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**PUBLIC STATEMENT**  
**Sri Lanka: Amnesty International condemns killing**  
**of Neelan Thiruchelvam MP**

Amnesty International today strongly condemned the assassination of Tamil Member of Parliament (MP), Neelan Thiruchelvam, and paid tribute to him as a politician who contributed greatly to his country.

Neelan Thiruchelvam, a member of Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), was killed on his way to work at *the International Centre for Ethnic Studies* when a suicide bomber threw himself at his car. His bodyguard and driver were wounded.

The nature of the attack suggests it could be linked with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in which case it constitutes a clear breach of international humanitarian standards.

A constitutional lawyer, Neelan Thiruchelvam entered parliament in August 1994 as a member of the TULF, a moderate Tamil party. He was a member of the parliamentary select committee on constitutional reforms, which devised an autonomy devolution package for north-eastern Sri Lanka. The package was aimed at settling the 16-year-old armed conflict between the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE, who are fighting for a separate Tamil state called Eelam in north-eastern Sri Lanka. The LTTE, who were not consulted at the initial stages, have opposed the peace plan.

The attack comes amidst speculation that a new constitution, which would include the devolution package, could be presented in parliament within the next two months. Progress on the devolution package, which requires a two-thirds majority vote in parliament, has been slow due to the withdrawal of support for it by the opposition United National Party (UNP) in October 1997.

The LTTE have recently stepped up their intimidation of MPs and public officials. In May this year the Tamil Tigers ordered government employees in Jaffna to abstain from work on Tuesdays and Fridays. This order was subsequently withdrawn. In June, five MPs from different political parties, and who represent Sri Lanka's eastern Batticaloa district, were ordered by the LTTE to restrict their public activities. In 1998 the LTTE was held responsible for killing two mayors of Jaffna Town.

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