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PRESS RELEASE

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Mass rally to protest China's support of human rights abuses in Sri Lanka & Burma gains momentum

Washington, D.C. July 9, 2008 - People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (PEARL), in partnership with US Campaign for Burma (USCB), will hold a rally on Capitol Hill at noon on July 24 to protest China's unconditional financial support of two notorious human rights violators: the militaries of Sri Lanka and Burma. Elected officials and representatives from human rights organizations are scheduled to speak at the rally.

In the last year, China's aid to Sri Lanka grew fivefold to nearly \$1 billion, making it the country's largest single donor. Within the last two years, approximately 4,000 civilians have been killed in conflict. China is the Burmese military regime's single most important ally, supplying billions in weapons, aid, and trade, while shielding the regime from international action by the UN Security Council. PEARL and USCB are joining to address China's military aid, which only fuels violence against civilians in both countries.

The mass rally is also being held to commemorate two episodes of ethnic violence that engulfed Sri Lanka and Burma, and to mark the 25th and 20th anniversaries of these tragedies. In Sri Lanka's "Black July", an ethnic pogrom, organized mobs backed by the Sri Lankan government killed approximately 3,000 Tamil civilians, displaced several thousand Tamils and destroyed over \$300 million worth of Tamils' property.

In the "8.8.88 Uprising" of Burma, over 3,000 student, Buddhist monks and civilians were killed by the military during a peaceful demonstration on restoration of democracy. This is one of the most important dates in Burmese history, and incidentally enough, the Beijing Olympics will begin on the anniversary.

The rally will be followed by a silent vigil to remember the victims and honor the survivors of Black July. Survivors of Black July will speak about their experiences during the pogrom and testimonials of survivors will be read at the event.

Hundreds of people from across the country, including California and Texas, will attend the rally to urge China to stop supporting militaries that have failed to abide by international human rights and humanitarian norms.

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