

Motion: Condemn Sri Lanka and support sanctions against the government for violations of human rights

Proposer - Harish Karunalingam, LSESU Tamil Society Campaigns Officer

Seconded - Durgesh Prabu, LSESU Tamil Society Tamil Student's Initiative (TSI)

Representative

This Union notes:

- That the Sri Lankan Civil War ended in May 2009 after a 26 year long military campaign by both Tamil rebel groups and the SL government
- That Sri Lanka is one of the top “red alert” countries at risk for genocide (Genocide Prevention Project), and in 2008 was voted off the UN Human Rights Council
- That almost 150,000 and counting Tamil people still remain unaccounted for, almost 5 years after the end of the civil war
- That President Mahinda Rajapaksa, a man accused of severe allegations of orchestrating war crimes and genocide, currently sits as Chairperson-in-Office of the Commonwealth of Nations after Sri Lanka hosted the Commonwealth Head of Government’s meeting in 2013
- That there have been numerous reported cases of forced sterilisation of Tamil women within the North East, with “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group” a key part of the UN General Assembly’s “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” definition of Genocide
- That a resolution was adopted by the UNHRC in March 2014 calling for accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, requesting the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein) to undertake an investigation into the “alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights and related crimes by both parties in Sri Lanka” – something which the government has refused to cooperate with, with Mr. Zeid recently accusing the govt. of using a “continuing campaign of distortion and disinformation” to obstruct the OHCHR’s impartial investigation
- That even today many journalists and academics, both citizens of SL and foreign, are being unlawfully detained – recent example of LSE lecturer, Dr. Rajesh Venugopal, detained by Sri Lankan immigration officers and questioned by police ‘for violating his visa regulations’ by travelling to the North East (Batticaloa) and enquiring about military presence and military reprisals

This Union believes:

- That the ongoing mistreatment of Tamil civilians within the North East of Sri Lanka is representative of genocide and violations of human rights
- That the SL government’s intentional repeated obstruction of the international investigation process breaks international law and should thus face sanctions and reprimands from the British Government and the United Nations
- That the LSE, in accordance with their ethics code and given their presence as a world renowned academic institution, should make a statement against the actions

of the SL Govt. in restricting the intellectual freedom of Tamil people and not fund nor benefit from any relations with Sri Lanka

This Union resolves:

- To instruct the General Secretary to issue a statement, on behalf of the Student Union, condemning the actions of the SL Govt. since the end of the civil war, both in their mistreatment of Tamil civilians within the North East and their obstruction of the ongoing international investigation by the OCHRC
- To instruct the General Secretary, on behalf of the Student Union, to write a letter to the Commonwealth, encouraging them to suspend Sri Lanka and strip President Mahinda Rajapaksa of his position as Chairperson-In-Office, because of its atrocious human rights record and constant failure to abide by the organisation's core principles
- To instruct the General Secretary, on behalf of the Student Union, to write a letter to the British government and the United Nations, calling for stronger sanctions and prosecution against the Sri Lankan government in light of ongoing allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity

Passed, 5.12.2014:

Yes: 298

No: 15

Undecided: 19