

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Conference Briefing



### **BROAD SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENT, INTERNATIONAL WAR CRIMES INQUIRY AND A REVIEW OF SRI LANKA'S RIGHT TO HOST 2013 CHOGM**

At Global Tamil Forum's 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Conference, a wide range of international speakers – including some British Government Ministers and Parliamentarians from all three major parties – as well as representatives from Sri Lanka called for an independent, international war crimes investigation in Sri Lanka and for a review of the location of the 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), currently scheduled for Colombo.

Taking place in the British Houses of Parliament, on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February, speakers addressed an audience of more than 250 delegates in a packed Committee Room. The event, Chaired by **Siobhain McDonagh MP** – Vice Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils (APPGT) – as well as GTF's President, **Rev. Dr S.J. Emmanuel**, provided an important opportunity to highlight the ground realities in Sri Lanka, as well as the pressing need to ensure truth, justice and lasting peace on the island.



**British Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon Nick Clegg MP, with Rev. Dr S.J. Emmanuel, GTF President**

Joining key British political and Parliamentary figures, which included the Deputy Prime Minister, **Rt. Hon Mr Nick Clegg MP**, the Senior Minister of State for the Foreign Office, **Rt. Hon. Baroness Sayeeda Warsi**, and the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition and Leader of the Labour Party, **Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP** was; a delegation from the Tamil National Alliance (TNA); prominent international guests, such as **Cde. Yasmin Sooka**, Member of the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka, **Cde. Naomi Ribbon Mosholi**, International Relations Manager for the African National Congress, and **Hon. Erik Solheim**, former lead negotiator in the Sri Lankan peace process; representatives from Sri Lankan civil society; dignitaries; leading academics,

*“any peace must be based on justice and the rule of law, an inclusive political settlement and reconciliation between all those affected by the war.”*

**Rt. Hon David Cameron MP**

including **Professor William Schabas**, the international human rights law expert; journalists, including **Frances Harrison**, author of 'Still Counting the Dead'; representatives from prominent human rights groups and international NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) and Civicus; as well as the film director **Callum Macrae**, who introduced exclusive excerpts of his new documentary 'No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka' (NFZ).

*I am “shocked, distressed and moved” by the ‘No Fire Zone’ documentary and urge a “proper, thorough and independent, investigation”*

**Rt. Hon Nick Clegg MP**



**Callum Macrae, Director – ‘No Fire Zone’**

**Rt. Hon Nick Clegg MP** was “left reeling” by the screening of NFZ's compelling new evidence of war crimes, and called for a “proper, thorough and independent, investigation” into the issues raised by the 'Sri Lanka Killing Fields' documentary series. Joining the Deputy Prime Minister, was his fellow Liberal Democrat MP and the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, **Rt. Hon Ed Davey MP**. He said that the international community has significant role to play to ensure accountability and justice in Sri Lanka, and urged the establishment of an “international” commission of inquiry on war crimes allegations.

**Rt. Hon Baroness Warsi**, delivered her address in the absence of the British Foreign Secretary, **Rt Hon William Hague MP**, who was on overseas business. She called for the full implementation of the constructive recommendations of Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission and reaffirmed the Government's support for "*credible, thorough and independent*" into human rights violations at the end of the armed conflict on the island in 2009.



**Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP, Leader of the Labour Party, addressing the Conference**

The British Prime Minister, **Rt. Hon David Cameron MP**, was represented by the Conservative Party Chair, **Rt. Hon Grant Shapps MP**. In a written statement to the Conference, the Prime Minister stated that "*any peace must be based on justice and the rule of law, an inclusive political settlement and reconciliation between all those affected by the war.*"

**Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP**, who paid tribute to the role of the Tamil community in British public life, reaffirmed his Party's support "*for an independent, international investigation*" and was "*determined to fight for truth, justice, reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka*". In his address to the

Conference, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, **Rt. Hon Douglas Alexander MP** stated that he had "*grave concerns*" about on-going rights violations on the island and urged the British Government to have a clear policy on the 2013 CHOGM and bring "*their influence to bear*" on Sri Lanka.

**Rt. Hon David Miliband MP**, the former British Foreign Secretary in a video message, echoed the sentiments of his Labour Party colleagues. Calling for international action on Sri Lanka, he urged the 2013 CHOGM not to be held in Sri Lanka, given the Government "*has failed to uphold Commonwealth values*".

*I support "an independent, international investigation [...]" and am "determined to fight for truth, justice, reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka"*  
**Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP**

**Hon. Mr Sampanthan MP**, the Leader of the TNA, delivered his keynote address in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and spoke of the difficulty he and his Party had had in dealing with the Government of Sri Lanka on the pressing issues for Tamils, particularly the intransigence of the Rajapaksa regime with regards to a political settlement. Hon. Mr Sumanthiran MP, from TNA, provided powerful testimony as to the current state of affairs in Sri Lanka.



**Cde. Madam Yasmin Sooka, Member of the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka**



**Hon. R. Sampanthan MP, Leader of the Tamil National Alliance**



**Rt. Hon Grant Shapps MP, Conservative Party Chairman**

**Peter Kellner**, RCS Chair, emphasised that if Sri Lanka failed to satisfy the fundamental values of the Commonwealth, holding the 2013 CHOGM in Colombo would be a disaster.

*"Sustainable peace cannot happen without addressing the past"*

**Cde. Madam Yasmin Sooka**

**David Mepham**, UK Director for Human Rights Watch (HRW) presented HRW's latest damning report on sexual abuse of Tamil detainees in Sri Lanka, whilst **Yolanda Foster**, Amnesty International's Senior Researcher on Sri Lanka, gave an analysis of her organisation's key, current concerns on the island, including the intimidation of human rights defenders.

Their calls for action were joined by the likes of **Cde. Sooka, Erik Solheim, Frances Harrison** and **Gordon Weiss**, the former UN Spokesperson in Sri Lanka and Author of "*The Cage*". With the "*harrowing*

evidence of abuses still emerging - murder, rape, torture”, as described by **Ms Harrison, Cde. Sooka** was adamant that that the international community had a duty to ensure that the Government of Sri Lanka was held accountable for its actions. “Sustainable peace cannot happen without addressing past”, she noted. In addition, **Mr Solheim** was clear that “accountability and a final political settlement for Tamils” was vital to Sri Lanka’s future. **Gordon Weiss** had an important message for the Tamil community urging it to “display sincerity of purpose, be pragmatic and [...] unite around core supportable objectives and values.”



**Hon. Erik Solheim, Former Norwegian Government Minister and lead negotiator in Sri Lankan Peace Process**

In her remarks closing to the Conference, **Rt. Hon Joan Ryan**, GTF's Policy Advisor, stated that it was a “truly cross party event” and welcomed warmly the contributions of all speakers, and invited guests who had helped to make the event such a success. Drawing on the inspiration of Nelson Mandela, she concluded by saying that whilst

*Sri Lanka needs a fundamental constitutional reform not only for permanent peace to end the ethnic conflict but also for true democracy and future prosperity of the island.”*

**Rev. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel**

realising our objectives might seem a long way off “it always seems impossible until it is done.”

The Global Tamil Forum will continue to engage parliamentarians, key decision-makers and interested parties around the world to sustain international pressure to ensure that truth, accountability and justice will prevail in Sri Lanka.

Other important contributions from Conference speakers:

- ✦ **Prof. Joshua Castellino**, Head of Law Department – Middlesex University, spoke on minority rights in relation to Sri Lanka.
- ✦ **Dr. Elvira Dominguez-Redondo** from Middlesex University: Analysed the 'Responsibility to Protect Doctrine' and minority rights in relation to Sri Lanka.
- ✦ **Mr Robert Halfon MP**, Treasurer and Secretary APPGT: “I believe the international community should recognise what happened as genocide and the perpetrators should be brought to international court.”
- ✦ **Rt. Hon Mr Simon Hughes MP**, Vice Chair Tamil APPGT: “only need to see the changes in Britain's constitutional arrangements to see that change can happen”.
- ✦ **Mr MCM Iqbal & Mrs Rajani Iqbal**: Introduced compelling film on 'Facing Life After War: Women's Experiences of War and Conflict in Sri Lanka'.
- ✦ **Mr Bawa Abdul Kader**, former Deputy Chair – Sri Lanka's Teacher's Union: “Tamils being treated as subjugated people.”
- ✦ **Ms Kerry McCarthy MP**, Shadow FCO Minister: “so much more” needs to be done to ensure human rights, accountability and justice in Sri Lanka.
- ✦ **Cde. Ms Naomi Mosholi**: “A glimmer of hope is seen in the process driven by the UN Human Rights Council.”
- ✦ **Prof. William Schabas**: Spoke on international human rights law & justice in relation to Sri Lanka.
- ✦ **Mr Lee Scott MP**, Chair APPGT: “UN has a serious role to play, can no longer shirk that responsibility.”
- ✦ **Dr. Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah**, Secretary-General Civicus (“World Alliance for Citizen Participation”): “Very concerned at what Rajapaksa Government is doing to undermine civil society in Sri Lanka.”
- ✦ **Mr Gareth Thomas MP**, Shadow Minister for Civil Society: Called for a review of Britain's deportation policy to Sri Lanka.
- ✦ **Rt. Hon Mr Keith Vaz MP**, Chair Home Affairs Select Committee: “International community and Tamil community must be united in calls for justice, truth and accountability.”

Other Members of Parliament, we are grateful to for attending the event, include:

Rt. Hon Theresa Villiers MP, (Conservative). Rt. Hon Steven Timms MP, (Labour). Barry Gardiner MP, (Labour). John McDonnell MP, (Labour). Steve Baker MP, (Conservative). Paul Burstow MP, (Liberal Democrat). Jackie Doyle-Price MP, (Conservative). Iain Stewart MP, (Conservative).

Ms Sandya Ekenligoda (wife of Prageeth Ekenligoda) and Mr Sunanda Deshapriya, the exiled journalist, were scheduled to take part, but were, unfortunately, unable to participate. A number of other civic and religious leaders from Sri Lanka, included from the Sinhalese community, were unable to join us due to fear of reprisals from the Government of Sri Lanka.



**Global Tamil Forum's 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Conference**  
**Houses of Parliament, Committee Room 14, Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February**



**Gordon Weiss, Former UN Spokesman in Sri Lanka & Author of "The Cage"**



**Frances Harrison, Journalist and Author of 'Still Counting The Dead'**



**Peter Kellner, Chair - Royal Commonwealth Society**



**Yolanda Foster, Senior Researcher - Amnesty International**



**Hon. MA Sumanthiran MP - Tamil National Alliance**

**ORDER OF DAY**

**10.00-11.00**

Prayer, Minute Silence, Welcome Address

**Rev. Dr. S.J Emmanuel**, GTF President

Welcome Address

**Ms Siobhain McDonagh MP**, Chair of Event and Vice Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils (APPGT)

Speakers

**Mr Robert Halfon MP**, Treasurer and Secretary, APPGT

**Dr. Elvira Dominguez-Redondo**, Senior Lecturer Middlesex University

**11.00-12.30**

Speakers

**Mr Peter Kellner**, Chair Royal Commonwealth Society

**Hon. Cde Ribbon Mosholi**, African National Congress International Relations Manager

**Ms. Frances Harrison** Former BBC Foreign Affairs Reporter and Author of "Still Counting the Dead"

**Mr Bawa Abdul Kader**, former Deputy Chairman of the Sri Lanka's

Teacher's Union

**Dr. Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah**, Secretary-General of Civicus

**Mr Gordon Weiss**, former UN Spokesman in Sri Lanka and Author of "The Cage"

*"Far better for the Commonwealth to abandon plans to meet in Colombo than to abandon the principles enshrined in the Harare Declaration."*

**Peter Kellner**

**12.30-14.00**

Speakers

**Hon. Mr R. Sampanthan MP**, Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA)

Video

**Director, Mr Callum Macrae** introduces excerpts of 'No Fire Zone' film

Speakers

**Rt. Hon Mr Nick Clegg MP**, UK Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party

**Rt. Hon Mr Ed Davey MP**, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change

**Rt. Hon Mr Ed Miliband MP**, Leader of the Labour Party

**Rt. Hon Mr Keith Vaz MP**, Chair of Home Affairs Select Committee and Member of APPGT

**Mr Lee Scott MP**, Chair of APPGT

**Hon. Cde Madam Yasmin Sooka**, Member of the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka

**Hon. Mr MA Sumanthiran MP**, TNA National List MP and Human Rights Lawyer

Video Message

**Rt. Hon Mr David Miliband MP**, former UK Foreign Secretary

14.00-15.30

Speakers

**Ms Kerry McCarthy MP**, Shadow Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister with responsibility for Sri Lanka

**Mr Gareth Thomas MP**, Shadow Minister for Civil Society and Member of APPGT

**Mr David Mepham**, UK Director Human Rights Watch (HRW) on HRW's new report "'We Will Teach You a Lesson': Sexual Violence against Tamils by Sri Lankan Security Forces".

Video

**Mr and Mrs MCM Iqbal**, Human Rights Activists, introduce excerpts of film on plight of women in the Vanni

Speakers

**Professor Joshua Castellino**, Head of Law Department Middlesex University

**Ms Yolanda Foster**, Senior Researcher on Sri Lanka for Amnesty International

*"The apparent disregard to democratic ideals and to the values and principles of the Commonwealth [...] clearly demonstrates the authoritarian and dictatorial nature of the present regime."*

**Hon M.A. Sumanthiran MP**

15.30-17.00

Speakers

**Rt. Hon Mr Grant Shapps MP**, Conservative Party Chairman

**Rt. Hon Mr Douglas Alexander MP**, Shadow Foreign Secretary

**Hon. Mr Erik Solheim**, former main negotiator in the Sri Lankan peace process and Norwegian Government Minister

**Professor William Schabas**, International Law Expert, Middlesex University

**Rt. Hon Mr Simon Hughes MP**, Liberal Democrat Deputy Leader and Vice Chair of APPGT

**Rt. Hon Baroness Warsi**, Senior Minister of State FCO

Vote of Thanks & Closing remarks of Conference

**Rt. Hon Ms Joan Ryan**, Policy Advisor, GTF

*We have "very real, very pressing and grave concerns. Human rights abuses continue today and are unchecked."*

**Rt. Hon Douglas Alexander MP**



**Rt. Hon Baroness Warsi**, Senior Minister of State FCO with **Rev. Dr S.J. Emmanuel**, GTF President



**Rt. Hon Douglas Alexander MP**, Shadow Foreign Secretary



**Rt. Hon Ed Davey MP**, Secretary of State – Energy and Climate Change



**Lee Scott MP**, Chair APPGT



**David Mepham**, UK Director – Human Rights Watch, with **Kerry McCarthy MP** – Shadow Minister with responsibility for Sri Lanka



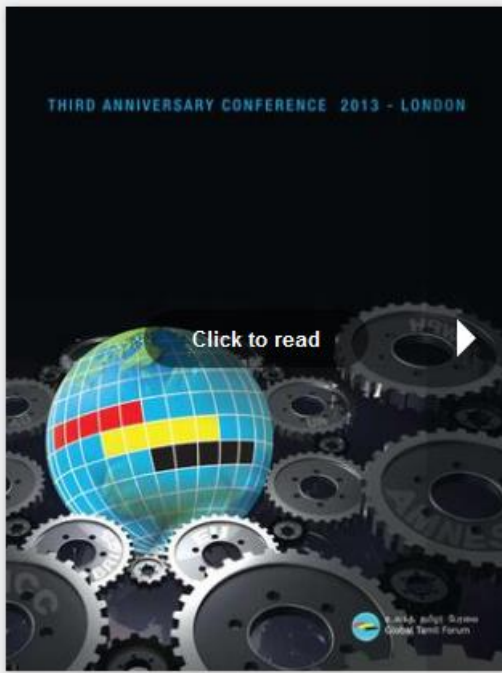
**Dr. Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah,**  
Secretary-General of Civicus



**Hon. Cde Ribbon Mosholi, ANC**  
International Relations Manager with  
Siobhain McDonagh MP, Vice Chair  
APPGT



**Professor William Schabas,**  
International Law Expert



**GTF 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Conference brochure:**  
<http://goo.gl/rdeQe>



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உலகத் தமிழர் பேரவை  
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*Global Tamil Forum (GTF) was established in 2009 by a number of grass-roots Tamil groups following the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. It is the largest Tamil diaspora organisation with members drawn from fifteen countries on five continents. GTF is committed to a non-violent agenda and seeks a lasting peace in Sri Lanka based on justice, reconciliation and a negotiated political settlement.*