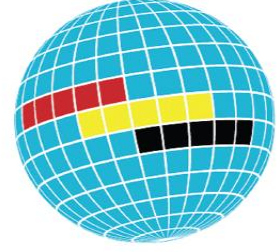


# உலகத் தமிழர் பேரவை Global Tamil Forum



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## STATEMENT

March 19<sup>th</sup> 2011

### **“We are with the Tamils and I am very concerned about Sri Lanka” – Sonia Gandhi**

In an opportunity to speak with Mrs Gandhi following her Commonwealth lecture, at the reception for invited guests, senior members of the Global Tamil Forum (GTF) raised issues regarding the plight of Tamil women in Sri Lanka.

Mrs. Gandhi said that she is very concerned about the situation in Sri Lanka. She said that the Congress lead coalition government has asserted their serious concerns to the Government of Sri Lanka. She said that Tamils from the war torn parts of Sri Lanka must be rehabilitated without further delay. Replying to evidence of breach of international law and crimes against humanity, Mrs. Gandhi said “I have myself, seen that video and we are very concerned”. When asked whether she would support an international investigation into war crimes alleged to have been committed in Sri Lanka, Mrs. Gandhi very politely said that she cannot comment and asked the members to refer that question to Mr. Kamallesh Sharma – The Commonwealth Secretary General who was flanking Mrs. Gandhi at the reception.

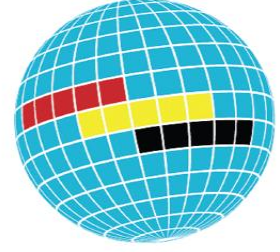
When members told Mrs. Gandhi about the militarised north and the crimes including systematic rape of women by the military, again Mrs. Gandhi said that “I am very very concerned about the situation in Sri Lanka. Tamils should have their rights restored and it’s their rights you know. We are with the Tamils, you must know, we are with the Tamils”

Senior GTF members thanked Mrs. Gandhi for taking the time to speak to them and shared with Mrs. Gandhi the willingness of Global Tamil Forum to engage with India in finding a political solution to the longstanding conflict in Sri Lanka.

Addressing the 14th Commonwealth lecture, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, President of the Indian National Congress Party and Chair of the United Progressive Alliance, discussed the 2011 Commonwealth theme, ‘Women as Agents of Change’, on Thursday 17 March in the Ballroom at 8 Northumberland in London.

Mrs Gandhi reminded the Commonwealth that “investing in women is the highest-return venture”, and set out five areas in which women have emerged as ‘agents of change’ in India. These included self-help groups pooling savings and securing loans for local projects; new, elected roles for women in rural self-government; social activism through the establishment of the language of human rights for women; the establishment of local enterprise collectives; and the setting up of village information centres and IT kiosks.

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She added that women's enterprise plays a vital role in regions ravaged by violence and conflict, "a programme in war-torn Afghanistan to train women, especially war widows, to acquire skills, set up food processing enterprises and initiate ecological regeneration". Within India, these enterprise groups have taken the lead in mediating, peace-building and reconciliation in areas of strife".

-ENDS-

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## Notes to Editors:

Global Tamil Forum exists to harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and others including mainstream decision makers in the international governments, institutions and organisations with the aim of alleviating the suffering of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka and to further their right to self-determination (as defined by Article 1.1 'United Nations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights' 1976) within a democratic framework under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. The forum was set-up in 2009 with the support of many International Tamil community organisations. For more information please contact [info@globaltamilforum.org](mailto:info@globaltamilforum.org) and/or visit: [www.globaltamilforum.org](http://www.globaltamilforum.org)