

AUSTRALASIAN FEDERATION OF TAMIL ASSOCIATIONS

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Media Release:

THE BRUTAL KILLING OF A TAMIL PARLIAMENTARIAN

The Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations (AFTA) is outraged by the wanton murder of Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham, Member for Batticaloa in the Sri Lankan Parliament.

We are shocked that the brutal slaying was carried out inside the church in the presence of hundreds of people right in heart of Sri Lankan Army controlled town of Batticaloa where Mr Pararajasingham was attending mass on Christmas day at the **St. Mary's Co-Cathedral Church** .

Mr. Pararajasingham, a member of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) was an outspoken critic of the human rights violations of successive Sri Lankan regimes and was held in high esteem by several Humanitarian and Human Rights Organisations. Throughout the 1990's, he played a crucial role in drawing attention to the gross human rights violations of the people in the North East. These included massacres, disappearances and torture. It was primarily due to his tireless efforts that atrocities in the North East by the Sri Lankan Government were brought to the attention of the world community.

He was instrumental in exposing the rape of 18 year old School girl Chrishanthi Kumaraswamy and the murder of her mother, brother and neighbours by the Sri Lankan army personnel mid 1995. He was similarly very concerned about the rape and murder of 17 year old Tharshini just a week ago by Sri Lankan naval personnel.

As a founder member of the North East Secretariat on Human Rights (NESHOR) he was actively involved in the protection of human rights of the people of the North East.

In the course of his parliamentary career spanning over 15 years, he had visited Australia, the US, the UK and Canada where he raised the matter of the gross violations of Human Rights by the Sri Lankan Government with Governments, politicians and Human Rights Groups.

He was a vociferous critic of the Sri Lankan armed forces and the paramilitary groups working in tandem with the army in conducting a shadow war in the East.

During his visit to Australia in May this year, Mr Pararajasingham had expressed fears for his life at the hands of the paramilitaries acting at the behest of the Sri Lankan Government. The co chairs to the Sri Lankan peace process, themselves had called upon the Sri Lankan Government on several occasions to disarm these groups as per the Cease-Fire Agreement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Instead, the Sri Lankan government has persisted with the use of the paramilitaries to wage a war on the Tamil people in the East.

This murder like that of Tamil academics, journalists and human rights activists has to be laid at the feet of the Sri Lankan Government.

We call upon the Australian Government to strongly condemn this slaying of a human rights activist and parliamentarian.

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