



தமிழ் இளைஞர் அமைப்பு Tamil Youth Organisation

"Empowering Youth to Excel as Leaders and Architects of Our Nation"

The England and Wales Cricket Board
Lord's Cricket Ground
London
NW8 8QZ

BY POST & FAX: +44 (0)20 7286 5583

14th December 2020

Dear Sirs,

Re: Concerns about the ECB's decision to tour Sri Lanka in January 2021

Tamil Youth Organisation UK (TYO-UK) is a youth organisation working in partnership with British Tamil grassroot organisations and students unions from over 27 universities in the UK and we write for and on behalf of the British Tamil community.

As part of our campaign to help create awareness war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the Sri Lankan state against the Tamil population in the island and to prevent Sri Lanka from whitewashing its crimes using sport, we have been leading the campaign calling for the boycott of Sri Lanka Cricket since 2005.

We write to raise our serious concerns on the following: -

1. Announcement on 9th December 2020 of the controversial tour to Sri Lanka

The ECB chose the 9th December 2020 to announce that the England and Wales cricket team are scheduled to tour Sri Lanka in January 2021 to play two Test matches.

The Board will be well aware that 9th December is marked as the UN International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime. The Board will no doubt be familiar with the credible allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the Sri Lankan state on the Tamil people since Sri Lanka gained independence from Britain.

On a particular note, the Tamil families of the disappeared have been protesting continuously for over 1392 days to raise awareness of the mass atrocity crimes committed by the Sri Lankan state and calling upon the International Community to refer Sri Lanka to



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the International Criminal Court and bring those responsible for the enforced disappearance to justice. The families' protest has been ongoing despite the difficulties caused by the public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic and the permanent harassment from Sri Lankan state and its military apparatus.

Sri Lanka has the second-highest number of enforced disappearances in the world. Over 100,000 people, mostly Tamils, have been disappeared by the Sri Lankan state. Eleven years after the end of the war, Tamil families are still searching for their loved ones.

It is therefore appalling on the part of the ECB to be insensitive to the agony and cries of the Tamil mothers and relatives of the disappeared and announce the controversial tour on 9th December.

2. The Mahinda Rajapaksa International Cricket Stadium

We note that the England and Wales Cricket team is to depart from London to Sri Lanka on 2nd January 2021 and train in a biosecure environment between 5th and 9th January 2021 at the Mahinda Rajapaksa International Cricket (MRIC) stadium in Hambantota, in the Sinhalese heartland, south of the island.

The MRIC stadium was built in 2009 by then President Mahinda Rajapaksa who is the current Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. Rajapaksa stands credibly accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide by various UN agencies and international NGOs.

Mahinda Rajapaksa's brother, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, is a former Sri Lankan Minister of Defence and the current President of Sri Lanka. He also stands credibly accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide by various UN agencies and international NGOs.

It is shameful of the ECB to have agreed to the Sri Lankan regime's proposal to have the England and Wales Cricket team prepare and train at a stadium named after a war criminal and genocidaire.

The ECB management board will also be aware that Sri Lanka has decided to withdraw from its commitments made to the UN Human Rights Council. The Sri Lankan government has said it will no longer cooperate with the UNHRC's resolution 30/1 to promote reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka.



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It is therefore a travesty of what the Board stood for when it called for the boycott of Zimbabwe in 2004 for its appalling human rights record but now allowing the team to tour Sri Lanka despite Sri Lanka's documented serious gross violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law.

3. Military Management of MRIC stadium

The Board might be aware that the MRIC stadium is operated by the Sri Lankan military. The stadium is managed by Brigadier Shanaka Ratnayake, the commander of the Sri Lankan Army Commando Regiment. The Sri Lankan military and its leadership stand credibly accused by the UN and other international NGOs of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide of Tamils. The Sri Lankan military also stands indicted of rape and sexual exploitation of children while deployed abroad in conflict zones.

The Tamil people in the North and East of Sri Lanka have been continuously opposing the land grab by the Sri Lankan armed forces and the militarisation of their civilian life and institutions (e.g. schools, health centres, farming and agricultural productions, etc.). While the civil societies in Sri Lanka have been calling for an end to the ongoing militarisation of civilian life, the decision of the ECB to train at the military managed MRIC stadium is deplorable.

Regrettably, the ECB has in this occasion failed to follow its own framework for dealing with controversial tours. Should the ECB continue to maintain its decision to train at the MRIC stadium, then it will be, forever, an indelible stain on the ECB's history and good reputation.

4. First Test match is on 14th January 2021

14th January is celebrated by Tamils from all around the world as Pongal Day. It is an important day of cultural and historic significance for Tamils. British Prime Ministers and other world leaders have used the harvest celebration day to extend their greetings and thank the Tamil community for their contributions to the wider society.

When Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka are indicting the Sri Lankan state of cultural ethnic cleansing and genocide, it is insensitive for the ECB to agree to play the first test match between England and Wales cricket team and Sri Lanka team on 14th January. The Sri



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Lankan cricket team is predominantly Sinhalese Buddhist and do not celebrate the Pongal festival.

The Sri Lankan state is engaged in a campaign to erase Tamil identity through cultural genocide. It is therefore further regrettable and upsetting that the ECB has failed to consider the sentiments of the Tamils when agreeing to play their first match on 14th January 2021 and is aiding and abetting Sri Lanka's heinous agenda.

For decades Sri Lanka has used sport to project normality within its shores and whitewash mass atrocity crimes it has and continues to commit against the Tamil people. This tour will only aid Sri Lanka to falsely project normalisation instead of achieving it through tangible efforts towards accountability and justice.

In light of the above, we call upon the ECB and the England and Wales Cricket team to reflect on their decision and the pain caused to the Tamils in the United Kingdom and in Sri Lanka, and we urge the ECB to reconsider its decision to tour Sri Lanka and in particular train at the Mahinda Rajapaksa International Cricket stadium, a venue named after a war criminal and genocidaire, and managed by the Sri Lankan military.

The England and Wales Cricket team and the Board have a moral duty to use their position in the cricketing world to send a clear and loud message to human rights violators in Sri Lanka and other parts of the world, and stand firm against war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Play by the rules is not Sri Lankan. We humbly request the Board and the team to stand by the Tamil mothers and relatives of the disappeared.

We look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, should you have any questions or need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

TAMIL YOUTH ORGANISATION - UK