



HARTLEY COLLEGE

Past Pupils Association – Canada/USA

(Ontario Corporation Number 906192)

Established 1989



26 May 2007

Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Stephen Harper:

ACADEMIC COMMUNITY RECEIVING
DEATH THREATS FROM MILITARY FORCES IN SRI LANKA

We would like to bring to your attention an issue of grave concern. On 13 May 2007, the University of Jaffna campus, in Sri Lanka, was inundated with leaflets containing serious death threats. The leaflets specifically listed certain students and staff, including the Vice Chancellor and professors, and were signed by the “National Alliance for the Defense of the Country”, which is believed to be a front for the Sri Lankan secret service.

The organization claims that the threatened people are working against the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Other faculty at neighbouring schools received similar threats on 10 May 2007, and many others have already been attacked. The Jaffna Human Rights Commission estimates that as of March 2007, 67 civilians had been shot dead, 29 had been abducted and 68 were missing in Jaffna alone. By April 2007, the number of abducted people had risen to 80 and included several high school students. We are deeply disturbed by this pattern of escalating abductions and disappearances, which has been documented by several human rights organizations.

The University of Jaffna is located in the northern district of Sri Lanka, which is the most militarized part of the country, with 40 000 armed government forces for a population of only 500 000. Since President Mahinda Rajapakse came to power in October 2005, there has been a sustained campaign against local media organizations and journalists, several of whom have been killed. All outside media, both national and international, are banned from visiting the area, except for occasional tours conducted by the armed forces. The fact that increasing numbers of students are now being abducted indicates that the government has turned its campaign now towards the academic community.

The Hartley College Past Pupils Association of Canada/USA urges you, as the Prime Minister of a country, dedicated to Human rights, peacekeeping and equality, to use your good offices to help protect these civilians against the Sri Lankan government’s pervasive, merciless and senseless counter-insurgency campaign, particularly in this case

of direct death threats leveled against the academic community of the University of Jaffna. Inaction by Canada and the world at large encourages the government to continue its human rights violations unabated. We ask you to collaborate with NGOs and IGOs to send a fact-finding mission to Jaffna to assess the situation firsthand. An international Human rights monitoring presence in Sri Lanka, particularly in North and Eastern provinces may deter human rights abuses from occurring.

We, all the undersigned, look forward to your immediate and meaningful action regarding the threatened University of Jaffna students and staff, and we implore you to work towards protecting all the civilians of the northern and eastern region from violence.

Sincerely,

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