

British Tamils Forum: Mass Rally in London Calls on UK to Boycott CHOGM

Written by - British Tamils Forum -
Saturday, 02 November 2013 21:00 -



Demonstrators from both the British Tamil community and its supporters staged a mass rally to Downing Street today to call on the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, to boycott the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), which is due to take place later this month in Sri Lanka. At its peak, almost 4,000 people took part in the rally, waving banners and placards describing the various human rights abuses, war crimes and acts of genocide the Sri Lankan state stands accused of committing against the Tamils. Demonstrators also displayed messages calling on David Cameron and Prince Charles to avoid lending legitimacy to a state that continues to smear “blood on its hands”.

At the end of the procession, six members of British Tamils Forum presented a petition on behalf of the crowd to 10 Downing Street, calling on the Prime Minister to boycott the summit in order to send the strongest possible message that the UK would not tolerate Sri Lanka’s historical and continuing violations of international law. The petition also called for the Commonwealth to suspend Sri Lanka and demanded that those responsible for perpetrating acts of genocide against the Tamil people must be held to account by the international community.

The rally was well covered by news organisations, from both the UK and abroad, and coincidentally took place straight after Amnesty International UK staged its own CHOGM protest in Parliament Square.

The level of interest in the demonstration, both from onlookers and the media, is testament to the acute controversy surrounding the UK government’s decision to participate in the summit – a decision that has been widely condemned by human rights organisation, and one which

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provokes daily embarrassment for the UK government as further evidence of Sri Lanka's past and current abuses continues to emerge in the British media on an almost-daily basis.

Only yesterday the Leader of the Opposition, Ed Miliband MP, reiterated to British Tamils Forum members that the Labour Party stands firmly opposed to the UK government's decision to participate in CHOGM in Sri Lanka.

btfmediateam@googlemail.com