



CANADIAN TAMIL CONGRESS ■ CONGRÈS TAMOUL CANADIEN
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Press Release – For Immediate Release

A Canadian Tamil Community response to Allegations by Human Rights Watch on Extortion

March 14, 2006

Toronto, Canada

A report to be released by New York based Human Rights Watch on March 15, 2006, entitled "Tamil Tigers Extort Diaspora for 'Final War' Funds" indicts the entire Tamil Canadian community by allegations that in effect portrays the entire community as complicit in illegal activities.

The author, Ms. Jo Becker, alleges that Tamil community members are being extorted and intimidated, thereby challenging "an entire community's right to live without fear." Ms. Becker concludes that the Canadian legal system as a whole has failed to protect the rights of the Tamil community.

Leading members of Tamil community organizations assert that the reports conclusions potentially place Tamil Canadians at great risk of racial discrimination and harassment. "The report makes disparaging conclusions about our community's ability to report extortion and casts doubts about our integrity as law abiding citizens. This is my community; one that I have helped build in Canada for the past 20 years. This report makes me sick because it is saying that we are covering something up and our community is living in fear. In Toronto alone, there are 30 independent Tamil newspapers, three 24 hour radio stations, and three 24 hour Televisions stations. There is no veil of silence – Ms. Becker simply has her facts wrong." stated David Poopalapillai, Spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress.

"To date Human Rights Watch has failed to offer proof of sound social science research to an issue that has severe implications for a community. Not only are the report's findings completely false from our knowledge base – they seem to be based on anecdotal evidence and misguided assumptions," stated Ashwin Balamohan, a University of Toronto student and incoming Vice President University Affairs for the Students' Administrative Council

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To be credible journalists are requested to ask Human Rights Watch, the following questions:

What was the sample size of the survey or interviews?

What was the methodology used to conduct the survey?

How were interview subjects chosen and how did they come forward?

How was the research funded and what was the total cost of the study?

Did the researchers have training in interview techniques in multicultural settings?

Were interview subjects paid for the interview?

As primary lead researcher, could the community have an idea of Ms. Beckers credentials as a researcher?

Extortion is already a criminal code offence in Canada – why has no one been charged?

If no one has been charged, how can it be determined that they belong to a particular group?

The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) is an organization that is dedicated to the promotion and advancement of the interests of the Tamil Canadian community in Canada. It is dedicated to the principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of Canada, including the freedom of conscience and association

CTC requests Canadian journalists to uphold values of the Charter – the right to life, liberty and security of Canadian Tamils when reporting about the community.

A cross section of the Tamil Canadian community, comprising grass root organizations, will address a Press Conference, to be held on Wednesday, March 15, 2006, at 2:00 pm at the Delta Toronto East, 2035 Kennedy Road (Kennedy & 401), Scarborough, Ontario, M1T 3G2 Toronto C Ballroom in order to challenge the report.

For further information, please contact Canadian Tamil Congress at 416 240 0078

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