest in the world in its total number of recorded "disappearances", as the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances noted in its 1995 report. It still ranks second highest in the world, after Sudan.

The Tamil Information Centre has throughout raised its concerns over the serious human rights situation in Sri Lanka and about the thousands of Tamil people held in various prisons, detention centres, police stations, and military camps without charge or trial. The TIC has also advocated introduction of reforms in law and practice which could halt grave human rights violations. Torture, deaths in custody, disappearances are widespread in Sri Lanka. A number of women and children have "disappeared" after being taken by the security forces in the Tamil areas. Tamils are continued to be held in secret places of detention especially in the Jaffna peninsula, Colombo and Vavuniya. This is despite the requirement that detainees can only be held in officially approved and publicised places of detention, thus resulting in serious failure to observe safeguards to prevent "disappearances". A "disappearance" does not constitute a crime under Sri Lankan law. Until the present judgement, no one responsible for "disappearances" has been punished, even where those responsible were identified. The Sri Lankan Courts, including the Supreme Courts, have declared in a number of cases that detentions had been illegal and torture had been carried out in custody. But no one has even been charged for these crimes. The TIC in its recent report titled "The International Crime of Genocide: The case of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka" has urged the Sri Lankan government to comply with its obligations under the Genocide Convention, in particular Article I, V, and VI. This obligation concerns measures to be taken by Sri Lanka to prevent and punish genocide.

The protection of human rights is a universal responsibility, transcending the boundaries of

nations, ideologies and interests. The continuing gross human rights abuses that are taking place in Sri Lanka and the repression against the Tamil people demand continued international response. The TIC acknowledges the Colombo High Court's decision to punish the perpetrators as a positive step forward towards putting an end to "disappearances". But, it is only when the existing indemnity legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and Emergency Regulations (ERs) are repealed and the obstacles to prosecution are removed entirely, one can be proud of a major victory for all peoples of Sri Lanka and the international community.

4 July 1998

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