

# **AUSTRALASIAN FEDERATION OF TAMIL ASSOCIATIONS INC.**

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## **Statement by the Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations**

The Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations is deeply disappointed that delegations from the LTTE will no longer be received in any of the EU Member States. This decision by the EU has gravely endangered the Peace Process so much desired by the Tamil people in the Island of Sri Lanka and those of the diaspora.

The EU's decision to ban the LTTE from visiting the EU States has placed the Tamils at a distinct disadvantage in countering sustained attempts by influential sections of the Sinhala polity to misinform and misrepresent the events in respect of the peace process.

It is particularly disappointing that this travel embargo should be imposed at a time when Sinhala supremacy is on the rise –this time under the banner of the JVP and the Jathika Hele Urumya (JHU). The EU ban has strengthened the hand of those opposed to sharing political power with the Tamils by implying that the International Community has little concern for Tamil rights or lives.

As a Co Chair to the Peace Process, the EU's conduct in restricting the LTTE from visiting EU countries has further undermined the LTTE's capacity to negotiate with the Sri Lankan regime as an equal. Enduring solutions can only be forged where both parties perceive themselves to be equals. It was the realisation that there was parity in terms of military capabilities that led to a Cease-Fire Agreement (CFA) between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the LTTE. In order for the truce that resulted from the CFA to be transformed into an enduring peace, it is vital that the parties to the conflict are treated as equals by the facilitator. Instead, the EU's action has only served to destroy the LTTE's status as an equal. And not being an equal the LTTE's is constrained in its capacity to negotiate. Nelson Mandela's observation that **"Only free men can negotiate; prisoners cannot enter into contracts"** accurately reflects the LTTE's predicament.

Whilst we understand EU's condemnation of the murder of Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, the implication that this was carried out by the LTTE is simply based on claims made by the GoSL. It has ignored the LTTE's denial of any role in this act. Furthermore, the EU, by failing to make any reference to the murder of well respected Tamil journalists, academics and senior LTTE members has given the impression that it has abandoned its neutrality.

The obvious glee with which the Sinhala media responded to the travel ban is a clear indicator that the Sinhala polity regards the EU as not being opposed to a military solution anymore and the GoSL is free to pursue its own agenda. Influential sections of the Sinhala owned media have referred to the EU Declaration as a "slap in the face" to Norway and an "ultimatum" to the LTTE-led Tamil National Movement. What is worse, they see the Declaration as virtual support for the Sri Lankan government's non-implementation of key provisions of the February 2002 Cease Fire Agreement.

The press release by the British High Commission on behalf of European Union in its capacity as the Chair of the EU on 4, October stating that this interpretation by the Sri Lankan media is *'false and highly misleading'*, is bound to be ignored by the Sinhala people.

We call upon the EU to review its declaration and take steps to restore parity between the parties.

**Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations  
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