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Australian Tamils to boycott the Sri Lankan Goods & Services

Source: Consortium of Tamil Associations in Victoria - November 18, 2006 At a meeting held on 12th November 2006 at Forest Hill, Victoria the Consortium of Tamil Associations in Victoria, RESOLVED as follows:

1. THAT a Petition be drafted and handed to the Australian Government and in particular the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, requesting the assistance of the Australian Government to prevail upon the Government of Sri Lanka to lift the economic embargo on the Jaffna Peninsula thereby making available to the residents of Jaffna Peninsula all food, medical and other essential supplies.

ALTERNATIVELY , the Australian Government be requested to press the Government of Sri Lanka to reopen the land route to Jaffna, in particular the A9 route to allow

a) the free flow of food , medical and other essential materials to the residents of the Jaffna Peninsula

b) the free movement of people in and out of the Jaffna Peninsula.

2. THAT the Australian Government be persuaded to cease all economic aid and aid in any form whatsoever until the Government of Sri Lanka lifts the economic embargo on Jaffna and undertake to fully recognise and abide by the Cease Fire Agreement of 2002.

3. THAT other organisations and companies doing business in Sri Lanka be informed of the atrocities being committed by the Sri Lankan government, and if possible to implore the organisations and companies to refrain from undertaking any further contracts and/or projects until and after the economic embargo imposed on the Jaffna Peninsula is lifted.

4. THAT the Tamil Community in Australia be urged to boycott all Sri Lankan goods and services until the Sri Lankan Government lifts the economic embargo on the Tamil population of Sri Lanka.

AN APPEAL TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

We are fortunate to have been given the opportunity to live in this wonderful country. We have taken up our allegiance to Australia as Australian citizens and have adopted the Australian way of life and have assimilated well into the Australian society. Unfortunately, many other Tamils have not been so lucky. They remain in Sri Lanka and are now facing the brunt of the cruelty imposed upon them by the Government of Sri Lanka.

On 12th November 2006, the representatives of the above mentioned organizations met at Forest Hill and passed several resolutions.

A copy of the Resolution is enclosed herewith for your perusal. Pursuant to the aforesaid Resolutions, we write to highlight the problems, hardship and suffering experienced by our brethren currently residing in the Jaffna Peninsula, as result of the economic embargo imposed by the Government of Sri Lanka. We implore you to help these unfortunate people.

Background: Approximately 3 months, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) imposed an embargo on food and essential items to the Jaffna Peninsula.

In addition the GoSl also closed the key access land route to Jaffna (the A9 Highway) thereby preventing:

(a) a free flow of food , medical and other essential materials to the residents of the Jaffna Peninsula; and

(b) free movement of people in and out of the Jaffna Peninsula. It must also be pointed out at the outset that the GoSL impelled the International NGOs and the Journalists to leave Jaffna before they imposed the economic embargo.

Thus the GoSL is operating under a shroud of secrecy as far as the embargo and its effects on the people of Jaffna.

This has resulted in a severe shortage of food thus substantially affecting the well being of the people of the Jaffna Peninsula. This has also caused an unprecedented rise in the price of basic foods thus causing further hardship on the people. It has been reported that the price of basic food items have risen five folds. On the other hand the income of the people has either fallen or is non existent.

Shortage of Drugs: In contrast to what the GoSL claims the reality is that there is an acute shortage of drugs and whatever drugs that are available are beyond the reach of the average person as the cost of the drugs are exorbitant.

Thus many poor people have no access to drugs needed for the treatment of cardiac problems, diabetes and the like.

Shortage of Fuel: There is an acute shortage of fuel. This has affected the transport and also resulted in a short supply of electricity. Therefore farmers are also impeded in their work in that they are unable to work and/or utilise their machines for their cultivation works thus adding to the burden of food shortage. Fishermen are unable to use their boats to carry out their livelihood.

We understand that the Australian Government through its various agencies provides foreign aid to Sri Lanka to the tune of (Aus) $31 million. We therefore earnestly urge you to use your good offices to prevail upon the GoSL to:

lift the economic embargo on the Jaffna Peninsula thereby making available to the hapless residents of Jaffna Peninsula all food, medical and other essential supplies ALTERNATIVELY, to press the Government of Sri Lanka to reopen the land route to Jaffna, in particular the A9 route to allow

a) The free flow of food, medical and other essential materials to the residents of the Jaffna Peninsula;

b) The free movement of people in and out of the Jaffna Peninsula.

We would also appreciate any advice you may provide us in connection with the subject matter of this letter.

Thanking you.
Yours truly,
P. Senthooran
Chairman,Consortium of Tamil Associations in Victoria.
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