



## **INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TAMILS**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **IFT Denounces Criminalization of the Tamil Diaspora and Calls for Engagement.**

Geneva, 26th June 2008. The International Federation of Tamils (IFT) is disappointed that the anti-terrorist legislation has been misused to suppress the voice of the Canadian Tamil Diaspora by listing the World Tamil Movement (WTM) as a 'terrorist' organization. This comes in the wake of the arrests of Tamils in Europe, the USA and Australia on similar charges.

The rationale for these actions is clearly based on the Tamil Diaspora's support for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which has been listed as a terrorist organization by these countries. The Tamil Diaspora's support for the LTTE stems from its unwavering commitment to the democratic verdict delivered by the Tamil people in 1977 at a free and fair election for independence from Sinhala rule.

Tamils are mindful that it was the Sinhala State's oppression of Tamils through state orchestrated pogroms and draconian 'anti-terrorism' legislation that caused thousands of Tamils to flee the island in search of refuge.

Tamils are also mindful that it is the LTTE that has since then defended them from this brutal oppression and it is the LTTE which has on behalf of the Tamil people entered into negotiations and signed Cease Fire Agreements. Nor are Tamils unaware that it is the LTTE which administers the defacto Tamil state.

It is ironical that those very governments, which, over the years have provided refuge for Tamils fleeing persecution by successive Sri Lankan regimes, should cause Tamils fear persecution for voicing their political views!

IFT denounces the measures undertaken by these governments as plainly unhelpful and clearly counter productive.

Instead of criminalizing the Diaspora's support for the LTTE, IFT calls for actions to address the root cause of a conflict which has driven hundreds of thousands of Tamils out of Sri Lanka and forced tens of thousands resort to an armed struggle.

Indeed by engaging with the Tamil Diaspora communities, the international community can help forge an enduring peace in the island of Sri Lanka.

IFT will support all initiatives by international governments for engagement with the Tamil Diaspora to:

- **Understand** the Diaspora's motives for supporting the Tamileelam struggle for self-determination spearheaded by the LTTE.
- **Consider** the Diaspora's views on structures for the Tamil and Sinhala people to coexist as equals within the island of Sri Lanka.
- **Enhance** the Diaspora's capacity to promote democracy and build the economy of the Tamil state.

(the end)

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