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PRESS RELEASE

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Sri Lanka War Crimes Investigation: USTPAC supports UN Secretary General's move creating advisory panel

Washington, DC: *The United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC) declared its enthusiastic support for UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's initiative to appoint an advisory panel for war crimes investigations in Sri Lanka. USTPAC proposed the name of Chicago law professor Francis Boyle to the advisory panel, and described him as eminently qualified for the task.*

One year ago Sri Lanka was carrying out a military onslaught against the Tamil Tigers, with callous disregard for the lives of nearly a half-million Tamil civilians trapped in a narrow stretch of sand in the middle of the fighting. The United Nations warned of a "blood bath on the beach." According to the then UN spokesperson in Colombo, Gordon Weiss, up to forty thousand civilians were killed by the indiscriminate use of heavy weapons. The 300,000 survivors of the onslaught were put in internment camps by the Sri Lankan Government for many months under humiliating conditions and in violation of innumerable international norms.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon formally declared in February his "concern about the lack of progress on political reconciliation, the treatment of internally displaced persons, and the setting up of an accountability process in SL since the UN signed a joint statement with the Government last year in the wake of the end of its separatist Tamil rebels."

The Secretary General announced his intention to move forward in assembling a group of experts "to advise him on setting the broad parameters and standards on the way ahead on establishing accountability concerning Sri Lanka." On March 16 he re-affirmed his intention to appoint the expert panel, which would advise him on "standards, benchmarks, and parameters based on international experience that must guide the accountability process."

"The UN Secretary General's initiative is welcome, deserves the full support of the international community, and should proceed without delay. The terms of reference need to be broad enough to ensure full accountability," said a spokesperson for the USTPAC. The Secretary General's action follows calls by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillai and the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Alston, urging international investigations based on credible reports of war crimes on the island.

The *Inner City Press* reported that the Secretary General has entrusted the panel's terms of reference and its membership to his chief of staff, Mr. Vijay Nambiar, along with the Sri Lankan Ambassador to the UN, Dr. Palitha Kohena. "We appeal to the Secretary General that, in the interest of fairness to the victims, he consult the Tamils also in appointing the advisory panel," said the USTPAC spokesperson, adding, "the USTPAC and the Global Tamil Forum strongly recommend Professor Francis A. Boyle to the advisory panel."

Currently a law professor at the University of Illinois, Professor Boyle has been instrumental in developing the indictment against Slobodan Milosevic for committing genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "As a well known scholar in the fields of international law and human rights, Professor Boyle is eminently qualified to advise the UN Secretary General on any war crime investigations of the parties to the conflict in Sri Lanka," said the USTPAC spokesperson.

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