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Northern Provincial Council

17021



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10-01-2015

His Holiness Pope Francis  
Vatican City State, 00120

Your Holiness,

We are grateful to God to witness the hope you would be bringing to the conflict-stricken people in Northern Province during your visit to Madu shrine in the island of Sri Lanka.

I am Mrs. Ananthi Sasitharan, an elected member of Northern Provincial Council in the island. I am working for the people who lost their family members in the last phase of the genocidal war waged on Tamil people in the North-East. We have been tracing the whereabouts of many of the cases that are being regarded in the records as 'missing persons'.

I have sought justice through approaching the Sri Lankan government appointed LLRC commission, Presidential Commission, both of which only ended up as eyewash measures to save the Colombo government from international scrutiny.

At the LLRC sittings in Mannar, the Bishop of Mannar, Rev Dr Rajappu Joseph, boldly established the fact that a total of 146,679 people had gone unaccounted for in the final stage of the war in 2008 and 2009.

I also approached all possible international avenues that were created when the UN committees analysing the UN failure and the latest OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka created through the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) process in Geneva. With a special mandate from the Northern Provincial Council in March 2014, I raised the awareness of UN Human Rights Council by addressing the 25th session in March 2014 four times.

However, we are yet to receive any proper response from the Sri Lankan government authorities. Five years have elapsed since we last saw our family members and relatives, who were handed





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Northern Provincial Council

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over to the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) in front of our eyes, with the facilitation offered by Rev Fr Francis Joseph, our beloved priest who came to help the people at a critical juncture.

We placed our hope in Fr Francis Joseph as he was a witness attached to the Church.

During the last days of the genocidal war, on 17 May, 2009, we passed into Vadduvakal in Mullaithivu and reached a place called Selvapuram, an area that had been already seized by the SLA.

On the following day, the SLA announced through megaphones that they will provide amnesty if those who were attached to the LTTE earlier surrendered themselves. Hence, former Principal of St. Patrick's school, and principal of Kilinochchi English school, Rev. Francis Joseph, took our family members to surrender to the SLA as requested by the family members. There were many women, pregnant mothers, and children who were part of this organized surrender. There were not only former combatants, but humanitarian workers, rights activists and officials involved in the civil services of the de-facto administration run by the LTTE. Their family members were also among those surrendered. Still, we are not told the whereabouts of our kith and kin, who were taken in military buses to undisclosed locations on that fateful day. As you are aware Rev. Fr. Francis Joseph also went with them and never returned.

As a member of the Northern Provincial Council and as one of the affected victims, I urge Your Holiness to reach out for us in demanding a clear answer from the Sri Lankan Government and its military on what had happened to Rev Fr Francis Joseph, the hundreds of our family members and relatives who were taken into SLA custody on 18 May, 2009.

The officers of the United Nations were involved in suggesting the surrender providing assurances that the security of those surrendered would be looked after by the UN agencies. Likewise, the Co-Chair Countries of Tokyo Donor Conference on the peace process, which were the USA, the European Union, Norway and Japan, were also advising the Tamils to go into the SL military controlled territory. Indian government was also telling the same. Your Holiness, all these countries are also responsible to give us an answer.





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Northern Provincial Council

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I am personally imploring Your Holiness to help my three daughters and myself to establish the whereabouts of my husband, a former political leader, who accompanied Fr Francis Joseph on that fateful day.

In addition, there are thousands of 'missing persons' cases still pending without any response from the Sri Lankan authorities. I also urge Your Holiness to take up the matter as a collective issue and demand a proper response from the Sri Lankan government.

Your Holiness, we believe there is no one else in this planet to place the straightforward question on the whereabouts of Fr Francis Joseph. Please be kind to convey the answer you get from the Sri Lankan government to the people in the North when you visit the Madhu shrine.

I hope that Your Holiness is aware of the fact that the underlying conflict in the island is a 60-year-long genocide against Tamils. It has claimed the lives of most of the talented people from our traditional homeland in the North-East. A significant number of our resource people are forced into exile. The remaining Tamils are forced to live as second-class citizens, facing various forms of oppressions, colonisation, Sinhalicisation and finally Buddhicisation of the traditional Tamil homeland through Sinhala militarisation.

During your visit, the Sri Lankan political leaders, including the newly sworn-in President Maithiripala Sirisena, who was the deputy defence minister during the genocidal onslaught when Fr Francis Joseph was taken away by his military, will be fighting for the opportunity to kiss your hand and get your blessings. Just as his predecessor Mahinda Rajapaksa, who invited you to the island amidst his election plan, the political leaders and their military commanders of the Colombo government are seeking to protect themselves and their system from its crime of genocide.

Your Holiness, please do not be fooled by their false promises on protecting 'minorities'. In fact, transforming Tamils into their 'minorities' was their first step in the genocide.





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Northern Provincial Council

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Tamils are not a minority in our own traditional homeland, which is subjected to systematic Sinhala Buddhist colonisation with a genocidal motive.

I hope Your Holiness is aware that there is an ideology behind the genocidal process. This ideology stems from the myths interpreted from the chronicle of Mahavamsa.

We look at Vatican, as a moral guardian of humanity. The Catholic Church, having witnesses among the people, has a moral duty to safeguard the people from the protracted crime of genocide.

I hope you will be able to listen to the victims and at least gain a direct sense of the real nature of the crime during your short stay in the Northern Province.

Most Holy Father, I hope that your visit will be a step in bringing justice to hundreds and thousands of people, among them a large number of Tamil Catholics, who need the voice of Vatican at this critical juncture.

Yours truly,

S. Ananthi

**Mrs. Ananthi Sasitharan**  
Provincial Council Member,  
Northern Province,  
Sri Lanka.