



CANADIAN TAMIL CONGRESS ■ CONGRÈS TAMOUL CANADIEN

31 Progress Avenue, Suite #202, Scarborough M1P 4S6 T: 416-240-0078 F:416-240-1601 e-mail:info@ctconline.ca

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Tamil Canadians call on MP Deepak Obhrai to Demand Release of 300,000 Tamil Civilians

Tamil Canadians welcome Canadian Parliamentary Secretary Deepak Obhrai's visit to an internment camp holding some of the three hundred thousand innocent Tamil civilians, including Canadian nationals. This would mark the first visit by an elected Canadian official and one of very few witnesses to one of the most devastating humanitarian issues of our time.

Despite Mr. Obhrai's guided visit, the camps remain restricted to the media, humanitarian workers, and the outside world. Mr. Obhrai's visit is a rare opportunity to shed some light on the human crisis unfolding in these camps, however, Tamil Canadians fear that the guided tour will not allow Mr. Obhrai the opportunity to objectively and freely assess the situation. "While we welcome Mr. Obhrai's visit to an IDP camp in Vavuniya, we hope he remains aware that a visit agreed to and supervised by Sri Lanka will only present a limited vision of the truth. This is government known for its brutal crackdowns on free press and human rights workers who seek to honestly report the facts," said David Poopalapillai, National Spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress.

"While in Sri Lanka, we hope Mr. Obhrai denounces Sri Lanka's 0.9 per cent tax on all funding for aid groups despite the desperate need for relief and also questions why aid workers and media still do not have unfettered access to IDP camps despite repeated requests," Poopalapillai said.

Tamil Canadians also urge Mr. Obhrai to heed the chorus of international voices calling on the immediate release of the nearly 300,000 civilians who are being interned by Sri Lanka in violation of international humanitarian law.

"Canada is a leader in advancing human rights and defining international human rights and humanitarian law. As a government official, we urge Mr. Obhrai to speak forcefully in defense of the voiceless internees and call for their immediate release from these illegal camps. As a first step, Mr. Obhrai should take this opportunity to urge the government of Sri Lanka to release the three doctors who saved thousands of lives in northern Sri Lanka and who have now been detained by the government as well as Canadian nationals being held against their will," Poopalapillai said.

For more information, contact the Canadian Tamil Congress at (416) 240-0078.

• Toronto	• Ottawa	• Montreal	• Vancouver	• Edmonton	• Winnipeg	• Halifax
(416) 240-0078	(613) 789-9371	(514) 995-7483	(778) 231-0074	(780) 498-1070	(204) 290-4686	(902) 229-5482