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## Sri Lanka: Human Rights Watch Replies to the Canadian Tamil Congress

During our investigation of intimidation and extortion in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, Human Rights Watch interviewed several dozen members of the Tamil community in Canada and the United Kingdom, including business owners, professionals, activists, journalists and other individuals. Their accounts were credible and consistent. Their personal experiences, as well as information they relayed from their colleagues, neighbors and relatives indicated a widespread and systematic campaign by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to obtain funds from Tamils in the West.

The extortion activities described in our report are being carried out by a small number of individuals claiming to represent the LTTE or groups linked to the LTTE, including the World Tamil Movement. While a large number of Tamils are subjected to demands for money, we do not suggest that significant numbers of Tamils are engaging in extortion or other unlawful activity. We also note that many Tamils actively and willingly support the LTTE.

We believe that the lack of prosecutions for extortion reflects both the reluctance of many Tamils to step forward because of their fear of LTTE reprisals against them and their families in Sri Lanka, as well as the failure of law enforcement to vigorously investigate and prosecute unlawful activity by the LTTE. It does not mean that intimidation is not a problem within the community.

Human Rights Watch is an independent non-governmental organization founded in 1978. We report on human rights abuses by both government and non-state actors in more than 70 countries. We are funded through contributions from private individuals and foundations. We accept no money from any governments. We never pay witnesses for information.

Human Rights Watch initiated its investigation of intimidation, extortion and violence linked to the LTTE in the West because we felt that these were serious abuses that deserved greater attention. The Sri Lankan government had no involvement in this investigation in any way.

Human Rights Watch investigations are based on qualitative rather than quantitative research. We do not do “population sampling” but rely on individual testimonies taken during in-depth, one-on-one interviews. For this report, witnesses were identified through contacts with Tamil journalists, activists, business owners and professionals. Accounts from a number of individuals could not be included in the report because we believed it would place those persons at risk.

The author of [Funding the ‘Final War’: LTTE Intimidation and Extortion in the Tamil Diaspora](#) is a

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veteran Human Rights Watch researcher with more than eight years of experience conducting human rights investigations. Her work for Human Rights Watch has included investigations in Sri Lanka, Burma, Uganda and the United States. She has extensive international and cross-cultural experience, and frequently represents Human Rights Watch in international forums.



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