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On Australia's response to Sri Lanka's LLRC report

The Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations (AFTA), the umbrella body of the peak Tamil associations in Australia and New Zealand, is disappointed to see the long awaited Australia's response to Sri Lanka's LLRC report lacks either the persuasive language or open caution to Sri Lanka for its failure to address alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

AFTA while appreciating Australian Foreign Minister (FM) welcoming the constructive proposals recommended in the report; for advancing reconciliation and reconstruction, including through reducing the presence of security forces in the North, care of internally displaced persons and media freedoms and the need for investigation to be undertaken in specific cases, AFTA is disappointed and outraged that the Minister has stopped short of giving a stern warning to Sri Lanka for continuing to ignore the repeated call by the international community to address alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

US administration has already publicly said that it will support a resolution against Sri Lanka on the same issue at the forthcoming UNHRC session in Geneva. In a motion for a resolution, the European Parliament has called on the EU presidency, among many other issues, to urge the UN to implement the recommendations of the expert panel appointed by the UN secretary general on Sri Lanka. Even after choosing to give his response long after every concerned country has given its response, our FM simply says that "*the Australian Government has consistently urged Sri Lanka to investigate all allegations of crimes committed by both sides to the conflict, including those raised in the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts report*". Our FM had told Sri Lanka several times in the last 3 years to investigate all allegations of crimes committed by both sides to the conflict. Now our FM again telling Sri Lanka one more time that "*in light of the report's failure to comprehensively address such allegations, we continue to call on Sri Lanka for all such allegations to be investigated in a transparent and independent manner*" tantamount to insulting the intelligence of the Australasian Tamils.

It is obvious that our FM has chosen to ignore the fact that the Sri Lankan President has failed not only to implement a number of simple, mere symbolic and easiest recommendations of the LLRC such as the National Anthem should be sung in both languages at national functions using the opportunity at the recently held Independence day celebrations but also has tried to hoodwink the international community by saying in his independent speech that during the 6 weeks period after the release of the report his government has been actively implementing the recommendations of the LLRC.

AFTA while appreciating all the support given by our government in the clearance of land mines and unexploded ordinance from 74 square kilometres of land and the reconstruction of around 4,600 homes and an estimated 20 schools in northern Sri Lanka since 2009, would also like to see Australia upholding the values of Human Rights, International Humanitarian Laws and Media Freedom it is well known for, in the case of Sri Lanka.

Therefore, AFTA calls upon the FM to at least declare publicly now, Australia's support for the proposed resolution the US administration has decided to propose or support at the forthcoming UNHRC session in March against Sri Lanka in order to give a clear message to Sri Lanka to address alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law without further delay.

AFTA Member Associations:

Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland and Wellington