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Sri Lanka

40,000 march in Europe for Tamil self-determination

- News from around the world -

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40,000 people demonstrated in front of the EU and UN headquarters in Europe on March 16th. They demand an end to the Sri Lanka's government's genocide, that emergency aid be allowed into the war zone and for a lifting on the ban on the LTTE, the militant organisation which represents the Tamil people.

The 25,000 demonstrators in Brussels heard two speakers from European political parties: one was Duncan Chapel, a Respect member and part of the Socialist Resistance steering committee. The speeches are online at [TamilNet](#). He prepared the following comments:

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/brussels_02_77845_445.jpg]

We are proud to give our greetings to this rally for peace and freedom in Sri Lanka. The socialist and labour movement stands against repression and genocide. We stand in solidarity with the Tamil people in the face of its suffering at the hands of the Sri Lankan government.

The Tamil people is right to be angry that the Western governments have turned a blind eye to the crimes of the government. But you should know that you have friends all over the world in the socialist and working class movement, friends who want to help you take the struggle to the governments of the west and to the government in Sri Lanka.

All across the world, the hypocrisy of the Western governments is becoming clear. In Britain, the government can't even send its envoy to Sri Lanka. Over 100,000 Tamils demonstrated on the streets of London. But Britain keeps on arming and training the Sri Lankan army, navy and airforce.

What are the results of Britain's support, and the international support, for the Sri Lankan government? Sri Lanka is now internationally recognized one of the the most horrific sites of genocide in human history. The army is intentionally killing civilians by targeting schools and hospitals. No medical supplies have been allowed in for three months. The lack of antibiotics and oxygen has led to hundreds of deaths. We even see the scandal of India using medical aid as a tool for ethnic cleansing: by sending medical aid to the outside of the war zone, it forces people to choose between their homeland and medical care, between land or life.

The international regimes are not helping. We demand that the west stops military aid to Sri Lanka. We demand that the European Union here in Brussels lifts the ban on the Tamil Tigers. And we also need to build international solidarity from the grass roots. That's why it's so important to hear that the Tamil community in Britain is organising a ship to take medical aid directly to the war zone. If the Western governments won't help, then the Tamil people can start to help themselves.

Let's share something from our experience in Britain, our party - the Respect Party - has just celebrated sending a convoy of aid from Britain to Gaza. We worked with the Muslim community in Britain to demand that the British government helps the people of Gaza. When the British government refused to help, we helped organise this convoy to show to the people of Gaza that people in the rest of the world oppose genocide and war against civilians. The convoy mobilised support, placed pressure on governments and made a real change.

The success of the Gaza convoy shows that movements like this one can win mass support and make changes.

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Don't forget that you have friends around the world in the socialist and working class movement who stand with you. Even in the Sinhalese south of Sri Lanka you have allies: the NSSP is standing in the Columbo elections to demand a cease-fire, self-determination and autonomy. Here in Europe, socialist and working-class organisations will help you to place demands on the EU and national governments, and to raise material aid for those affected by the war.

The time for this work has never been more urgent. The war has escalated into a critical level since January. More than 350,000 civilians face the war in Vanni. Their lives as internally displaced people is horrifying. Over the last weeks we have seen the establishment of concentration camps for Tamils in the government controlled area. The UN says that since January almost 3,000 have been killed and 7,000 have been injured. Almost 2,000 of those were children. Many of the internally displaced people have no access to clean water, food or medicine. A terrible future is facing them. That is why we need to demand:

1. - That food, medicines and the media would be allowed freely into the war zone
2. - That the Sri Lanka military must leave the Tamil homeland
3. - That the ban must be lifted on the Tamil Tigers, which represents the Tamil people. The legalisation of the LTTE has to be the first step towards Tamil peace, freedom and self-determination.