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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Human Rights Campaigners in USA urge holiday shoppers to boycott Sri Lanka Blood Garments**

Human rights activists concerned about the Tamil Genocide gathered in front of GAP and Victoria Secret stores around major cities in USA braving the winter weather and sub zero temperatures. Activists asked shoppers to check the label and boycott anything “Made in Sri Lanka.” With new evidence surfacing in recent weeks broadcasted on Channel 4 news UK showing that the Sri Lankan soldiers have sexually assaulted and executed a 26 year old young mother named “Isaipriya”, who worked as a journalist, the activist wonder why a retailer like Victoria Secret that caters to the highly sophisticated professional women of the American consumer market would still have its clothes sources from Sri Lanka under the Rajapakse regime.

The activists in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia urged shoppers outside a GAP store not to buy any items from Sri Lanka. The city is largely populated by professionals working in the federal civil service, the U.S. military, or for one of the many private companies which contract to provide services to the federal government. One of the organizers said the activists were encouraged by the reception they got from the shoppers and the drivers passing by them honking from their vehicle to show their support for the cause.

Most pedestrians stopped by the activists and asked questions to learn more about the conflict in Sri Lanka. And the shoppers who came out of Gap Store checked the label of the items they bought and were glad that they were not from Sri Lanka.

The activists also ran into a Sri Lankan Sinhalese woman who inquired about the boycott campaign then got mad, yelled at the protestors and tried to tear down the placards. She had yelled at the activists saying that there are no human rights violations in Sri Lanka. She went on to accused them of coming to USA as refugees and then doing all these unnecessary things like these boycott protest to tarnish the image of Sri Lanka and its reputation globally. Later on she had brought a man with her and was on the phone with her friends hoping to run a counter protest and intimidate the human rights activists.

Meanwhile in Princeton, New Jersey, a college town with many institutions of higher learning saw a group of activists with their families joining in the nationwide campaign. The shoppers stopped by the protestors and wanted to know more about the Tamil.

## NYC boycott

Despite the freezing cold, the New York activists had a great turnout of Tamil Americans and friends. They handed out over 500 boycott postcards and flyers explaining to prospective shoppers that buying a garment made in Sri Lanka supports genocide. Hundreds of shoppers, New Yorkers and tourists passed the busy corner where the activists have positioned themselves to target the shoppers to the retailers, Gap and Victoria Secret. People were shocked at the extent of the killings of Tamils in Sri Lanka and many of them pledged to check the labels of all apparel they considered buying. Activists shout out to NYC was "IF IT IS MADE IN SRI LANKA PUT IT DOWN".

They helped people to understand the concept of divestment from Sri Lanka and how we needed the consumer to push Victoria Secret and the Gap to relocate to other countries. The activists are confident after more than a year of dogged protest that they are making progress as so many people already knew about the conflict and will not buy anything made in Sri Lanka. With the boycott team that is committed to continuing these boycotts on a monthly basis it is going to have a huge impact in the coming months.

## Raleigh, NC

Down south in Raleigh, North Carolina a boycott rally was held across from the Crabtree valley mall off Glenwood Avenue from 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm. It is a very busy street and the roads were packed with cars making it an ideal location to reach out to most of the holiday shoppers to the mall. The activists were determined and did all they could to urge shoppers to boycott Sri Lanka and make a difference in thousands of miles away in a small corner of the Indian Ocean to bring down a brutal Nazi like Rajapakse.

In 2009, the Sri Lankan armed forces which is 99% Sinhalese, massacred 40,000 Tamil Men, Women and Children in indiscriminate bombing and forced starvation, which many human rights activists are calling the bloodiest ethnic cleansing since the Srebrenica Genocide of 8,000 Bosnians. Although the civil war ended more than a year ago, over 400,000 Tamils have not been allowed to return home and the Tamil areas are being colonized by Sinhalese with government support. The government has not kept its promises about the resettlement of these Tamil civilians and has ignored repeated pleas by humanitarian agencies, the UN, and the US State Department for adherence to international norms and standards.

Many analysts are now referring to the situation of the Tamils in Sri Lanka to the holocaust of the Jewish minority in Nazi Germany. This Nazi like Sri Lankan state is propped up by exports of garments to the west, its largest source of foreign exchange. With more than 25% of Sri Lanka's total export earnings and half of its garment exports coming from the US, American citizens can have a big role in stopping the Tamil genocide and exert more pressure on the Obama administration to intervene on behalf of Tamils.

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