

Press Release 14.11.2013

Commonwealth's embrace of Sri Lanka highlights the need for the 'People's Tribunal' investigation of genocide against the Tamil people

Despite public calls from Canada not to hold the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Sri Lanka and protests within India forcing Manmohan Singh to join the boycott, Britain has succeeded in assembling 50 out of the 53 commonwealth countries in Colombo to 'engage' the Sri Lankan state - precisely at the time when the terrible crimes that were committed against the Tamil people are beginning to be internationally acknowledged.

Next month, in Germany, the Sri Lankan state as well as Britain, India and the USA will be accused of orchestrating a genocide on the Tamil people by the International Human Rights Association Bremen (IMRV) and the Irish Forum for Peace in Sri Lanka (IFPSL).

These charges that are being put forward by the IMRV and the IFPSL will be heard by a Tribunal held under the aegis of the Rome based 'Permanent Peoples Tribunal' (PPT). The PPT continues in the spirit of the Jean-Paul Sartre/Bertrand Russell's Tribunal on Vietnam. The 'People's Tribunal' relies on a high profile panel of judges that has been selected by the PPT to invoke a robust moral opinion. The PPT has invited representatives of the four accused countries to Germany to answer charges put forward by their accusers the IMRV and the IFPSL. The Tribunal will take place in Bremen - during 7th - 10th December 2013.

This hearing continues a previous 'People's Tribunal on Sri Lanka' that was held in Dublin in January 2010 - just seven months after the military operations were concluded by the Sri Lankan armed forces. In that instant, the Panel of Judges assembled by the PPT had found the Sri Lankan state guilty of 'war crimes' and 'crimes against humanity'. It also held that pressure from the UK/USA governments contributed to the breakdown of 2002 peace process between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Government of Sri Lanka, precipitating the war. Though the charges put forward by the IFPSL and the IMRV at that time did not contain the accusation of genocide, the Dublin panel, due to the character of the evidence put before them, recommended that further investigation may be necessary regarding the question of genocide.

Speaking for IFPSL - one of the organisations preparing the charges for the follow up Tribunal to be held in Bremen - Dr. Jude Lal Fernando stated: "The fact that substantial, quantitative and qualitative new evidence has become available is one of the reasons that compels us to call upon the PPT once again to assemble a panel to examine the charge of genocide against the Tamil people". Mr. Nicolai Jung from the IMRV stated that the follow up Tribunal is called upon to not only investigate whether a genocide of the Tamils has and is taking place in Sri Lanka but also to examine the extent to which countries like Britain, USA and India are involved in this crime. He went on to say that this will help to throw light as to why Britain is showing such determination to try to use its commonwealth to underwrite the Sri Lankan state.

Press statement issued by the Irish Forum for Peace in Sri Lanka and the International Human Rights Association Bremen.

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For background about the Dublin Tribunal and for upcoming updates see: www.ptsrilanka.org

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