

May 18, 2021

12th ANNIVERSARY OF TAMIL GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Commemorating this day allows us to ensure such a tragedy is never repeated again.

The Tamil community in the country is one of the largest concentrations of Tamils outside southeast Asia. Tamil-Canadians have families still suffering in their homeland in the north and east of the island of Sri Lanka. They have lost their loved ones and have been physically or mentally traumatized by the genocide that the Sri Lankan state perpetrated against the Tamils during the civil war which lasted from 1983 to 2009, and especially so in May of 2009.

Genocide is the deliberate and organized killing of a group or groups of people, with the intention of destroying their identity as an ethnic, cultural, or religious group. The United Nations Organization estimates that in the final months of the civil war alone about 40,000 to 75,000 Tamil civilians were killed. Other estimates place the death toll at 146,679 civilians.

These figures only reflect the death toll in 2009 leading up to May 18, the day on which the civil war ended. The loss of Tamil civilian lives during the genocide, which continued for decades in Sri Lanka, is much higher.

In addition, the Sri Lankan state has systematically disenfranchised the Tamil population of their right to vote and to maintain their language, religion and culture. For example, the *Sinhala Only Act* of 1956 made Sinhalese the official language of Sri Lanka ignoring the 29 per cent of the population whose primary language was Tamil, thereby putting them at a serious disadvantage for participating in the public service of Sri Lanka.

It is important for many reasons to acknowledge publicly that the killings and all aspects of the genocide constitute a heinous act. Not only does this acknowledgement honour the lives that were lost, but it gives a sense of hope to those who have suffered since it represents the first step to healing and reconciliation.

Most importantly, by recognizing the Tamil genocide, we affirm our collective desire to maintain awareness of this genocide and other genocides that have occurred in world history in order to prevent such crimes against humanity from happening again.

Solidarity with our Tamil-Canadians friends and co-workers requires an understanding of their struggle, and the empathy to make it our own. We must stand up for justice whenever we see the abuse of human rights, whether it is here at home, or anywhere else in the world.

Together, we demand justice for the Tamil people.

Light a candle on May 18 at 8:18 pm

Take a photo of you lighted candle and post it on social media using the following hashtags:

#may18 #tamilgenocideremembranceday

In Solidarity,



Julee Sanderson
1st National Vice-President

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