

# Nationalist groups in Tamil diaspora seek deal with Trump at UN

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Tamil diaspora groups sent delegations to Geneva during the recent United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) sessions to appeal for Washington and the other major imperialist powers to re-launch international investigations of Sri Lankan government war crimes.

The Global Tamil Forum (GTF), the National Council of Canadian Tamils (NCCT), the Tamil Youth Organization in Canada (TYOC), the Tamil Coordinating Committee (TCC) and the Transitional government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) participated in the lobbying. At the same time, despite the coming to power of the far right Trump administration in Washington, these groups are deepening their alignment with the US “Pivot to Asia,” which is aimed at bullying and preparing for war with China.

They could not hide, however, that Washington has abandoned any push to investigate Sri Lankan war crimes, and impotently voiced pious wishes that Trump's election would help them. Last Sunday, a GTF official told media in Geneva: “In our meeting with them, America said that the Sri Lankan government may need time. The political changes in America could turn out to be in our favor. For now we cannot say anything clearly. To a certain extent, we have to wait and see.”

The collapse of these groups' authority among the Tamil workers and youth in North America and Europe is revealed in the poor attendance in their March 6 demonstration in Geneva. Despite a month-long TCC campaign, only a handful of people attended the protest, which in previous years was attended by Tamils from across Europe who came in dozens of chartered buses and trains.

Their claims that the Trump administration will be moved by the fate of Tamils in Sri Lanka are a contemptible fraud. Proceedings of the latest UN sessions indicate that it will soon adopt a resolution—co-authored by the United States and Britain, in consultation with Sri

Lanka—that would extend by a further two years the deadline to fulfill the recommendations of the previous October 2015 UNHCR resolution.

More broadly, the entire international war crimes probe, which the Tamil nationalist groups have continued to promote long after Washington effectively dropped the matter, was a cynical maneuver to advance US imperialist interests in the Indian Ocean. The United States, Britain and other imperialist powers, along with India, militarily and diplomatically supported the Sri Lankan government's relaunching of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2006 through the final onslaught in 2009, which resulted in the mass slaughter of thousands of Tamil civilians.

Washington, moreover, has systematically flouted international law in launching and waging wars of aggression that have led to millions of deaths in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Africa.

In 2012, however, Washington sponsored a UN resolution demanding an international probe of war crimes during the Sri Lankan civil war. The Tamil nationalist groups, both in Sri Lanka and in the diaspora, hailed Washington's UN probe as a defense of human rights and a means of securing “justice” for the Tamils.

At the time, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned that this was a cynical ploy: Washington was threatening to shed light on some of the crimes perpetrated by the Colombo regime so as to pressure then-President Mahinda Rajapakse to align his government with the recently-launched US “Pivot to Asia” and curtail Sri Lanka's economic ties with China.

When Rajapakse failed to fall into line, Washington decided to topple him. The Tamil nationalists backed the US-led regime change operation in January 2015 that evicted Rajapakse and installed Maithiripala Sirisena as president—placing Sri Lanka in the orbit of US foreign policy.

Once the political and military officials who led the

2009 offensive and oversaw the mass killings of Tamils were no longer working under Rajapakse, but in a pro-US government under Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, Washington lost any interest in investigating these crimes. In September 2015, it moved a resolution abandoning the international probe, whitewashing the Sri Lankan government's and military's atrocities, summary executions, and illegal detentions.

Washington's pullback from an international probe and its support for a resolution recommending local mechanisms for war crimes inquiry exposed the bankruptcy of the Tamil nationalists. In Sri Lanka, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) officially sanctioned calls to give the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government two more years to implement the last UN resolution's recommendations. The Sri Lankan government, however, has failed to fulfill any of the recommendations.

Tamil diaspora groups' claims that their annual pilgrimage to Geneva will get justice are empty rhetoric. These groups, founded after the massacre of the Tamil-separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009, are based on layers of academics and businessmen hostile to the working class, including Tamil workers. In the political tradition of the LTTE, they vehemently oppose a joint struggle of Tamil and Sinhalese workers against the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie and unifying diaspora Tamil workers with their class brothers and sisters in the countries where they live.

They manipulate the sympathy of workers and students towards Tamils in Sri Lanka for their own political ends—securing a “political settlement” giving the Tamil elite a larger share of the profits extracted from the workers and toilers of the island-state and political influence in the countries where they live.

Their leaders are deeply integrated into the ruling elites of the imperialist powers where they live, and through which they pursue their business and professional interests. They are the organizers of countless groups promoting reactionary imperialist politicians, such as “Tamils for Trump,” “Tamils for Obama,” Tamils for Clinton” and “Tamils for Corbyn.”

They are indifferent to the war crimes committed by Washington and its European allies. They are desperate to serve imperialism and the Sirisena government and are complicit in the cover-up of war crimes not only in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, but also in Sri Lanka—those both of the Colombo regime, which initiated the three-decade civil war after years of escalating discrimination

against the Tamils, and of the LTTE.

The diaspora Tamil nationalist groups lobbied and held protests to demand US military intervention in Sri Lanka at the end of the civil war, and recklessly promoted Obama's anti-China “Pivot to Asia.” Insofar as the Trump administration gives them a basis to advance their business and political interests, they are now ready to support Trump's “America First” strategy that intensifies the war threat against China and goes hand in hand with mass deportations and other drastic attacks on immigrant rights in the United States.

They do not try to hide their alignment with US, Canadian, and European imperialism. GTF leader S. J. Emmanuel boasted in Geneva, “I often used to go to the US State Department. Last year, I also went there and spoke to State Secretary Nisha Biswal. She said that Sri Lanka would be on their agenda. Now the government has changed. However, generally we can't do anything without the help of international countries—Britain, Canada, Australia, America, and Europe.”

Similarly, V. Uruthirakumaran, the leader of the Philadelphia-based TGTE, boasted that “In the 21st century, the Indian Ocean would be the backbone” of world trade. He explained that the TGTE therefore hopes to sell itself to the imperialist powers as a well-placed servant.

“In this strategically important part of the Indian Ocean, Eelam Tamils and Tamil Nadu Tamils live,” he said. “The challenge before us is how to translate this strategically and geographically important location into political strength. The TGTE is currently involved in this work. In this regard, we have set up a research center and certain courses are being conducted by professors.”

The Canada-based NCCT works with the Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic parties alike. In a Lanka Sri radio interview at the UN, its representative Mohan Ramakrishnan said that after Trump's election, “There are discussions taking place at the very highest levels. Good times will come.” He added, “America is very conscious, it will not allow China to set foot in Sri Lanka.”



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