



CANADIAN TAMIL CONGRESS ■ CONGRÈS TAMOUL CANADIEN

31 Progress Avenue, Suite #202, Scarborough M1P 4S6 T: 416-240-0078 F:416-240-1601 e-mail:info@ctconline.ca

For Immediate Release

July 21, 2008

Tamil Canadians mourn 25 years of violence

(Toronto) Throughout the month of July, the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) in collaboration with various community organizations will be hosting events commemorating the 25th anniversary of the arrival of Tamils in Canada as a result of the anti-Tamil violence of Black July in Sri Lanka. Between July 24 and July 29 1983, a period referred to as Black July, Tamils were systematically targeted with violence in Colombo and many other parts of Sri Lanka. In those few days, thousands lost their lives, homes and sense of security. Black July is poignant for the global Tamil diaspora and especially for Tamil Canadians for the welcome they received in Canada as they fled the violence in their homeland.

“Canada opened its arms to the Tamil refugees fleeing the anti-Tamil violence in Sri Lanka,” said David Poopalapillai, National Spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress. “We would not be the 250,000 strong community that we are today, if it were not for the compassion and kindness of the Canadian people. As we thank Canadians, it is also important for us as a community to remember all those who lost their lives during Black July and the twenty-five succeeding years of armed conflict in Sri Lanka.”

The Tamil-Canadian community has come to embrace Canada as its home, however, Tamil-Canadians will always remember the tragic circumstances that led them to up-root their lives and families. CTC is showcasing their stories through several signature events that will be held across the nation including Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto.

For more information on the history of Black July and a complete list of events, please visit <http://www.blackjuly83.com>

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BLACK JULY EVENTS

Vigil: A vigil will be held in Toronto, in commemoration of the victims of Black July. Canadian Tamils will join in solidarity to remember lost friends and family members.

Venue: Albert Campbell Square, Scarborough
Date: Friday, July 25, 2008
Time: 6pm-8pm

Exhibit: The “Remembering Silenced Voices” exhibit is a must-see and powerful collection that incorporates the work of local artists, archival footage from international press, haunting survivor stories and inspirational testimonials on the Tamil Canadian immigrant experience. ***Of particular interest is the work of two young emerging artists, a photographer and a painter, who have chosen to express their thoughts on Black July through their art.***

Venue: ARTA Gallery, Distillery Historic District
Date: Saturday July 26, 2008
Time: 10am-9pm
An artist’s reception with poetry readings and survivor stories will be held at 2:30pm

In addition, a mobile version of this exhibit will be held in various venues around the GTA, including:

Toronto:

Venue: Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St. West, Toronto, ON
Date: July 18th - 22nd

Scarborough:

Venue: Scarborough Civic Centre
150 Borough Drive, Scarborough, ON
Date: July 23rd - 25th

York Region:

Venue: Regional Municipality of York, Great Hall
17250 Yonge Street, Newmarket, ON
Date: July 29th - 31st

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Play: In association with Asylum Theatre Group "What if the Rain Fails" will chronicle the life of a Tamil refugee from Sri Lanka who escaped the anti-Tamil violence in 1983 and sought refuge in Canada. Employing testimonies, poems and multimedia, the play vividly portrays the moral and material challenges that Tamil refugees encounter in the Diaspora. ***An interesting dimension in this compelling intergenerational production, is that some of the players, including the lead, are survivors of Black July.***

Venue: Young Centre for the Performing Arts,
The Distillery Historic District

Date: Saturday July 26, 2008
Performances at 1pm, 4 pm, 6 pm

Youth Conference: A youth conference titled "In Search of Our Roots" designed for 200 Tamil youth between the ages 16 to 29 will be held in the University of Toronto Scarborough. Topics related to Tamil history, heritage, language and philosophy will be discussed. In addition, **there will be particular focus given to the topic of Tamil Canadian identity with respect to its current reality and future steps.**

Venue: University of Toronto, Scarborough Campus
Arts & Administration Building, Room # AA112

Date: Sunday July 27, 2008

Time: 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Blood Donation: On Canada Day, a blood donation campaign was launched where the Canadian Tamil community challenged itself to donate 5000 units of blood to increase the donor supply and to thank Canada for the welcome given to them over the last 25 years. Blood donor clinics are running throughout the month of July at various locations across the nation from coast to coast.

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