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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by the Association Bharathi Centre Culturel Franco-Tamoul, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 February 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The July 1983 genocidal violence against Tamils*

The mood of the government was reflected in a pronouncement President Jayewardene made during the course of an interview he gave Graham Ward of the Daily Telegraph, published in the issue of 18 July 1983. He said: "I am not worried about the opinion of the Jaffna people now... Now we cannot think of them. Not about their lives or of their opinion about us." India had been diplomatically voicing its concern about the worsening situation to the government. The Sri Lankan government had been working up anti-Indian remarks by the President. Significantly, the first public statement of concern for the Tamils in Ceylon from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, came between the publication of Jayewardene's remarks in the Daily Telegraph and the commencement of the racial violence six days later.

We have seen that in the weeks leading up to the 23rd of July 1983, the government had been building up for a use of massive force against Tamils. Regulations had also been framed which empowered state officials to break up refugee settlements of victims of the 1977 violence painstakingly built up in the North and East. Under cover of the July 1983 violence, there was forced transport on a large scale of Indian Tamil refugees from the North and East back to the hill country which they had fled in fear six years previously. They were simply dumped in the hill country while around them Tamils were again being killed and rendered refugees. July 1983 saw the publication of a report by Amnesty International detailing the large scale practice of torture against detainees. This was dismissed by President Jayewardene as communist inspired.

A senior L.T.T.E. man, Sellakilli, who had turned the tables on Inspector Bastianpillai was also killed. According to one source there had been a mix up of signals and Sellakilli had stood up. The following day the army went on a spree in Jaffna killing 41 people - some in their homes, some while they were waiting for buses at Manipay, and so on. The violence in Colombo started in the early hours of 25 July. 53 Tamil detainees at Welikade prison were killed in two successive attacks by armed fellow prisoners on the 25th and 27th of July. There was no impartial inquiry into this incident. It is believed that the prison massacre was planned at the highest levels and in the circumstances it could hardly have been otherwise.

The excerpts given below are taken from "*Sri Lanka: The Holocaust and After*," by L. Piyadasa, Marram Books, London (1984). These describe the course of violence:

In Kelaniya, Industries Minister Cyril Mathew's gangs were identified as the ones at work. The General Secretary of the government "union" the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya (J.S.S.) was identified as the leader of gangs which wrought destruction and death all over Colombo and especially in Wellawatte, where as many as ten houses a street were destroyed. A particular U.N.P. municipal councillor of the Dehiwela-Mount Lavinia Municipality led gangs in Mount Lavinia. In the Pettah (the bazaar area, where 442 shops were destroyed and murders were committed) the commander was the son of Aloysius Mudalali, the Prime Minister's right-hand man. And so on. Thugs who worked regularly for the leaders of the U.N.P., the Ministers of State and Party Headquarters, and in some cases uniformed military personnel and police, were seen leading the attack. They used vehicles of the Sri Lanka Transport Board (Minister in charge, M. H. Mohammed) and other government departments and state corporations. Trucks of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation's Oil Refinery came from many miles away bringing the men who destroyed so much of Wellawatte. There is much other evidence of this sort. In view of the quasi-governmental nature of the "action," the killings that took place may have been difficult for the eye-witnesses to resist ... But in the neighbourhoods, after the initial shock, Sinhalese and Burghers organised themselves and kept off the gangs who had been sent to burn and kill.

We have talked to people who were eye-witnesses of the killings - the beatings-to-death and burnings-alive in cold blood of individual Tamils seized, with never a case of police opposition, on the streets and in vehicles. Most people have read or heard the account, which we are convinced is authentic, of the Norwegian tourist who saw twenty people burnt alive in a minibus by one of these gangs. One of the most remarkable exploits of the "heroes" was the massacre, that day, in Welikade Prison (Sri Lanka's most important) of 35 people including some convicted men, and most either on remand or arbitrarily detained by the military. All were Sri Lankan Tamils. We are convinced that this massacre could not have been carried out without government and National Security Council authorisation and preparation at a level which would have guaranteed immunity from prosecution and public investigation. The men and women

responsible for the conspiracy to commit this atrocity were never named, nor were those who organised and directed it. Fellow-prisoners of the murdered persons who were set up to commit some of the killings, and provided with weapons (and what else?), were collectively but not individually identified, but no one was charged!

The pogrom continued less intensely in Greater Colombo for three more days, in spite of the curfew. On Tuesday, July 26th, some of the action squads were transported to Kandy, some 70 miles away, and that afternoon there was a similar sharp and quick action there before the curfew was declared at 6 p.m. It then moved further up-country, past towns like Matale (devastated) and Nawalapitiya towards Badulla and Nuwara Eliya. Hindu temples had been added to the hit list. Army action had resulted in over 60 per cent of Badulla's city centre being reduced to rubble. On the 27th, incredibly, the second massacre of Tamil political detainees and remand prisoners was successfully carried out. This time 18 were killed. There was more to come. For, as some of the Tamils began to trickle back to work towards the end of the week, their fellow-countryman, J. R. Jayewardene, spoke publicly for the first time on Thursday evening, justifying what had been done to the Tamils in South and central Sri Lanka, and uttering not a word of sympathy. On Friday, this provocative speech, and other actions, led to further arson and many more killings.

The second extract describes the peculiar conduct of Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, M.P. for Nuwara Eliya and Minister of Lands and Land Development. Nuwara Eliya erupted following his visit, after the city had been brought under control by persons acting with foresight:

The town was closely guarded by the army. All vehicles were checked. Bus conductors had orders not to transport Tamils. Minister Gamini Dissanayake came from Colombo to Nuwara Eliya to hold a meeting with party members. The day before, M.P. Herath Ranasinghe had arrested precariously (sic) some well-known rowdies. Soon after the end of Gamini Dissanayake's party meeting they were released. These people went out immediately, well-equipped with petrol, iron rods and other kinds of weapons, and tried to attack two Tamil priests in town. They managed to escape. Without having succeeded they moved on - another mob joined up with the first one. They laid a ring of petrol around a Tamil shop which was then burnt. They were supported in this by the army who supplied them with gallons of petrol. During the day nearly all Tamil-owned shops were burnt. Mrs. Herath Ranasinghe ordered the army to disperse the looters - but it was already too late. The Member of Parliament was banished from town under a hail of insults. Tamil people who walked the streets were beaten by soldiers. The fire brigade which stood waiting was hindered by the army and the Sinhalese mob in doing its job... Shops which had not been burnt by the mob were set fire to by the army. Around noon Nuwara Eliya was like a sea of flames... ("*Sri Lanka - 'Paradise' in Ruins*," Sri Lanka Co-ordination Centre, Kassel, 1983).

Addressing a meeting of the L.J.E.W.U. (Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union), a union sponsored by Mr. Dissanayake as a rival to Mr. Thondaman's C.W.C., shortly after the July 1983 violence; Dissanayake said: "If India invades this country, the Tamils will be killed within 24 hours." There was much talk at that time about Indian troops being sent to protect Tamils. Dissanayake was, in the best street thug tradition, doing more than his share of Tamil baiting.

The best way for the international community to honor the lives lost during and since Black July is by listening to Tamils and ensuring effective and credible accountability processes. After thirty-five years of war-related suffering, Tamils' cries for justice must be heard.

UN, initiate independent international investigation into war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by Sri Lanka investigation into all violations of international law. Not only the more than 70, 000 killed and 147, 000 disappeared in 2009, but every Eelam Tamil killed in the genocide from 1948, including July 1983, deserves justice.

*Collectif La Paix au Sri Lanka, Swiss Council of Eelam Tamil (SCET), NGO without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.