

# No Impunity for War Crimes in Sri Lanka: Commonwealth Must Act

Brussels, Rome – 25 October 2011



The next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) will be held in Perth, Western Australia, from 28 to 30 October 2011. Sri Lanka is a member of the Commonwealth and, despite the fact it has not undertaken an effective accountability process for war crimes committed during the civil war, it is still slated to host the 2013 CHOGM meeting. A brief compiled by the International Commission of Jurists' Australia section recommends that Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to Australia, Mr Thisara Samarasinghe, be investigated for alleged war crimes and calls on CHOGM to take a strong stand against the ongoing impunity in Sri Lanka.

## **Statement by Alison Smith, Legal Counsel of No Peace Without Justice:**

"No Peace Without Justice and the Transnational Nonviolent Radical Party call on CHOGM to recommend and support investigations for war crimes allegedly committed in Sri Lanka, whether through a regional or international process.

"NPWJ and the NRPTT believe that the Commonwealth would make a powerful statement strengthening the fight against impunity if it were to take a stand against Sri Lanka's inaction by suspending it from the Councils of the Commonwealth until it takes positive action towards the establishment of a war crimes tribunal and fulfilling the other recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts delivered in April of this year. If Sri Lanka continues to do nothing in this respect it could be expelled from the Commonwealth altogether, something that has happened in relation to other countries. At the very least, Sri Lanka's hosting the 2013 CHOGM should be put on hold and another host identified until this appalling situation is rectified.

"It has now been 6 months since the UN Panel of Experts reported to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on accountability issues with respect to the conflict in Sri Lanka, calling for genuine investigations into the allegations, first and foremost by the Sri Lankan authorities. This clearly has not happened: the Government of Sri Lanka has not only consistently objected to any international enquiry, it has failed to undertake

credible or genuine investigations of those events itself.

“NPWJ and NRPTT welcome the fact that the Australian authorities have decided to investigate alleged war crimes committed in Sri Lanka, hence fulfilling their obligations as signatories to the Rome Statute. We hope other members of the Commonwealth will show similar resolve and commitment towards justice and accountability later this week.

“It is only through accountability and justice, by building a shared history and acknowledging the full truth of the civil war that Sri Lanka's deeply fractured society will be able to move beyond the conflict to a state of reconciliation and peace.”

For further information, please contact Alison Smith, phone +32 2 548 39 12, email [asmith@npwj.org](mailto:asmith@npwj.org) or Nicola Giovannini, phone +32-2-548-3915, email [ngiovannini@npwj.org](mailto:ngiovannini@npwj.org)