

UNP WC To Meet Again Tomorrow>> Stop Dashing Coconuts Says Mervyn>> SLFP (

[Home](#) [About us](#) [News](#) [Editorial](#) [Nutshell](#) [Headline](#) [Politics](#) [Expose](#)

[Spotlight](#) [Columns](#) [Review](#) [Sports](#) [Interviews](#) [Economy](#) [On The Spot](#)

[News Features](#) [Parliament](#) [Photo Essay](#) [World Affairs](#) [Suppliment](#)

[Business](#)

## [Global Tamil Forum Seeks Justice For Alleged War Crimes In Sri Lanka](#)

*By Maryam Azwer*



International Tamil diaspora organisation, the Global Tamil Forum (GTF) on March 17 met with President, Indian National Congress, Sonia Gandhi. Ten days later the GTF together with their British counterparts had another high level meeting. On March 28, they met United

States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Robert Blake.

In an email interview with The Sunday Leader, senior member of the British Tamils Forum and GTF Spokesperson, Suren Surendiran explains the purpose of these meetings, what was discussed, and the GTF's views on what it claims are war crimes that took place during the final stages of the conflict.

Excerpts from the interview:

**Q: You met with Sonia Gandhi and she expressed serious concern for Sri Lanka's Tamil community?**

**Suren Surendiran (SS):** GTF's meeting with Sonia Gandhi, the President of the Congress Party was an important one. This face to face meeting gave GTF the opportunity to convey the strength of feeling in relation to the conflict and also the expectations of the Tamil people, including the diaspora from the Congress Party and the Government of India. Taking action to end the suffering of Tamils and having a robust dialogue with the Government of Sri Lanka to find a permanent end to the more than half a century old ethnic conflict is important for India and the rest of world — to have peace and stability in the region.

**Q: Considering that Sonia Gandhi could have had her own reasons for conveying her concern for SL Tamil community given that elections in Tamil Nadu are due, how confident are you of receiving her sincere support in helping Tamils in Sri Lanka?**

**SS:** I really do believe that (the) Tamils' issue has gone beyond party politics be it in India, Britain or the US. The evidence of war crimes is mounting against Rajapaksa and his

brothers. (The) Rajapaksa regime will not be able to continue fooling the people of India and leaders like Mrs. Sonia Gandhi regardless of whether an election in India is due or not.

**Q: According to reports, your meeting with Ms. Gandhi also drew mixed reactions from the international Tamil community. While some expressed approval, others have strongly spoken out against this meeting. What is your response?**

**SS:** Of course it is understandable and was expected that those who lost their loved ones in the war will not see favourably the meeting with Mrs. Sonia Gandhi. It is no secret that India played a major role in the war.

The important thing is, most Tamil activists and diaspora fully understand the significance of this initial step and the different direction India is beginning to take. Sonia Gandhi's recent statement in Chennai is a further testament to the fact that India is seriously concerned about Rajapaksa's post war approach to reconciliation and political settlement.

(The) majority of the Tamils agree that India being the regional super power is in a position to resolve the Tamil issue.

**Q: Following the meeting with Ms. Sonia Gandhi, the Global Tamil Forum then met with United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Robert Blake. Why?**

**SS:** This meeting was vital to counter the mis-information campaign by the Sri Lankan government. This was one of many meetings the Global Tamil Forum is having internationally with friendly governments, dignitaries and institutions. There is no media freedom in Sri Lanka. Many



**The Sunday Leader** on Facebook

Like

4 people like **The Sunday Leader**.

Sanjaya Yohan

Faraz

Facebook social plugin

followers

**Subscription**

Subscription



**Lasantha Wickrematunge**  
*The man who changed Sri Lankan journalism*

[read more >>](#)

journalists who sought to tell the truth have been killed by the Sri Lankan government. Sadly The Sunday Leader Editor Lasantha (Wickrematunge) was also a casualty. The Global Tamil Forum has released some of the many evidences of war crimes in our possession through some reputable media organisations and international institutions. As a result opinion is changing. Some 57 US Senators signed a memorandum recently which was handed over to (Hillary) Clinton. The US Congress voted unanimously only a few weeks ago just as the Australian Parliament voted unanimously in June 2010 in support for an independent international investigation into war crimes committed in Sri Lanka. The British Prime Minister when answering a question in the House of Commons has called for an independent investigation into war crimes. Since then over 45 UK MPs from cross parties have signed a memorandum calling on the PM to demand for an international independent investigation. As a global organisation, we will continue to lobby decision makers throughout the world until we find justice for more than 40,000 innocent Tamils who were killed by the current Sri Lankan government during the last leg of the war and until we achieve a just political settlement based on truth and justice which will enable Tamils to feel free, secure and to live with dignity in their native land without an occupying military.

**Q: What was discussed at this meeting, and what does the GTF hope to achieve through this discussion?**

**SS:** One of our main aims of the visit to the US was to impress upon the US Government the need for an international independent

**YOUR AD HERE!**

**YOUR AD HERE!**

**YOUR AD HERE!**

**YOUR AD HERE!**



investigation into the alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka especially during the last leg of the war.

We shared with Mr. Blake and his team of advisors some of the evidence material that we will be releasing through international organisations and media outlets in the next few weeks.

This we wanted to do before he visits Sri Lanka soon, so that his hands can be strengthened when he highlights to President Rajapaksa as he (Mr. Blake) has already publicly stated that if Sri Lanka doesn't investigate certain allegations to international standards, then the international community will be left with no options other than bringing an international mechanism to do the job on their behalf.

Mr. Blake made it very clear to us that the US and the international community do not want to be taking a path of being adversaries, (and would) rather be playing a helping role to achieve the objective.

Other than the above and the official press statement released on Wednesday, 30 March, we (GTF) would like to maintain strict confidentiality of the matters discussed at the meeting.

**Q: Who represented the Global Tamil Forum and the British Tamils Forum at these two meetings?**

**SS:** The GTF delegation was led by its President, Rev. Father S.J. Emmanuel (Germany), (and also) included President of the United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC), Dr. Elias Jeyarajah, Grace Williams (USA) and myself.

**Q: The panel appointed by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, to investigate alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka, is due to hand over its report this month. What do you foresee for the Tamil community, both in Sri Lanka and abroad, in the light of the release of this report?**

**SS:** Evidence (of) breaches of international law and crimes against humanity during the last period of the war is compelling.

Global Tamil Forum is holding most of the damning evidence to submit to the formal war crimes investigation when it begins.

Therefore it is not what, it is when.

It is just a matter of time before Rajapaksa and his brothers and their accomplices will be held accountable for the crimes they committed against humanity. They cannot run away from justice. It will catch up with them one day, soon.

When the UN Secretary General gave a lecture at the Oxford University recently, he was asked the following question:

"The UN has failed to protect and prevent in such countries as Sri Lanka, where over 40,000 innocent civilians were massacred in 2009.

Will you ensure, during your term, that those responsible are brought to justice?

"Will you ensure there is a proper investigation of war crimes and will you push for a UN referendum as the situation in northern Sri Lanka is the same as South Sudan? People have the same cultural differences, different language and different religion."

The Secretary General's answer was: "I share your concern and there were a lot of concerns raised at the time of the Sri Lankan Government's war against Tamil groups. I visited Sri Lanka twice and I had very serious talks with the President and Government leaders. After a lengthy, very difficult, almost turbulent course of negotiations, I was able to convince the Sri Lankan Government that a group of experts would be established. Still, it has not yet been able to complete its mission. They are still negotiating with the Sri Lankan Government. Meanwhile, accountability should be verifiable and any perpetrators of crimes must

be held accountable. That's a basic principle of justice. There is often conflict as to how to deal with justice and political power and political stability. I think political stability is sometimes important, but if it is not accompanied by justice, the political stability cannot be sustained. And likewise, if we don't support political stability, we may not be able to carry out justice. So, my policy has always been that political stability and justice should go hand in hand. That is what I have been trying to achieve in Sri Lanka and we will continue to do that."

Based on this answer, the Tamil community both in Sri Lanka and abroad, many of whom have lost their loved ones in the war can expect the UN Secretary General to initiate an independent international investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the President and his government. The perpetrators must face justice and justice must be served.