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## Not in our name

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Selva Kumar, Jamal Mohamed and Lenin Benedict, National Post Roy Ratnavel's recent National Post article ("Why Canada's Tamils are upset," March 20) may lead readers to the mistaken belief that all Tamils in Canada share the same opinion on the situation in Sri Lanka. In fact, not all Tamils in Canada are from Sri Lanka (many come from India, Malaysia, Singapore and other nations). And even among those Canadian Tamils who do come from Sri Lanka, not all support the LTTE (better known as the Tamil Tigers) or its Canadian affiliates. In fact, most of us don't support the group. There are over a million Tamils in Sri Lanka's south living peacefully among the country's Sinhalese and Muslims. Many Tamils in Canada come from these areas, and aspire to see this same sort of pluralism in the formerly LTTE-controlled regions in Sri Lanka's north and east. Certainly, Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka have suffered as the Sri Lankan army presses its offensive against the Tigers in the last remaining sliver of rebel-held territory. But this suffering has been worsened by the LTTE itself, which holds many of the civilians hostage. This fact has been reported by both the United Nations and the Red Cross, which also note that civilians attempting to flee have been shot and killed by the Tamil Tigers. Moderate Tamils have attempted to make their voices heard in Canada-- including at a recent rally on Parliament Hill organized by the Hindu Priests Association. However, hundreds of Tamil men and women were sent from Toronto by a pro-LTTE group to infiltrate the rally with Tamil Tiger flags. This sort of practice has become the norm. The Canadian media and public should understand that Tamil Tigers supporters are co-opting these events against the organizers' own wishes. Millions of Tamils in India are protesting against the sufferings of Tamils in Sri Lanka, but LTTE flags are never seen in those rallies. There is no reason why they should be used in Canada. Supporters of the Tamil Tigers -- a group that has been considered a terrorist organization in this country since 2006 -- even use such events for fundraising. LTTE-supporting groups in Canada claim to be fighting against discrimination toward Tamils in Sri Lanka. Yet they freely discriminate against all other Tamils in Canada, especially Indian Tamils and Muslims. The LTTE drove out 100,000 Tamil Muslims from Sri Lanka's north, and continues to discriminate against those that have fled to Canada. Temples and organizations started by Indian Tamils decades ago in Canada have been taken over by pro-LTTE groups. Canadian businesses owned by Tamils who are not supportive of the LTTE are targeted for harassment. And Sri Lankan Tamils who want to bring peace in Sri Lanka through negotiations with the government are labelled "traitors" by the LTTE groups operating in Canada. The phenomenon even undermines Canadian democracy: Pro-LTTE groups have opposed and threatened Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil election candidates who do not subscribe to their views. Some even use illegal fundraising tactics to wage their campaigns. The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) -- on whose board Roy Ratnavel sits -- claims to represent the "unified voice of Canadian Tamils." But a review of the group's press releases, board members and media interactions over the years shows that it has been invariably critical of the Sri Lankan government and sympathetic to the LTTE. There is nothing Canadian or Tamil about the group. Its pronouncements make one wonder if it is no more than a message board for the LTTE. Canadians need to realize that not all Tamils are supporters of the Tamil Tigers. Noisy as they are, groups like the Canadian Tiger Congress, in fact, represent only a small Tamil-Canadian minority -- the minority that sympathizes with the LTTE. Canada should let Sri Lanka deal with the LTTE terrorists, and work with the UN to help the Tamil civilians held hostage by the LTTE. More importantly, Canada should focus on helping Canadian Tamils held hostage to LTTE groups right here in our country. For starters, politicians of all stripes should stop engaging pro-LTTE groups, and do what is right for Canada. - Selva Kumar, Jamal Mohamed and Lenin Benedict are members of Canadian Tamils for Peace and Democracy (CATPAD). Courtesy: Nationalpost