



CANADIAN MEDICAL DENTAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

CHARITY NO:823467279RR0001
www.cmdda.ca

Canadian Doctors of Tamil descent express alarm over hospitalization of hunger strikers - call for immediate intervention by the Canadian Government.

TORONTO, April 17 /CNW/ - The Canadian Medical Dental Development Association and the Medical Institute for Tamils (CMDDA/MIFT) call for immediate intervention by the Canadian Government to meet with the individuals who have undertaken hunger strikes in Ottawa and to effectively intervene in the crisis in Sri Lanka.

Since the beginning of the hunger strike, CMDDA/MIFT has provided volunteer medical professionals to constantly monitor the hunger strikers in Ottawa who are putting their lives at risk to raise awareness to the worsening humanitarian tragedy in the North of Sri Lanka.

Dr. V. Santhakumar, President of the CMDDA/MIFT stated "As of today, three of the hunger strikers have been hospitalized with worsening medical condition and the remaining three hunger strikers condition is rapidly deteriorating. In our professional opinion, all of the hunger strikers are in imminent threat for permanent organ damage or death."

CMDDA/MIFT is also closely monitoring the evolving humanitarian tragedy taking place in the Northeast of Sri Lanka through frequent updates from medical officials from this zone. Over 100,000 innocent civilians, including women and children are trapped in a small strip of the beach approximately 10 sq km in the so-called safe zone with hundreds being killed on a daily basis. Additionally, hundreds of civilians are dying due to lack of medications, medical supplies, food and drinking water. Infectious diseases are on the rise due to poor sanitary living conditions.

CMDDA/MIFT strongly condemns all military actions targeting hospitals, medical workers transporting the sick and infirm, and innocent civilians in this war. We urge the Canadian government to effectively utilize its influence through international mechanisms such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth to intervene in the Sri Lankan conflict and implement immediate solutions.

Canadian doctors of Tamil descent have seen large increases in medical and psychological issues in the population of Canadians of Tamil descent directly related to this ongoing catastrophe.

"At least 75% of victims in Sri Lanka have siblings or direct relatives in Canada," said Dr. Santhakumar. "The escalating violence in Sri Lanka imperils the lives of relatives of Canadians. We fear a death by any of the hunger strikers may trigger other Canadian Tamils to take up the charge and follow the same path of self harm."

The Ontario government has expressed their concern for the mental health of the local Tamil community affected. At a recent meeting hosted by Tamil medical groups including CMDDA, the Deputy Premier and the former Health Minister George Smitherman personally pledged to facilitate mental health counseling for Canadians of Tamil descent through the Ontario Government.



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Immediate intervention

The CMDDA/MIFT urgently requests the government of Canada to:

- 1) Meet with the hunger strikers in Ottawa and commit to take a leading role internationally to end the conflict in Sri Lanka as it is impacting on the life of Canadian citizens;
- 2) Ensure the Government of Sri Lanka immediately implements a permanent ceasefire, allows the United Nations and Non Governmental Organizations, such as Medecin Sans Frontiers, unfettered access to the affected zone, and ensures the immediate delivery of food and medical supplies to affected areas;
- 3) Ensure the Government of Sri Lanka immediately stop all military engagements that imperil hospitals and innocent civilians; including immediate cessation of cluster bombing, chemical bombing and using multibarrel artilleries that are endangering the civilian populations; and
- 4) Utilize Canada's influence through international mechanisms such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth to intervene in the Sri Lankan conflict and implement immediate solutions as human genocide is not acceptable and a Peaceful solution must be achieved. Canada's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka must be temporarily recalled to advise on a process to reevaluate Canada's foreign policy vis-à-vis Sri Lanka that it meets Canada's commitment to democracy and consistency with Canada's Charter.

MIFT is a non-profit organization formed in 1998 by physicians and dentists and other allied professionals of Sri Lankan descent. CMDDA is a charitable organization that provides humanitarian and medical aid. In the past, MIFT has been involved in providing humanitarian and medical assistance to the troubled North and East in Sri Lanka. The organization was one of the first medical groups directly involved in post-Tsunami rehabilitation in Sri Lanka. More details can be found at www.cmdda.ca.

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