

Keith Locke

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Subject: Locke mourns assassination of Sri Lankan MP. Calls for NZ to help peace process

Keith Locke MP Green Party of Aotearoa/New Zealand

December 26, 2005

Assassinated Tamil politician visited NZ in May Locke calls for greater involvement in Sri Lanka peace process

Green MP Keith Locke today expressed his sorrow at the assassination of the Sri Lankan Tamil MP, Joseph Pararajasingam, who he met during the politician's visit to New Zealand last May.

Mr Pararajasingam was assassinated in Batticaloa yesterday while attending a Christmas mass. He visited New Zealand last May along with a fellow MP, Selvarajah Gaendren, from the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and met with Mr Locke, New Zealand government representatives and the local Tamil community.

[See attached photo of Keith Locke with Mr Pararajasingam with and Auckland human rights campaigner Maire Leadbeater, taken during the May visit to Auckland].

"Mr Pararajasingam's assassination is a serious blow to the already faltering peace process in Sri Lanka," said Mr Locke, the party's foreign affairs spokesperson.

"He was a warm and gentle man, who came to New Zealand to get support for meaningful negotiations between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil minority.

"In his memory, I would like New Zealand to do more on the diplomatic front to promote a peaceful solution, which takes into account the national rights of the Tamil people.

"It would be disastrous if Sri Lanka, on top of the tragedy of the tsunami, slipped back into civil war.

"Mr Pararajasingam understood this, which is why he took the time to come here in May appealing for help.

"New Zealand is respected in Sri Lanka, a fellow Commonwealth country and cricketing nation,

We also have a substantial Sri Lankan community in New Zealand, both Sinhalese and Tamil, which wants peace in their homeland

"New Zealanders do care about the fate of the people in Sri Lanka, We dug deep into our pockets for the victims of the tsunami - and we are still giving. We should also be able to help bring peace to Sri Lanka.

"Mr Pararajasingam's murder deepens the ethnic crisis which has unfolded since last month's election of a more hardline President, Mahinda Rajapakse, who is opposed to a federal solution for Sri Lanka. Mr Pararajasingam had been an MP for 15 years, representing Tamil interests in the national Parliament even during the darkest days of the civil war, which cost 65,000 lives. It is ominous when such an esteemed person is assassinated in a time of relative peace," said Mr Locke.

For further information phone 027-452-8353.