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NEWS

60 soldiers killed, 150 wounded in LTTE counter offensive

LIBERATION Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) mounted their first counter-offensive against Sri Lanka Army (SLA) in Vanni battlefront killing at least 60 soldiers and wounding another 150, according LTTE officials.

LTTE counter-offensive units carried out a preemptive strike on SLA offensive formation in Murikandi - Iranaimadu area Saturday, December 20, pushing back the SLA 2 km and recovering the bodies of 12 soldiers.

The preemptive strike was carried out as the SLA was preparing for another offensive push, according to LTTE officials.

The first LTTE-claimed preemptive strike comes in the wake of SLA suffering three debacles within the last few weeks in

Kilinochchi.

Sunday Times newspaper columnist, Iqbal Athas, reporting on the LTTE counter-offensive wrote: "heavy fighting broke out after guerrillas launched a counter attack on troop positions at a point between Terumurukandi and Iranamadu. The location is east of Adampan."

"The [LTTE fighters] attacked in four waves, one after another," a high-ranking military officer speaking on grounds of anonymity told Sunday Times.

"There were several close quarter battles where the [LTTE fighters] used small arms and machine gun fire. In others, mortars began to rain in. It was a mortar monsoon." The officer further told the newspaper.



New recruit Ranasinghe was captured by the LTTE less than a month after completing training

Fresh recruit becomes POW

A Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldier who has been captured by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Kilaali on 9 December has revealed that he was attached to Sinha Regiment and sent to the forefront of the offensive immediately after completing his military training at Diyathalawa Army Training Centre on 25 November.

The Prisoner of War (PoW), who was allowed to talk to media last Saturday while he was admitted at Klinochchi hospital, said he

had studied up to 7th standard and joined the SLA considering the economic benefits, but did not expect that he would be sent to the battle front immediately.

R.A. Nishan Ranasinghe said he was sent to training on 25 August 2008 with 659 new recruits. Following his three months training, which completed on 25 November 2008, he was dispatched to the Sinha Regiment and sent to the forefront at Kilaali in North.

During the night of 9 December, he was sent to the offensive and asked to move forward at 2:30 a.m.

After heavy LTTE resistance, he was asked to withdraw, but was wounded and lay there for nearly 12 hours from 6:30 a.m., without no one from SLA coming to rescue him.

The Tigers who found him at 7:00 p.m., gave water and some first aid, before sending him for further medical treatment.

Sri Lanka rejects Christmas ceasefire plea

DESPITE a fervent appeal by Catholic and Anglican bishops for a ceasefire during the Christmas and New Year season the Sri Lankan government announced it will not declare a ceasefire during the festive period and vowed to continue with the offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Thomas Savundranayagam, the Catholic Bishop of Jaffna, Rayappa Joseph, Catholic Bishop of Mannar, Norbert Andradi, Catholic Bishop of Anuradhapura, Kumara Ilangasinghe, Anglican Bishop of Kurunegala and Duleep de Chickera, Anglican Bishop of Colombo requested a period free from military action that would in turn benefit the civilians.

"We are now approaching Christmas, a world festival of peace. At this time many Christians and even persons of other faiths will be encouraged by the birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace, to review and strengthen relationships," in a statement released on Wednesday December 17.

"It is consequently expected that family ties will be renewed, communities will gather for fellowship, strangers will be welcomed, the marginalized included and the oppressed set free.

"Where relationships are strained or hostile it is expected that dividing walls will come

down and healing will take place through forgiveness and reconciliation."

The peace would bring "immense relief" to civilians in LTTE controlled areas, the bishops said.

"It will also enable the Christians of these areas to worship and engage in their religious practices with less anxiety, as well as bring some respite to the war weary soldiers and cadres and some peace of mind to their parents and loved ones."

The bishops further contended a ceasefire "initiative will be seen the world over as a sign of political maturity and generosity" and called on the government to take the lead in making the truce.

However, the government responded to the Bishops appeal stating it would declare a ceasefire only if the LTTE laid down its arms.

"The government has categorically said that it will go in for a ceasefire only if the Tigers lay down their arms. Till then there will be no decision of a ceasefire," Media Centre for National Security (MCNS) Director Lakshman Hulugalla told Sri Lankan media.

The bishops also appealed to both parties to "seriously consider" establishing safe zones for civilians, advising that religious leaders may help such a process.

Rajapakse says nothing can stop Army's forward march

DESPITE heavy losses incurred by the army on the battle front, Sri Lanka's president and commander-in-chief of security forces Mahinda Rajapakse has declared that the ongoing military operation in the north had no parallels in the world and nothing can stop the army's forward march.

Rajapakse also claimed that the army has not faced any major setbacks in its operations since the Maavilaaru battle in August 2006 and added no force can reverse the unparalleled victories achieved by the security forces in Wanni.

Rajapakse made these comments speaking at the annual War Heroes Commemoration ceremony of the Sri Lanka Sinha Regiment on Saturday, December 13, at the Sinha Regiment Headquarters in Ambepussa in the Kegalla District in southern Sri Lanka.

"I don't think there is a single

battle in the world parallel to the battle fought by our Security Forces at present in which they secure victory after victory without facing a single drawback," the Rajapakse said.

"Neither chemical weapons, air attacks, suicide bombers, disastrous monsoon rains nor major floods can stop troops from going forward in the battlefield as the soldiers would never be deterred by such obstacles created by foes or by nature," Rajapakse added.

"Our forces are equipped with the latest technology. Today our soldiers are performing in a bold manner on the battlefield and this can be considered as the greatest battle ever. Our soldiers are achieving victory after victory,"

Observing that the country has been fortunate to have a general of the calibre of army chief Sarath Fonseka, Rajapakse told his audience that the "Negenahira Navodaya" (Awakening the East)

was indeed an awakening to the people of the East and the "Uthura Wasanthaya" (Re-awakening the North) would definitely win the hearts of the people of the North.

Rajapakse assured his audience that not a single portion of land that was freed from the LTTE would go back to the hands of the LTTE.

President's Secretary Lalith Weeraratne, Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Army Commander Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, Sinha Regiment Commanding Officer L.K.J.C. Perera and officials as well as the families of the dead soldiers were present at the ceremony held to invoke blessing to the soldiers in the battle front.

An indoor stadium named after Mahinda Rajapaksa and an operating theatre at the Sinha Regiment headquarters were declared open during the ceremony.

NEWS

Army suffers another debacle in Vanni

- * Hundreds of Sri Lankan soldiers killed in latest fighting
- * Over a thousand injured as LTTE puts up stiff resistance

THE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fighters in Kilinochchi and Killali have killed at least 600 Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers and wounded another 1600 in five separate clashes in the past five weeks alone.

In its latest attempt to advance towards LTTE held Kilinochchi in Vanni battlefield, SLA suffered heavy casualties with more than 100 soldiers killed and at least 250 wounded.

LTTE fighters inflicted the heavy casualties on Sri Lankan on Monday, December 22 when they repulsed a fresh offensive push, said S. Puleedevan, the director of LTTE's Peace Secretariat, quoting LTTE's field commanders.

Heavy fighting raged from 5:30 to 12:45 when the SLA attempted to advance from Uruththirapuram towards Kilinochchi and Iranaimadu.

Several corpses of the SLA soldiers were seen in the battlefield and the Tigers were engaged in seizing arms and ammunitions after routing the offensive on two fronts, Mr. Puleedevan said.

The fresh offensive push comes after the Tigers claimed that the

SLA suffered 60 deaths and more than 150 wounded in a preemptive strike by their offensive forces on Saturday, December 20.

Few days earlier, on Tuesday, December 16, SLA suffered heavy casualties with at least 250 soldiers killed and 750 injured when it deployed 7000 soldiers and launched a multi-front push towards Kilinochchi through Malayaalapuram, Kunchupparanthan, Muri-kandi and Pulikkulam.

In the heavy battle that raged throughout the day till 4:00 p.m. along a wide stretch of the frontiers in Vanni, LTTE forces inflicted heavy casualties on the SLA troopers and recovered 28 dead bodies of the SLA soldiers.

On the same day LTTE defensive forces also thwarted an attempt by SLA to breakthrough Kilaali Forward Defence Line (FDL) in Jaffna peninsula, killing 40 SLA soldiers and wounding more than 120.

The SLA launched its offensive push at 1:30 a.m and after 9 hours of heavy fighting, the SLA was forced to pull back its troops, with heavy casualties.

8 bodies of SLA soldiers were

recovered in Kilaali, bringing the total number of dead bodies recovered by the LTTE that day to 36.

Photographs of the dead bodies of the Sri Lankan soldiers, recovered by the LTTE, has lately exposed Colombo's use of fresh recruits from the south in the intensive battle front in Kilinochchi.

The latest photo has also revealed that Colombo is victimising Sinhalese children in its offensive front in Vanni.

The Tigers said they have seized several weapons in the clearing mission.

Third debacle

The latest is the third major reversal SLA has suffered within a space of one month in the Vanni battlefield.

"This is the third debacle of the SLA in Kilinochchi district within the past few weeks," Puleedevan told TamilNet.

On Wednesday December 10, a two-pronged SLA offensive on Kilinochchi was pushed back by LTTE fighters after heavy fighting in Puthumurippu in the west



LTTE soldiers on the front line are now putting up stiff resistance

of Kilinochchi and Ariviyal Nakar in which over 120 Sri Lankan soldiers were killed in action and more than 280 were wounded.

In late November, at least 75

SLA soldiers were killed and 160 wounded when LTTE forces beat back attempts by Sri Lankan military advance towards Kilinochchi through Naloor on Poonari-Paranthan road.

Kilinochchi: the kiss of death for Sri Lanka?

B.Raman

Outlook India

"KILINOCHCHI within kissing distance".

So said the disinformation warriors of Lt.Gen.Sarath Fonseka, the Sri Lankan Army Commander, more than a week ago.

It has been a long and fatal kiss--more for the Army than for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It has been a long kiss of death for the young hastily-trained Sinhalese recruits to the Sri Lankan Army who were rushed to the battle front by the General in his keenness to keep his promise of "In Kilinochchi before the New Year".

Similar to the promise which Gen.Douglas MacArthur, commanding the allied troops in South Korea during the Korean war, repeatedly made to the US troops fighting against the North Korean and Chinese Armies.

"To home before Christmas", he used to promise.

Christmas came and Christmas went, but the North Koreans and the Chinese fought fiercely. MacArthur's promises were repeatedly belied.

"Which Christmas?" people

started asking sarcastically.

Ultimately, there were neither victors nor losers in the war. It ended in a stalemate after the loss of thousands of lives on both sides.

In bitter fighting on the outskirts of Kilinochchi since the beginning of this week, the SL Army and the LTTE have sustained heavy casualties. As normally happens in military conflicts, both sides are playing down their own casualties and exaggerating those of the adversary.

However, the claims of the LTTE seem to be nearer the truth than those of the Army.

The LTTE claims to have killed 170 soldiers of the SL Army, but the Army insists that only 25 of its soldiers have been killed. However, the LTTE has been able to release the photographs of at least 36 soldiers killed, thereby proving that the fatalities sustained by the Army are many more than the 25 admitted by it.

Reliable accounts show that both sides have been fighting fiercely and losing many young

people. The Army has lost many more arms and ammunition and other equipment than the LTTE. The fighting has been a bonanza for the LTTE, which has been able to replenish its dwindling stocks of arms and ammunition.

The odds are still against the LTTE. It has well-trained and well-motivated cadres, who have been fighting with great determination, but it is running short of arms and ammunition despite the seizures from the Army. It has no air cover against the repeated air strikes by the Sri Lankan Air Force.

The SL Army has the advantage of numbers and arms and ammunition procured with funds from China and Iran, but its soldiers are not as well-motivated and as well-trained as those of the LTTE.

The LTTE had shifted its offices from Kilinochchi many weeks ago in anticipation of the battle. Kilinochchi has now nothing but the death traps for the SL Army laid by the LTTE. The LTTE knows where those death-traps are, but not the Army. This gives an advantage to the LTTE.

The battle being fought for Kilinochchi is a combined miniature version of the battles of Stalingrad in the erstwhile USSR



As the battle rages around Kilinochchi, its symbolism is challenged

and El Alamein in North Africa. At Stalingrad, the Soviet Army beat back the Nazis after inflicting repeated heavy casualties on them. At El Alamein, the allied troops commanded by Gen. Bernard Montgomery (later a Field Marshal) beat back the advancing Nazi Army commanded by Gen. Rommel with heavy casualties. These two battles marked the turning points in World War II.

Making a statement on the defeat of Rommel's army at El Alamein, Sir Winston Churchill, the then British Prime Minister, told the House of Commons: "There was no victory before Al

Alamein. There will be no defeat after El Alamein." He was proved right.

Will Kilinochchi prove a similar turning point in the battle being fought between the SL Army and the LTTE? If the LTTE loses the battle, it could mark the beginning of its end as an insurgent force, but not as a terrorist organisation. If the SL Army wins, it will be a Pyrrhic victory.

B. Raman is Additional Secretary (retd), Cabinet Secretariat, Govt. of India, New Delhi, and, presently, Director, Institute For Topical Studies, Chennai

NEWS

Rebel in the family

Stuart Bell
National Post

The sister of the Tamil Tigers' leader speaks about her life in Toronto

VINOTHINI Rajendran's 11th-floor apartment is decorated with plastic flowers, a poster of Lord Krishna and framed photos of the little brother she left behind in Sri Lanka.

It has been years since she saw him. He never writes or calls, but she accepts that is just the way it is when your brother is Velupillai Pirapaharan, one of the world's most notorious rebel leaders.

"It must be God's wish that he should become such a man," says Mrs. Rajendran, who immigrated to Canada more than a decade ago and lives with her husband, Bala, in a modest apartment in east Toronto.

Despite being the sister of the Supreme Commander of the LTTE, Mrs. Rajendran has lived incognito in Toronto since 1997, but she agreed to tell her story to the National Post.

For 25 years, her brother has led the LTTE, or Tamil Tigers, in a civil war in Sri Lanka.

His objective: independence for the ethnic Tamil minority.

Sri Lanka has vowed to kill Pirapaharan and wipe out the Tamil Tigers over the next few months. Last week, the military said it was within "kissing distance" of the LTTE stronghold, Killinochchi, but Mrs. Rajendran says her brother is in no danger.

"They won't be able to catch him," she says.

Pirapaharan, 54, is the son of a middle-class bureaucrat who served in Sri Lanka's post-colonial government.

Mrs. Rajendran describes her father as "very kind and soft talking." He was highly disciplined. He never took bribes and abstained from all vices, alcohol and cigarettes included. He worked as a district land officer and volunteered as a trustee at the local temple.

"He was a religious-minded man, a Hindu," she says.

The family lived in Valveti-thurai, a coastal village on Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna peninsula, in a small house with a veranda and a banana tree, enclosed within a fenced compound.

Vinothini was the third-born child. She was two years old when Pirapaharan was born at Jaffna Hospital on Nov. 26, 1954.

"As a child, I was the pet and the darling of the family," Pirapaharan told the magazine

Velichcham in 1994.

"My childhood was spent in the small circle of a lonely, quiet house."

Vinothini would play with her baby brother, and fight with him.

"He was as normal as any boy," she says.

"Normal, only he was reading a lot."

The house was full of books. Their mother was 'a voracious reader,' Mrs. Rajendran says. They would borrow books from friends or the library.

Like his mother, Pirapaharan devoured history books, particularly stories about the Indian fighters who fought the British for independence.

"It was the reading of such books that laid the foundation for my life as a revolutionary," he once said.

The Tamil-dominated northern region of Sri Lanka is a dry zone; much of the soil is ill suited to farming. "So the people depended on education and government jobs," Mr. Rajendran explained.

But following independence from Britain in 1948, the island's ethnic Sinhalese majority tried to limit Tamil access to universities and civil service jobs. Tamil youths grew disillusioned with the government and turned to militancy.

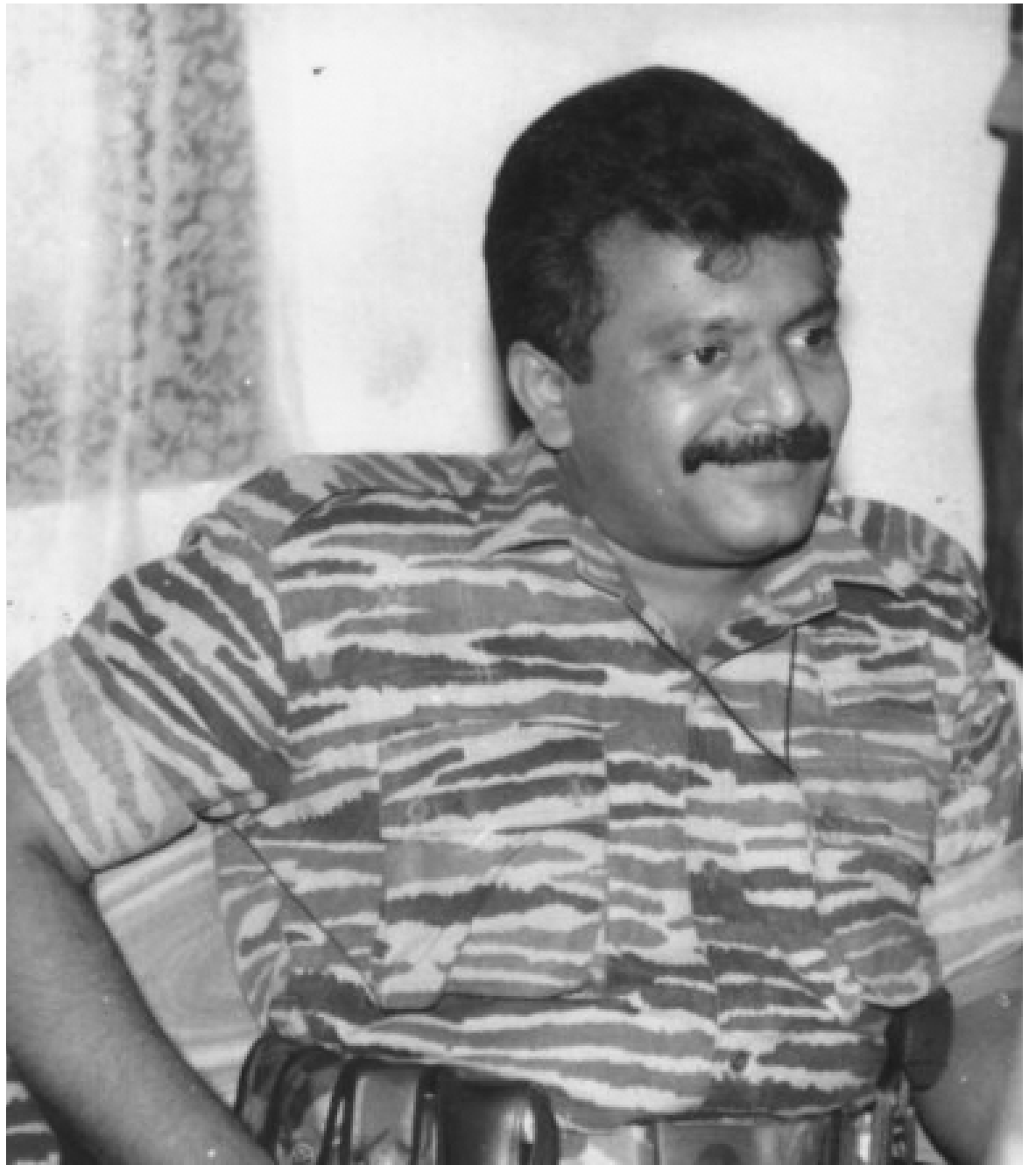
Around the same time Pirapaharan took up arms, his father spoke to a friend and they agreed that Vinothini and Bala would marry. The family erected a temporary building in their compound to accommodate wedding guests and shelter them from the sun and rain. The ladies prepared vegetarian dishes in the kitchen. No invitations were required; everyone knew they were welcome.

Pirapaharan was the best man. As is customary, he came by the groom's house the day before the wedding to pay his respects. "He was a very quiet man," Mr. Rajendran says.

"He was smiling and his eyes were piercing. He was lean."

A few months later, Pirapaharan formed the Tamil New Tigers, or TNT, to wage an armed struggle against the Sri Lankan state security forces. The group would later evolve into the Tamil Tigers.

"At that time, we knew he was doing something, but we didn't



LTTE leader Velupillai Pirapaharan took after his mother in that he was a voracious reader as a child, his sister, Vinothini Rajendran, recalls of the brother she has not seen in over ten years.

know it was so serious," Mr. Rajendran says.

They thought he was only putting up political posters. They only learned of his paramilitary activities when police came calling at the family home in 1972. Pirapaharan slipped out the back and disappeared.

"After that he stopped coming to the house," Mrs. Rajendran says.

Pirapaharan told the Indian journalist Anita Pratap that, "As soon as the Tiger movement was formed, I went underground and lost contact with my family ... They are reconciled to my existence as a guerrilla fighter."

The Rajendrns were living in the capital, Colombo, when Pirapaharan ignited the civil war with an ambush attack against Sri Lankan soldiers. Mr. Rajendran promptly lost his job at an import-export firm; his employer found out about the family connection and didn't want any trouble.

"I was asked to leave," he says.

They spent a week at a refugee camp and then sailed back to Jaffna. Six months later, Mr. Rajendran went to Jeddah to work as a deckhand on a ship on the Red Sea. Mrs. Rajendran stayed in Jaffna, but the police gave her a hard time about her notorious brother so the family decided to leave for India.

Thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils had sought refuge around Madras. The Rajendrns registered with the police and rented a house. Mr. Rajendran taught English and ran a consultancy service that helped Tamils submit applications to immigrate to Canada and Australia.

Pirapaharan was also exiled in India at the time, operating from a Madras safe house. The Rajendrns saw him there at a family function, a cousin's wedding.

"He came in a jeep with four or five boys," Mr. Rajendran says.

They saw him again just before he returned to Sri Lanka. "He talked to us and said he is going."

Tired of refugee life in southern India, the Rajendrns travelled to Canada, arriving on Oct. 27, 1997. They have returned to Sri Lanka only once, in 2003, to help Mrs. Rajendran's parents move back to Sri Lanka from India. It was the first time she had seen her homeland in almost two decades. The north was a desolate landscape of ruined buildings, destroyed by incessant shelling. The lush gardens of her youth had gone to weeds.

A red-and-yellow Tamil Tigers flag hangs in her living room in Toronto, but Mrs. Rajendran says she is not politically active. Neither she nor her husband attends Tamil communi-

ty events in Toronto, with the exception of Heroes Day, the annual commemoration of fallen Tigers.

Mrs. Rajendran does not work; her English is awkward. Her husband works part-time at a furniture store. His hands shake like he is nervous, but he explains he has Parkinson's Disease.

A poster of the Hindu hero Arjuna hangs on the wall. The Tamil script below tells a story from the Bhagavad Gita about a conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, who is reluctant to go to war.

"Arjuna says, how can I fight my relatives?" Mr. Rajendran explains. "Then Krishna says, it is your duty. I am the God and I am telling you, you do it. Then he decides to fight."

It was one of Pirapaharan's favourite childhood stories.

Every so often, Mrs. Rajendran gets a letter from her parents in Killinochchi, but she has had no contact with her younger brother since coming to Canada. She only hears stories about him.

She believes he will not give up his fight for Tamil independence. Because he started it, he feels obliged to see it through, she says.

"Once he accepts something, he always finishes it," she says.

"Father was like that."

NEWS

Sri Lanka parades 'strategic partners'

TamilNet

THE defense advisers and attaches of seven countries, USA, UK, Japan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Maldives were taken on a one day tour to Vanni by the Colombo government on Monday, December 15.

Suffering from heavy military debacles and facing serious economic crisis, the Colombo government is badly in need of parading strategic partners and abettors to attract means and justification for its genocidal war before time runs out, note political observers.

The visitors represented three of the Co-Chair countries, USA, UK and Japan and four South Asian countries having maritime boundaries.

During the visit the defence advisers met IDPs and surrendered LTTE cadres and observed welfare measures taken by the government, according to news released by the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry in the wake of latest debacle in Kilinochchi.

A highlight of the news release was that the visitors had the first-hand information how certain foreign aid organisations and NGOs had 'misused' vital humanitarian aid sent from foreign countries before the areas were 'liberated'.

The NGOs and the aid organisations never received conducive mandate or cooperation from the Sri Lanka government to carry out development in Vanni and they were not operating in the areas shown to the visitors said an official who worked with the NGOs in Vanni.

"The aim of the government now is to get the money for itself for the genocidal war," the official



Military personnel from several foreign countries currently engaged in helping Sri Lanka in its war effort, including the US, Britain, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Japan, were taken on a tour of the theatre of war in the Vanni.

said.

In the meantime, Sinhala colonisation programmes are carried out in full swing in the guise of development in the Eastern Province that has been claimed to have been liberated by the Sri Lanka government, reports indicate.

News reports from the East and news releases from embassies show that the 'Strategic partners' design their programs for 'development' in the East with the coor-

dination of the Sri Lankan central ministries rather than involving the local government and the elected parliamentarians.

Tamil political analysts from the East view this tendency as abetting the Sri Lankan government to camouflage its ongoing project of structural genocide against the Tamils.

Recently, the Sri Lanka army chief Sarath Fonseka has indicated that had there been more cooperation from some of the strategic partners, the army could have achieved more in the war.

Earlier, on the day of the announcement of Obama's victory, the US Pacific Command chief while patting the back of Colombo's army, indicated in a subtle way the time available and task that lies ahead of it.

Political analysts observe an undue haste among those elements especially in Delhi, Washington and Colombo, which perpetrated the theoretical and logistical foundations of the current war on Tamils, to achieve military victory justifying their line of thinking before they are nullified.

Another significant observation made by analysts is the new democratically elected government of Maldives, suffering from a 50 percent drop of its tourism income in the current season, and shortage of foreign exchange, getting openly tagged behind the strategic partners, dropping its three decades old strict neutrality.

Ever since the British base finally went out of the country in the 70s, it was never a party to military manoeuvres in the region.

Rajapakse plans LTTE proscription

SRI LANKAN President Mahinda Rajapakse warned the LTTE would face proscription in Sri Lanka unless they released all civilians who are kept against their will.

Sri Lanka observers say that Rajapakse is trying to use a recent Human Rights Watch (HRW) report which claims that the LTTE is holding civilians against their will to his advantage and achieve his long time plan of banning LTTE in Sri Lanka without facing much criticism from the international community.

"Rajapakse called on the LTTE that with the dawn of 2009 it should release all innocent Tamil people it is holding hostage and in bondage using them as human shields and allow them to come to safe areas provided by the government and security forces," the president's office said on Monday, December 22.

"They will face a ban and all other consequences if they failed to do so by the dawn of the New Year," Rajapakse was quoted as saying when addressing a gathering at the Presidential Secretariat.

"If the LTTE does not take steps to release all civilians trapped in the Wanni, then the terrorist outfit can expect to be banned and moreover erased for all time from the history books", Rajapakse said.

He also ruled out any cease-fire agreement that facilitates the division of the country or the strengthening of separatist forces.

Observing that various interested parties were conspiring to turn back the victories of the heroic security forces by creating unrest in the country, Rajapakse pledged to defeat them all and rid the country of the menace of terrorism during the year 2009.

Sri Lanka banned the LTTE for the first time in 1983 after the introduction of emergency regulation.

The ban was lifted during the peace talks held between the LTTE and the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga-Bandaranaike in the nineties and re-imposed in January 1998.

The ban on LTTE was last lifted in 2002 to facilitate the Norwegian-backed peace process.

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FEATURES

The high price of Sri Lanka's war

Ranjith Jayasundera
Sunday Leader

AS the government's war against the LTTE enters the bloodiest phase in the country's history, our research has found that the costly war of attrition is irreparably scarring an entire generation of Sri Lanka's youth.

The Sunday Leader has obtained a draft copy of a study circulated for peer review by Dr. Rohan M. Jayatunge and army psychiatrists that provides some insights into the trauma that soldiers faced after combat before 2008, a year in which over 1,200 soldiers have been killed from just six divisions.

According to the scientific study, there is a severe spread of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) amongst soldiers who have served in combat in the north and east and survived to tell the tale.

The paper, titled Psychological Management Of Combat Stress - A Study Based On Sri Lankan Combatants, reveals that over 17,000 soldiers were killed in combat up to 2001,

and interestingly enough, it also claims a similar number of LTTE cadres killed in the same period, indicating a 1:1 kill ratio.

Further, the army claims to have killed over 9,000 Tigers in 2008 to date. Coupled with media reports of over 350 civilians killed in combat this year, Eelam War IV has cost Sri Lanka over 10,500 lives in 2008, the highest number of people killed in any one year during the conflict's 25 year history.

It must be remembered that even these figures are only accurate up until the end of October, when the military officially stopped giving out casualty figures for its own losses or those of the LTTE for "security reasons."

In the last month however, it is well known that gruelling battles have taken place with heavy casualties on both sides as the army pushes harder to surround and capture Killinochchi, and bridge the gap between its forces in Muhamalai and those on the northern tip of the country's main-

land.

Fighting

In one particularly fierce three day bout of fighting, Defence Watch Spokesman and SLFP (M) Parliamentarian Mangala Samaraweera told journalists that over 200 soldiers had been killed in fighting, between November 15 and 18 alone.

Never in any one month this year has the government ever admitted that it lost more than 200 soldiers, thus the increase in intensity of the combat action in the month of November, with the budget debate looming, and many deadlines having been missed for the capture of Killinochchi, is alarming.

The Sunday Leader's journalists researched the available data on conflict related deaths in Sri Lanka since 1994 and the data confirms that the country has just endured the bloodiest year in its 25 year history of waging and surviving war.

The second bloodiest year in the conflict was 1995, when Jaffna was recaptured by the army, with the deaths of approximately 5,000 soldiers and LTTE

cadres in total. This is less than half as many as had been killed by November 2008, when the army's casualty count began to skyrocket as losses peaked by coincidence on President Rajapakse's birthday, just days after he awarded a one year extension to Army Commander Sarath Fonseka.

We have no choice but to await with baited breath the final tally of men, women and children who would have been laid to rest this year by the war. What is remarkable is that the government has managed to hide the human cost of the battle by maintaining tight control of what is published in the media.

Campaign

However, several excerpts from the yet-unpublished military trauma report show that this war is not as glamorous as the government makes it out to be in its glitzy recruitment and propaganda campaign. Rarely enough do we stop to think of the trauma undergone by the families of soldiers who lost loved ones in this campaign, and never at all does the level of stress undergone by war survivors occur to anyone.

The report highlights the experience of a 32 year old lance corporal who witnessed a fellow soldier die in a landmine explosion. "Even though he managed to escape without a single injury, he saw how his friend died in the blast. His depressive features appeared as survival guilt, self blame, hopelessness, grief and bereavement."

There is also another account of a private who witnessed his best friend, another soldier in his unit, being killed in a sniper attack. "After the confirmation" of the death, the private "was ordered to bury the body," but felt that the body was warm to the touch, possibly due to hot weather.

"After some years he had an irrational feeling that he buried the man alive," the report said, before spiralling into depression. The report is jam-packed with similar instances of surviving soldiers having their lives wrecked for good by what they experienced in the 'glorious' liberation crusade.

Explode

A lieutenant who witnessed seven soldiers explode due to an incoming enemy mortar and became schizophrenic, a sergeant who lost a leg and became violent and addicted to cannabis, and a captain who served for 20 years being "exposed to heavy combat" who felt a "misfit to civil society" and found it "uneasy to work with civilians," are the stories scattered throughout the study.

All of these examples are from soldiers who were in combat prior to 2008, which has now turned out to be the most deadly

year in the history of the war by the government's own statistical killing claims.

Slain

Most importantly, this was before the armed forces were committed to a war of attrition over a year-long campaign in which over 1,200 of their own were slain and over 7,000 permanently maimed and scarred. At least some senior officers will recall and recant the fact that several hundred soldiers did not have to die to capture Pooneryn in 1992, and also that the capture was inconsequential as the base was recaptured by the LTTE but one year later.

They will also remember that Killinochchi was captured by the army in 1996 without 1,000 soldiers dying trying, and that Madhu - and its now infamous shrine - was also captured in 1999.

In that campaign as in this one, the army held Jaffna and attempted to corner the LTTE into the Mullaitivu jungles, before they sprang out of nowhere and wreaked havoc across the island, seizing both Madhu and Killinochchi - and everything in between - in a blitzkrieg of Nazi proportions.

Although the Tigers may not have such a capability any longer, they need not strike so hard in order to cripple the country, a fact that has now been lost on every major political party in the country including the UNP, which just announced its tacit support for the war in its bloodiest ever phase.

The Tigers need do little more than let the country drag itself further into debt with the cost of its war, while believing they are closer to success, and inflict maximum casualties upon the army and terrorise Colombo with suicide bombs, to bring Sri Lanka to a position where barely a country will turn to help.

With every nation in the world reeling from the shockwaves of the global economic crisis it is unlikely that there will be any country willing to come to the aid of an island that is pursuing an internationally condemned war of attrition and territory as its first priority.

Devastating

The recent accusations that the air force has been using cluster bombs against civilian targets in the Wanni, would also prove devastating if it can be proven. To its credit, the government has denied the allegation, and the LTTE and its proxies have been unable to find any evidence of actual unexploded cluster 'bomblets' that such weapons always leave behind.

Alongside the revelation made by Mangala Samaraweera in parliament that the air force has dropped over 14 kilotonnes of

| Date | Official | Quote |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| May 28, 2007 | Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka | "The LTTE has 4,000 cadres in the north. They are not its best cadres. If they lose 2,000 cadres, they are finished." |
| December 30, 2007 | Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka | "LTTE has 3,000 cadres remaining. Military plans to kill them within six months. Our daily target is to kill at least 10 LTTE terrorists." |
| January 11, 2008 | Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka | "My term of office is coming to an end this year and I will not leave this war to the succeeding army commander." |
| February 10, 2008 | Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka | "They are an organised force with a lot of experience. They have thousands of fighters. I do not conduct the war looking at deadlines and timeframes. The LTTE has around 5,000 fighters. This time when we take Kilinochchi, we will not leave it after a while. But we must realise that the offensive is going to take time." |
| February 19, 2008 | Mahinda Rajapakse | "We would have cleared them out of the remaining areas long ago but we also had to ensure no civilians were killed. I would say, in a year and a half, we might be able to do it." |
| February 22, 2008 | Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara | "But we have never said that we will finish them off. We have never set deadlines. We are fighting a terrorist organisation, not a conventional war." "The more we weaken them, then the more they will come into negotiations. It is not possible to wipe them out." |
| June 2008 | Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka | "4,000 - 5,000 Tigers remain." "They have lost that capability, although they are fighting with us, not in the same manner like earlier. They had the defensive lines, we couldn't move even one km for two or three months. That kind of resistance is not there any more." "May be a maximum of one year from now onwards the LTTE should lose large areas." "They should not be able to maintain their present control over the population, to be able to resist the army in the way they are resisting now. They would have to lose all that capability." "Even if we finish the war, capture the whole of the north, still the LTTE might have some members joining them." "There are people who believe in Tamil nationalism. The LTTE might survive another even two decades with about 1,000 cadres. But we will not be fighting in the same manner. It might continue as an insurgency forever." |
| September 12, 2008 | Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka | 11,000 Tigers killed since July 2006. Only 4,000 Tigers remain. |

FEATURES



The LTTE released photos of deceased SLA soldiers, as the government tried to claim its losses in the Kilinochchi confrontation were lower than announced by the Tigers

explosives in the Wanni this year, if cluster bombs were to be used, Sri Lanka's air force would set a second world record.

The SLAF already holds the unenviable record of being the first, only and thus most frequent dropper of bombs on its own citizens, and the government would gain little from being seen in the eyes of the world as having used cluster munitions on a refugee camp as alleged by some NGOs and the LTTE.

Factors such as this are what bring memories of how the United States lost the war in

Vietnam not in the Viet Cong jungles but in the living rooms of Americans at home who witnessed the brutality that the war inflicted to all sides, and pressured that government to abandon Vietnam.

The lines that the army is now holding are stretched across several hundred kilometres and with every advance the terrain becomes more favourable to the LTTE due to their familiarity with the combat environment.

As the campaign gets longer, the troops on the frontline will become wearier and a lot of them

must already be under immense psychological stress from prolonged exposure to combat conditions. The study of military combat stress says as much.

"The percentage of study subjects whose responses met the screening criteria for major depression, generalised anxiety, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was significantly higher after serving" in the north and east.

Shot

"There was a strong reported

relation between combat experiences such as being shot at, handling dead bodies, knowing someone who was killed or killing the enemy, and the prevalence of PTSD," the study concluded, adding finally that there was "a significant risk of mental health problems especially regarding combat related PTSD."

These are exactly the kind of poor conditions that the late Major General Janaka Perera warned would imperil the military campaign should it drag on for months through the monsoon and beyond.

In order to maintain its popularity and war fever in the south, the government would have to prevent the LTTE from repeating their Eelam War III performance of materialising out of the Mullaitivu jungles and smashing through army lines like so many dominoes.

For the sake of the next thousand soldiers who are now on the front line, we can only hope that the military leadership is as competent at protecting its own as it is at marketing and fighting wars of words and propaganda.

(Edited)

EDITORIAL & OPINION

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Ideological Blindness

Western dogma ensures support for Sri Lanka against the Tamils.

The past few weeks have seen some of the bloodiest fighting in Sri Lanka since President Mahinda Rajapakse began his war to crush the Tamil rebellion. The Sri Lanka Army's massive multi-pronged offensive against the Kilinochchi-Elephant Pass area last week resulted in the third and largest debacle in as many weeks there. Over a thousand dead and wounded Sinhala soldiers were removed from the battlefield in four days. Heavy fighting is continuing. In the meantime, the Sinhala government has stepped up its bombardment of population centers in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. Houses and refugee camps are being destroyed and livestock slaughtered by cluster munitions and high explosive shells.

Yet the international community remains unmoved, hoping for and awaiting Rajapakse's military triumph. Some international voices are, meanwhile, blaming the LTTE for the Tamils' plight. Human Rights Watch, for example, declared last week the LTTE is "responsible for much of the suffering of civilians in Vanni". Less intemperate commentary holds the Tamils "to be caught between" the LTTE and the Sri Lankan forces.

This is not merely a matter of international actors being ill informed or unaware as to the ground situation. Rather, it is a question of ideological blinkers, of a specific interpretation of the situation. Whilst the Tamils see a racist Sinhala-dominated state seeking to impose its military dominance and wipe out their identity and scatter their people, actors like HRW see a 'war against terrorism' being waged amid 'poor governance'. In other words, rather than attributing a strategic intent to the state's many actions of violence and discrimination, they see a 'lack of capacity' or 'need for reform'.

Thus whilst Tamil people see the impossibility in of securing equality between themselves and the Sinhalese people in a single country - just like between the Kosovars and the Serbs, HRW et al, assume this is accepted amongst the island's population. All that is required is to establish a system of governance to reflect this. Western actors thus see any solution as beginning with the shoring up of the Sri Lankan state - first - and then 'reforming' it. Which is why, over the past decades, they continued to pump money, weapons and political support into the Sri Lankan state, despite the continued suffering of the Tamils.

Even when the Sinhala leadership openly declare their contempt for the Tamils, and the Sinhala people repeatedly declare their support for its policies, Western policy makers and practitioners, unflinchingly convinced of their 'single united and democratic Sri Lanka' vision, refuse to pay attention. They argue that many Tamils live amongst the Sinhalese - though they can't explain why so many are desperately trying to flee the island nor why there are no Tamils amongst those who declare Sri Lanka safe for Tamils. The millions of dollars poured since 2002 (at least) into 'peacebuilding', 'democratization', 'state reform', 'ethnic reconciliation', and so on have come to absolutely nought, as reflected by the wave of euphoria and racism that has erupted amongst the Sinhala since President Rajapakse began his war. The Tamils have tried, in myriad ways, to explain that the various deprivations they endure in Sri Lanka stems from a racial hierarchy institutionalized in the state. But HRW et al are not listening.

For the West, it is the LTTE that is the problem in Sri Lanka. Trapped in a racism of their own, which blinds them to any politics that doesn't accord with their view of how peoples of the South ought to conduct themselves, Western actors will never take Sinhala nationalism seriously, not even when it manifests itself as openly as in present-day Sri Lanka. Indeed, the Sinhalese leadership knows this well enough and has exploited this ideological blindness, adopting the rhetoric of 'human rights', 'democracy', the need for state and market 'reform' and so on. HRW et al have never taken up the notion of racist oppression in Sri Lanka. Limiting their concern to 'impunity' and 'rule of law' arguments, they see the Sinhala state as a flawed, but viable democracy.

In short, they are never going to support the Tamils, but will always back the Sinhala state. Which is why, even today, it is the LTTE that obsesses them. Tamils have repeatedly sought to make the argument that this is genocide, but not once has any Western actor stood up for us against the Sinhala state. Which is why it has come down to the battlefield. Only when the Sinhala state despairs of overcoming Tamils' resistance to Sinhala hegemony will we have our freedom. Amidst ongoing genocide, criticism of the LTTE and support for our Sinhala oppressors are one and the same.

Sri Lanka and the dark side of democracy

The historical link between the will of the Sinhala majority and war in the paradise isle.

J T Janani

Tamil Guardian

ON an official visit to Sri Lanka, not long after the 1983 state-backed pogrom against the Tamils, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher hailed the country as a "five star democracy". Her host on that visit was, of course, the pro-West President J. R. Jayawardene.

Although Tamils were horrified by her endorsement of a government that had recently participated in "acts of genocide" - as the International Commission of Jurists described the July 1983 massacres - in one important sense, she was right: the governments of Sri Lanka have generally reflected the collective will of the majority Sinhalese.

From the disenfranchisement of the Upcountry Tamils in 1948 to the all out war against the Tamil homeland in 2008, Sri Lankan governments have responded to the sentiments of the Sinhala majority.

Note that during the thirty years of mob violence up to 1983 and, especially, thirty years of all out war afterwards, over a hundred thousand Tamils have died in massacres by Sinhala thugs and, later, Sinhala soldiers, air strikes, artillery and naval shelling of schools, churches, temples and hospitals, sinking of refugee boats, and so on. Thousands have been arrested and disappeared, raped, tortured or shot on the streets.

Yet not one person has been convicted for these crimes in sixty years.

Today, even as formally Sri Lanka joins Sudan and the Congo as one of the world's eight red alert areas for genocide, the Sinhalese people overwhelmingly support the Rajapakse government and its violence. So much so that the government is considering calling early elections to consolidate its power base.

According to a poll by private research group, TNS Lanka, over 75% of people were firmly in favour of military action to answer the Tamil question.

While western policy makers insist that the military offensives are about 'terrorism', not the status of the Tamils, the top flight Sri Lankan leadership see no such distinction.

A few months ago, Sri Lanka's

top military officer, Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka explained to The Telegraph newspaper: "I strongly believe that this country belongs to the Sinhalese but there are minority communities and we treat them like our people...We being the majority of the country, 75%, we will never give in and we have the right to protect this country... They can live in this country with us. But they must not try to, under the pretext of being a minority, demand undue things."

In short, the island belongs to the Sinhalese, the Tamils may live in it as long as they act their place and do not demand their own identity or equality to the Sinhalese ("undue things").

Interestingly, some of the liberal think tanks in Colombo huffed and puffed. But even they merely questioned whether the military should pronounce on matters politic and avoided the central question here.

Moreover, Lt. Gen. Fonseka was merely articulating the aspirations of his people and his soldiers. Indeed, the place of the Tamils in Sri Lanka has been the central political question in Sri Lanka since independence, as reflected by the disenfranchisement of the Upcountry Tamils and 'Sinhala Only'.

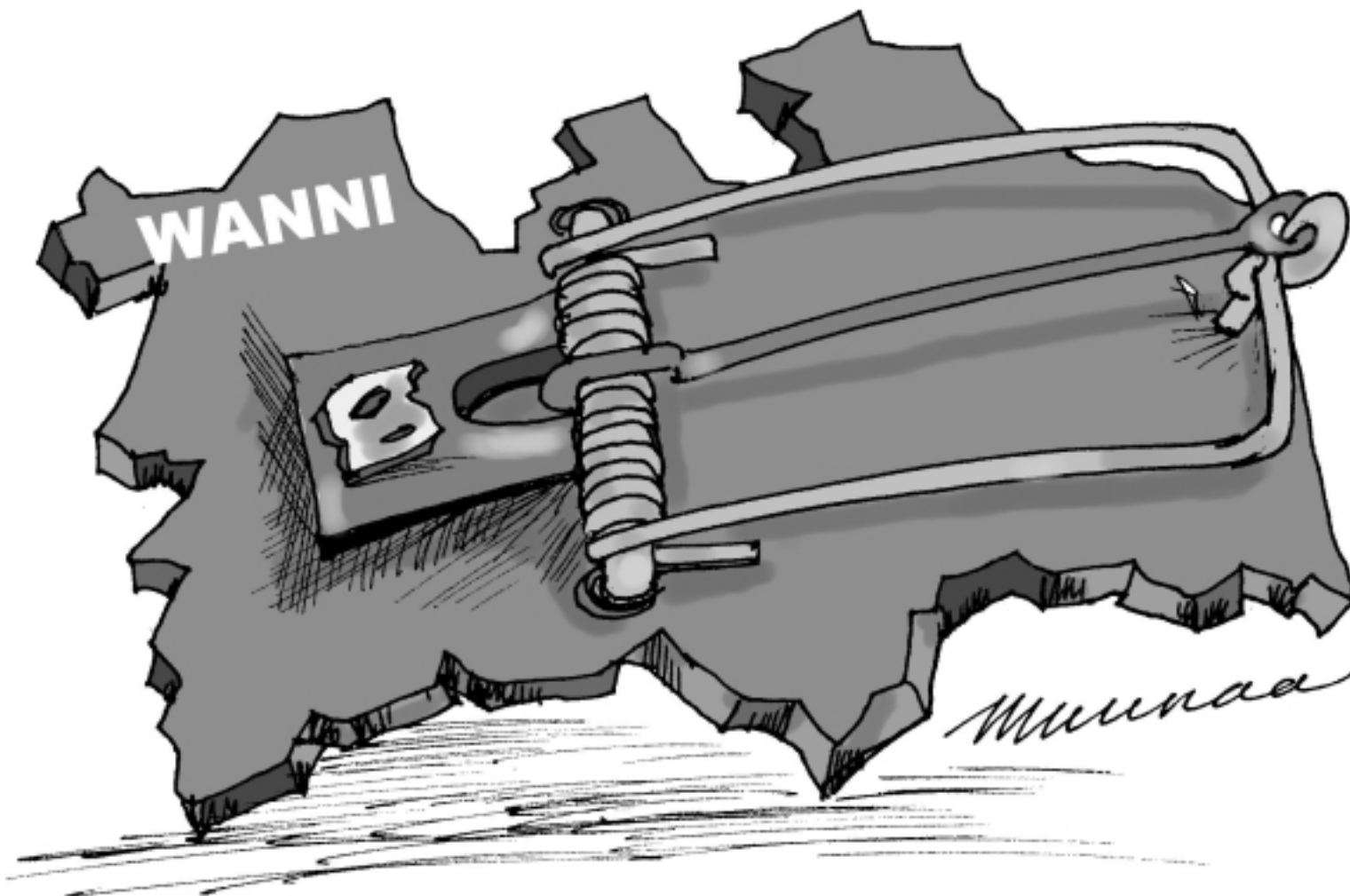
This column has argued in a recent series of articles that drew on notable theorists of genocide how Sri Lanka's policies towards the Tamils amount to precisely that, the wiping out of a people and their identity.

The arguments won't be repeated here, for reasons of space, but it suffices to say that the present war, being waged by President Mahinda Rajapakse and being backed by the main Sinhala opposition parties, is a continuation of the state's efforts to erase the Tamil political, economic and physical presence on the island.

The point here, however, is that each of the steps undertaken by Sri Lankan leaders in this regard always had the overwhelming support of the Sinhala majority.

This is why, despite the crushing economic conditions, the slow disintegration of non-military state institutions (health, education, etc) and the increasing inter-

EDITORIAL & OPINION



national pressure, the Rajapakse administration enjoys extraordinary popular support for its war.

The majority of Sinhalese believe the island belongs to their people and the Tamils are unwelcome invaders who may remain provided they know their place as second class citizens.

Sri Lanka's first post-independence Prime Minister, D. S. Senanayake, still known as the "Father of Sri Lanka", made this clear as early as July 1937: "we must realise that the Sinhalese are the rightful sons of this fair country, and that we must organise ourselves into a determined body and even risk our lives in doing it service. The minorities choose to believe that we are not trustworthy."

Ceylon's first post-independence (UNP) government, under Premier Senanayake, enacted the 1948 and 1949 citizenship legislation that deprived a million Upcountry Tamil people of citizenship, regardless of whether they had been born in the island or brought down by the British from India. After many years of statelessness, over half of these unfortunates were ultimately deported "back" to India.

The point is that this policy was enacted on the basis of these people's ethnicity. Although its defenders have since tried to portray the Citizenship Bill as class war rather than a race war, the citizenship legislation referred explicitly to ancestry (ethnicity), not economics.

As Tamil Senator and Queen's Counsel S. Nadesan winding up the debate on the Ceylon Citizenship Bill said on 15 September 1948, "... the Government wants to exclude as much of the (plantation Tamil) population as is possible from becoming citizens of this country ... On the unqualified statement

made that Ceylon has the right, as every other country, to determine the composition of its population. When Germany under Hitler, started to de-citizenise the Jews, every civilised country in the world condemned it. Hitler said that he has absolute power to determine the composition of the population of Germany; and he did determine that to his own satisfaction."

In 1956, the UNP was defeated by the SLFP. Prime Minister SWRD Bandaranaike came to power on a single promise to the voters: that if he was elected, he would make Sinhala, instead of English, the official language of the country. The SLFP won by a landslide.

Thus, far from being an oddity, Lt. Gen Fonseka's views on Sri Lankan citizenship have a long pedigree in mainstream Sinhalese election politics.

The West has struggled to accept the self-evident reality that the Sinhala majority vote on racial issues first and everything else second.

Some Western commentators suggest that Sri Lanka's problem stems from the repression of the English speaking media. They imply that the Sinhalese people would not support such policies if they were more open debate.

"What Sri Lanka needs is a serious and open debate about where this war is leading the nation," writes Peter Foster of The Telegraph. "The Government's relentless crushing of debate means that it's hard to see how Sri Lanka's next General Election (which my sources predict might be called soon, particularly if there's a victory in the north) can be free and fair."

But this attitude is extraordinarily elitist: it implies the Sinhala people do not know what they are doing vis-à-vis the ethnic

question, that they do not know what kind of politicians they "should" elect or support, that they are not educated enough (exposed to "serious debate") to make decisions.

This perspective fails to grasp scholar Michael Mann's central point: genocide is the dark side of democracy.

Genocide is a direct result of the democratic process; it is not an exception or some failure of the process. Improving the democratic process does not prevent genocide if genocide is, in fact, the will of the majority.

Given Mann's hypothesis, the unbroken chain of racism that runs through successive governments - the elected representatives of the Sinhala people (regardless of political party) - is unsurprising.

It is unsurprising that today all main Sinhalese parties - the SLFP, UNP and JVP - support the genocidal war: all these parties, not just the ultra-nationalist JVP, cater to the Sinhala electoral constituency.

This, lest it be forgotten, is democracy at work. Sinhala leaders have always successfully used anti-Tamil rhetoric to win Sinhala votes.

For example, SLFP leader Bandaranaike openly stated the logic for the Sinhala Only Act: "with their books and culture and will and strength characteristic of their race, the Tamils (if parity were given) would soon rise to exert their dominant power over us."

Although Banadaraike brought the Sinhala Only Act into being, it was the opposition UNP leader (later President) Jayawardene who had first called for it. In his own words, "the great fear I had was that Sinhalese, a language spoken by only 3 million in the whole world, would

suffer if Tamil was also placed on an equal footing with Sinhalese."

In 1957, Jayawardene, who became Sri Lanka's President in 1977, declared: "the time has come for the whole Sinhala race which has existed for 2500 years, jealously safeguarding their language and religion, to fight without giving any quarter to save their birthright... I will lead the campaign."

Consequently both the SLFP and the opposition UNP, the two main Sinhalese parties voted for the Sinhala Only Act. The SLFP and UNP have both always agreed on the subordinate place of the Tamils, although as scholar Amita Shastri noted in 2004, the two main Sinhala parties, increasingly sensitive to international opinion, were becoming "careful how they expressed themselves on the ethnic issue."

It is worth noting that today, the UNP - hailed by the international community since 2001 as 'pro-peace' - is not opposing Rajapakse's visibly vicious war: only the very small left-wing Sinhala parties are openly calling for peace.

It is also worth noting that the 2001 victory of the 'pro-peace' UNP alliance was on the strength of the overwhelming votes by Muslims, Upcountry Tamils and Tamils outside the Northeast: the majority of Sinhalese, despite the crushing economic pain, voted for the hardline SLFP and JVP.

In the Presidential elections of 2005, the majority of Sinhalese voted for Mahinda Rajapakse over Ranil Wickremesinghe (who, it was argued, had betrayed the country by seeking peace with the Tamils).

Just days before the July 1983 pogrom, President Jayawardene's, whose UNP had swept to power on a landslide, infamously declared in a radio broadcast: "I

am not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people... now we cannot think of them, not about their lives or their opinion... the more you put pressure in the north, the happier the Sinhala people will be here... Really if I starve the Tamils out, the Sinhala people will be happy."

Jayawardene's regime was a darling of the liberal, democratic West. Note British Premier Thatcher's warm words above. The practice of the West ignoring the manifest racism of Sinhala leaders has been consistent.

In the nineties, SLFP President Chandrika Kumaratunga, lauded by the West as a liberal, as a human rights champion, as a democrat, grumbled on South African television, "They [Tamils] are wanting a separate state - a minority community which is not the original people of the country."

Those Western commentators lamenting the lack of awareness amongst Sinhala voters forget that these Sinhala leaders have been educated in the West. SWRD Bandaranaike and Jayawardene were graduates of Oxford University, Dudley Senanayake of Cambridge, Kumaratunga of the Sorbonne.

There is no evidence to suggest more open debate amongst the Sinhalese will lead to more tolerance, though this is the dogmatic view of Western commentators. "Debate" presupposes rationality and liberal values: racism is not seen as rational.

However, every step of the genocide - deprivation of citizenship, ethnic cleansing of Tamil areas, pogroms, legislated seizure (by state acquisition of Tamil-owned land and businesses) - has been endorsed and presaged by the democratic process and the support of the Sinhalese People.

Indeed, these steps have been supported by the West too. Every Sri Lankan leader, irrespective of their support for anti-Tamil actions, has been able to draw considerable Western aid: military, economic and political.

A common refrain amongst international commentators is that the brutality in Sri Lanka today is a peculiarity of the Rajapakse administration. Change the regime, change the politics, they say. This may be true when it comes to foreign policy: the UNP has traditionally been pro-West, the SLFP pro-China.

However, a closer look at the specificities of the conduct over the past sixty years of both UNP and SLFP-led governments outlines how, for the Tamils, it has been a question not between two parties, but between a West backed, media savvy genocide (the UNP's) or a brazen, China/Iran-backed one (of the SLFP).

Sri Lanka, one of eight countries on the New York-based Genocide Prevention Project's red alert list, is a living example of the "dark side" of democracy.

The island's conflict is one of the last race wars of the 21st century, a violent manifestation of the "problem of the other" as President-Elect Barack Obama has described it. Until this is accepted, there will be no solution, only bloodshed and suffering.

DIASPORA



(Above) The Tamil Youth Organisation in France held an event titled Ini Vidiyal (Now Sunrise) while (below) the Tamil Solai Malai event was also held in France.



The Australian Tamil Youth Organisation commemorated the 60th anniversary of the signing of the UN Declaration on Human Rights by painting their view of the lack of rights experienced by Tamil's. The painting and display was organised for a weekday in the heart of Sydney's central business district and tourist area.



NEWS

Hamas 'may extend' truce if Israel ends siege, attacks

AFP

A tense calm reigned over Gaza on Tuesday, as Hamas confirmed that it might consider agreeing to a new truce with Israel if it lifted its crushing siege of the impoverished territory.

Hamas declared the end of a 24-hour lull, but deposed Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahhar, a senior party leader, told AFP the Islamist movement could consider renewing it and agreeing to a new long-term truce.

An Egyptian-mediated six-month truce ended Friday and Hamas initially said it would not renew it in light of repeated Israeli violations of the deal.

Gaza militants fired three rockets and one mortar round which hit without causing damage or injury during the period. It was not immediately clear which resistance group in Gaza launched the attacks.

Israel did not launch any raids on the territory after Hamas announced on Monday that it would not launch rockets or fire mortars for 24 hours.

Hamas is ready to renew the truce "if Israel respects the conditions of a cease-fire," Zahhar said Tuesday.

These include lifting the blockade of the Palestinian enclave and stopping military raids on the besieged territory.

"We demand that Israel respect truce conditions ... in particular that it stop all forms of aggression and open the border crossings," said Zahhar.

Under the terms of the Egyptian-mediated cease-fire that went into effect in June, Israel was to lift its siege of the territory if Hamas reined in fighters firing rockets into the Jewish state.

While Hamas was able to virtually halt the rockets, Israel never complied with its commitment.

However, the deal held until November 4, when Israel invaded Gaza in an offensive that killed seven Hamas members.

The invasion, along with other Israeli assassinations, prompted Gaza-based fighters to resume rocket fire on the Zionist state.

Also Tuesday, Hamas' exiled leader said any new truce with Israel must involve the easing of the blockade on the territory.

"The truce has not been renewed, it's the Zionist enemy that bears the responsibility after

failing to respect its terms," Khaled Meshaal told the Russia Today satellite channel from his base in the Syrian capital.

"There has not been a halt to [Israeli] raids and, quite the contrary, the blockade has been tightened," he said, referring to the Egyptian-brokered deal that expired on December 19.

"Those who want to talk with us about the truce must address the blockade imposed on our Palestinian people. This unjust blockade has left more than 270 people dead. It's a real tragedy," he said.

"The international community watched our people suffer for six months without speaking out to demand the opening of the border crossings. The behavior of Israel and the international community has meant that people did not understand the importance of the truce."

Various UN and EU officials have slammed the effects of Israel's blockade on the population of the Gaza Strip, roughly half of whom depend on international humanitarian aid.

Richard Falk, the top UN human rights official for Palestine, said recently that Israeli policies amounted to a "crime against humanity."

The overcrowded and aid-dependent territory of some 1.5 million people has been subject to Israeli sanctions and repeated raids since 2006, when Hamas won parliamentary polls and later participated in a deadly cross-border raid in which militants seized an Israeli soldier.

Aid groups have repeatedly appealed to Israel to lift its restrictions - which have seen Gaza virtually sealed off, including from international aid, since the November invasion and the Palestinian retaliation - to avoid a further humanitarian crisis.

Meanwhile, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas on Monday met Russian President Dmitry Medvedev for the first time, seeking Russian support to keep the shaky Middle East peace process on track.

Abbas's visit to Moscow came against a backdrop of resurgent unrest in the Gaza Strip, with Israel threatening a major offensive against Hamas, the Islamist group that controls the enclave.



Palestinian designer Mirvat Ghandur (R) shows the writing on her entry in the television talent show 'Mission: Fashion' at the studios of the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation, on December 12, 2008. The text reads: 'Everyone has a country to live in... except us, our country lives in us'. Ghandur won the designing segment of the competition. Photo Anwar Amro/AFP/Getty Images

"I am sure that we will work together in a fruitful manner, above all as the problems against which the region is confronted are growing at the moment," Medvedev said during their talks.

Abbas added: "We have many questions to discuss and we know that you bring a particular attention to the problems of the Middle East."

Russia is a member of the

diplomatic quartet for Middle East peace that also includes the European Union, United Nations and United States and has had traditionally friendly relations with the Arab world dating back to the Soviet era.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat told AFP ahead of the Moscow talks that Abbas would be seeking to enlist Russia's support in opposing Israeli settle-

ments in the West Bank.

"During the discussions he will insist on the necessity that Israel stop building settlements and prevent a rollback to the starting point of the negotiations," Erakat said.

Abbas's visit to Moscow came after he travelled to Washington last week in a bid to keep peace efforts alive, amid growing tensions between Israel and Hamas.

NEWS



TNA MP Shivaji Lingam, pictured with the leader of the Indian opposition BJP, L K Advani

Tamil Nadu condemns Fonseka's derogatory talk

POLITICAL leaders of Tamil Nadu condemned Sri Lanka Army Chief Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka for his derogatory comments on Tamil Nadu leaders in an interview to a Sri Lankan state-owned newspaper.

The Sri Lankan army chief had labelled Tamil Nadu leaders, who were seeking a ceasefire in Sri Lanka, as 'political jokers' and accused them of being 'corrupt'.

Fonseka's comments to the Sunday Observer newspaper followed an all party delegation to New Delhi headed by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi seeking a ceasefire in Sri Lanka.

Fonseka had expressed confidence that the Indian government "is not interested in a ceasefire in Sri Lanka" as it has listed the LTTE as a terrorist organisation.

He said that the Indian Government would never influence Sri Lanka to restore the ceasefire with the LTTE and it would not listen to the "political jokers" of Tamil Nadu whose "survival depends on the LTTE".

When asked by the newspaper reporter about allegations of Sri Lankan security forces' disregard for civilian casualties, Fonseka replied: "These allegations are made only by the corrupt politicians in Tamil Nadu who have been bribed by the LTTE. Though they are very much aware that the civilians are not getting killed in any of these military operations they try to utter some words on behalf of the LTTE as their survival depends on the LTTE."

"This is the time for them to realise the truth. And they should also realise their attempts to save the LTTE would not be successful as the LTTE is on the brink of extinction. Most importantly, they

should realise that LTTE is an internal problem of Sri Lanka and need to honour the sovereignty of Sri Lanka."

Warning that the LTTE's separate state ideology is a "threat" to India, the Sri Lankan Army chief said: "If you consider the overall thing, the LTTE's separate state ideology is a threat to India, because this ideology will spread in Tamil Nadu too. It is now proved by Tamil Nadu by staging protests against the Indian government and seeking help to take the side of the LTTE".

This is not the first time for the SLA commander to come up with such remarks.

In an interview to Canada's National Post in September this year, Sarath Fonseka had said he "strongly believed that Sri Lanka belongs to Sinhalese," and that the other communities "must not try to, under the pretext of being a minority, demand undue things."

The SLA commander failed to extend a public apology despite his comments drawing protest from many political quarters.

Meanwhile, Pattali Makkal Katchi founder S. Ramadoss and Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi president Thol. Thirumavalavan urged the Indian government to change its foreign policy on Sri Lanka and recognise Eelam.

Sri Lanka bleeds - no peace in sight

SRI LANKA'S dragging ethnic conflict is at a decisive phase, with the military determined to crush the Tamil Tigers and the LTTE adamantly refusing to give up. Having captured the eastern province from the LTTE in 2007 after nearly two decades, Sri Lanka is inching towards taking control of Kilinochchi, a small northern town that has been the LTTE political hub.

The army has captured a vast track of LTTE territories from Omanthai to Mankulam in the north and from Mannar to Pooneryn on the northwestern coastal belt. The LTTE is using all its might to stop the advancing military.

The year 2008 dawned on a violent note when opposition MP T. Maheshwaran was gunned down by gunmen during New Year prayers in a Hindu temple in the Sri Lankan capital.

There have been claymore mine attacks targeting buses carrying both military personnel and civilians elsewhere in the island. The military has been blamed for similar attacks in LTTE areas.

Confident of a military victory, the government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa formally spiked on Jan 16 the Norway-brokered ceasefire agreement signed with the LTTE in 2002.

This not only saw the ceasefire monitoring mission pack their bags but marked a virtual end to peace moves by Norway. This happened a few days after Sri Lanka faced a diplomatic blow when it lost its voting rights at the UN human rights body.

The holding of the maiden provincial council elections in the eastern province after seizing it from the LTTE was seen as a major political event. This was

won by the group that broke away from the LTTE in 2004 - and a former child soldier became chief minister of the province.

The LTTE announced a unilateral ceasefire ahead of the SAARC summit in Colombo in early August, but the government rejected the offer, saying it will fight on.

Following a chat with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, President Rajapaksa sent his brother Basil Rajapaksa as a special envoy to New Delhi in October to brief Indian leaders about the steps his government has taken to protect the civilians trapped in the war zone.

In early September, the LTTE staged a major pre-dawn ground and air assault on an army-air force base in Vavuniya. It wounded two Indian radar technicians - embarrassing New Delhi.

Addressing an all-party meeting, Rajapaksa urged the LTTE to surrender its weapons and enter the democratic process to avoid a military defeat.

LTTE chief Velupillai Pirapaharan responded Nov 27, vowing to carry on the separatist campaign despite facing "an intense war as never before". Extending an olive branch, he called India a "superpower" and urged it to lift the ban on his group.

The Tigers are offering fierce resistance to the military around Kilinochchi. But if the town does fall, it would be a major loss to the LTTE and a huge politico-military victory to the government.

However, even if that happens, analysts warn that Sri Lanka's ethnic war will be far from over. Despite their shrinking terrain, LTTE cadres are offering stiff resistance.

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NEWS

Sri Lanka compared to Somalia

A UN official in northern Sri Lanka has said that conditions for displaced people in LTTE-held areas are "as basic as in Somalia".

John Campbell, from the World Food Programme (WFP), told the BBC Sinhala service that conditions were "as basic as can be" and "much less than ideal".

Campbell was speaking from the LTTE-held village of Tharmapuram. The area is close to recent heavy fighting between the Tamil Tiger and the Sri Lankan army.

Independent journalists are prevented by the government from travelling to war-hit areas of the country - the WFP is one of the few foreign agencies allowed to deliver aid to the area.

Campbell said that many of internally displaced people in Tharmapuram were living in flimsy shelters soaked by recent heavy rainfall.

"They are extremely uncomfortable in waterlogged camps and depending almost entirely on international aid for food," Campbell told the BBC.

Sri Lankan officials say that the rain has also brought much of the fighting in the north to a halt and that only "intermittent skirmishes" between the Tamil Tigers and the army have recently taken place.

Campbell insisted that displaced people were getting enough food, despite their miserable living conditions.

"It is basic as it can be. I haven't seen anything so basic since when I was in Somalia."

Somalia has been without an effective central government since President Siad Barre was overthrown in 1991. Years of fighting in the African nation between rival warlords and an inability to deal with famine and disease have led to the deaths of up to one million people.

The UN estimates that there are about 230,000 displaced people throughout LTTE-held areas in the north of Sri Lanka.

A UN aid convoy - comprising of 50 trucks - arrived in the area after December 9 being given clearance by the Tigers and the Sri Lankan military.

Campbell told the BBC that the supplies included rice, flour and school equipment.

He said that the convoy was only the seventh to bring food to LTTE-held areas in the past two months.

The Sri Lankan government responded with a major outcry and a demand for an apology. WFP country director for Sri Lanka, Adnan Khan, was immediately summoned to the Defence Ministry where he made a personal apology on behalf of the errant official.

Khan, later said Campbell was giving a "personal opinion" and that such "statements given by staff members do not necessarily reflect the official policy of



Many Tamil children to live in refugee camps, like the one above in Batticaloa in the east, an area which the government claims has been 'liberated' for months now, but where killings and disappearances continue unabated. Photo Lakruwan Wanniarachchi/AFP/Getty Images

WFP".

He added that WFP was working in cooperation with the government and was "fully committed to continue the weekly dispatches of convoys to the Vanni" region.

He also told The Sunday Times that the WFP would look into every aspect of the incident, and take necessary action against the official, adding that he may even be suspended from operating in the country.

"However everything depends on the outcome of the ongoing internal inquiry," Mr. Khan said.

The WFP later said in a statement that its mandate was to provide food and assistance to those in need and that statements made by staff members do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the organisation.

Following the incident the WFP has put a gag on its staff and in future only a few selected officials at the very top will be allowed to make statements to the media, Khan further said.

British journalist Peter Foster, in his column in UK Telegraph, said Campbell stepped unwittingly into the minefield of Sri Lankan politics.

"This piece of mealy-mouthism [of Khan] reflects the invidious position of all aid agencies in Sri Lanka, and particularly the UN which I know from personal contacts has a rocky relationship with the Sri Lankan government," he said.

Plight of Sri Lanka's war widows

Saroj Pathirana
BBC Sinhala service

"MY husband was a fisherman. About three years ago, when he returned from a fishing trip, somebody checked his identity card and shot him dead," says Jeyarulai Puwanendran, weeping.

The single mother, 23, is a resident of Kiran, Batticaloa, in Sri Lanka's eastern region.

"I have a four-year-old daughter. I don't get help from the government or anybody else. My parents are the ones who look after me and my daughter. My father is a labourer. They have six other children apart from me," she says.

Ms Puwanendran is among an estimated 33,000 women who have been widowed in Eastern Province during nearly three decades of war between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers.

Similar stories can be heard all over the east. The case of 30-year-old Vadivel Shanthi, a mother of three young children in a camp for displaced people in Batticaloa, is typical.

Her family left their home in

Trincomalee district after her husband, a farmer, was shot dead by unidentified people.

"One day my husband went to the paddy field but did not return. After seven days his decomposed body was found in a paddy field. I was left with no option other than to hand over two of our children to an orphanage," she says.

Women's rights activists argue that widows are still suffering despite the government recapturing the east from the Tamil Tigers more than a year ago.

Visaka Dharmadasa, of the Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) recently visited the region.

She says that fear still prevails in the region and killings continue despite government claims that the area is safer now.

The husband of 24-year-old mother Karthiga, Selvaratnam Ramesh, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen at their home in Valaichchenai, Batticaloa, on 27 November.

"It was about 7.30pm in the

evening. I was at home with my husband. Suddenly I heard a sound like a cracker exploding. When I looked at my husband, he was on the floor with gun wounds," she said.

"My husband was a mason. We did not have a penny when he was killed. I have a seven-year-old daughter and I am now seven months pregnant. I don't know how to get on with my life," she says.

Although the government has identified the problem, activists say it lacks the commitment to help these women to rebuild their lives.

A spokeswoman for the chief minister of Eastern Province is reported to have told the AWAW that while the provincial council recognises the urgency it does not have funds to implement projects to help it.

"She expressed serious disappointment that no money was allocated, though many projects are planned to uplift the lives of these women," said AWAW spokeswoman Visaka Dharmadasa.

The government, however, sees things differently.

According to Nation Building Minister Susantha Punchinilame,

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NEWS

Sri Lanka in "Genocide Red Alert" watch list

SRI LANKA has been named as a country where genocide and other mass atrocities are under-way or risk breaking out.

The New York-based Genocide Prevention Project, in a report published December 9, includes Sri Lanka as one of eight "red alert" countries. The report also includes a comprehensive list of 33 countries where genocide is a possibility.

The report was published to mark the 60th anniversary of the United Nation's convention on the prevention of genocide, and 20th anniversary of the ratification of the treaty by the United States.

"Red alert" countries include Afghanistan, and Iraq alongside regions currently experiencing genocidal conflict such as Sudan's Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

These and Myanmar, Pakistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka all made the list's top eight because they appear in each of the five "expert" indexes.

The next 25 "orange alert" countries appear in at least three of the indexes. They include China, Colombia, Philippines and Indonesia as places where ongoing or simmering violence could flare to genocidal proportions.

"It is possible to identify early indicators of mass atrocity crimes. But what happens now is the international community sees what's going on, gets paralyzed and, if it acts, really only acts after the fact," said Jill Savitt, project executive director.

Savitt states three factors that are likely to change the "political will" lacking in the past.

First, the stated determination of Susan Rice, U.S. president-elect Barack Obama's choice for U.S. ambassador to the UN, to



Sinhuja Sivarajan was among seven children injured in indiscriminate aerial bombardment by the Sri Lankan Air Force on Dec 17

prevent future genocides after witnessing the after-effects of the 1994 Rwanda slaughter.

Second, current discussion around the 60th anniversary of the genocide prevention convention, which calls on countries to prevent and punish actions of genocide.

And third, the public "guilt" over what occurred in Rwanda and Bosnia, and what Savitt called public "hunger for a response" to the Darfur crisis.

Meanwhile, a task force led by Madeleine K Albright, former Secretary of State and advisor to Obama and Clinton, released a

report on world genocide threats which will likely be used by the Obama administration as a guide post to prevent developing genocides. "Preventing genocide is an achievable goal," the Albright report, released on December 8, says.

"Genocide is not the inevitable result of ancient hatreds or irrational leaders. It requires planning and is carried out systematically. There are ways to recognize signs and symptoms, and viable options to prevent it at every turn if we are committed and prepared," the Washington Post said, quoting from the Albright report.

Navy claims sinking of LTTE arms ship

THE Sri Lankan Navy this week claimed its naval patrol destroyed a medium sized ship and four small attack crafts, belonging to Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, off the northeastern coast of Sri Lanka on Saturday December 22.

According to the Navy, the LTTE vessel, approximately 40 metres long (130 feet), was spotted in international waters steaming toward Mullaitheevu on the northeastern coast.

"Navy offshore patrol craft observed a medium-sized LTTE vessel about 70 miles (112 km) northeast of Mullaitheevu and navy fast attack boats attacked it," Navy spokesman Mahesh Karunaratne said. "The vessel was

destroyed. Four LTTE attack crafts that came in support were also destroyed."

Interestingly, Navy claim of sinking a LTTE arms ship comes a week after military columnist Iqbal Athas pointed out in his Sunday Times newspaper column that heavy use of artillery and mortar by LTTE in the Kilinochchi battle front indicated an interrupted supply of arms to LTTE by sea.

Earlier Sri Lankan defence officials had claimed that Sri Lankan Navy had destroyed the LTTE's fleet of ships transporting weapons and they no longer possessed the capability to transport arms and ammunition by sea.

Plight of widows ...

Continued from p14

action is being taken to help widows, the overwhelming majority of whom are under 30.

Basil Rajapaksa, the younger brother of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, is a senior adviser to the president on a plan to provide more assistance to the bereaved women in the east.

"Actually this problem was only recently highlighted and we are currently conducting a study on the situation and the figures relating to widows," he says.

"The authorities are committed to helping thousands of widows," Mr Rajapaksa says.

"We are working to help them find opportunities for self-employment, foreign jobs and jobs in the livestock and agricultural sector."

Mr Rajapaksa insists that the government is co-ordinating with the Eastern Provincial Council (EPC) on development work.

"This year, for example, the EPC approved the biggest development budget from the money offered by the government and the foreign donations transferred through the government," he says.

Mr Rajapaksa says he hopes that the provincial authority will receive more funds as the EPC re-establishes a financial and tax system in the area and many currently defunct industries restart work.

But critics such as Ms Dharmadasa argue that there are few positive developments in recent months for widows in the east.

Widows are seriously affected by the war, she says, and are left to cope without official help.

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NEWS

A luxury they cannot afford

TamilNet

"THE soldiers set upon the pregnant woman. As one of them stripped her naked, she screamed. The second sliced her belly with a sword. She fell down, blood spurting out. They cut her breasts and finally her throat. She rolled into the pit. Then came the turn of the second woman, also pregnant".

"I closed my eyes" said K. Krishnakumar, 35, the only person who escaped when the Sri Lankan army arrested and massacred 181 people, including 35 children below 10, in Sathurukkondan, Kokkuvil, Panichchayadi and Pillaiyarady, a cluster of Tamil villages three miles north of the Batticaloa town, on the night of September 9, 1990.

Krishnakumar has related what he saw that night to the ICRC, the Human Right Task Force, the Batticaloa Peace Committee and the Presidential Commission to Inquire into Disappearances in the East. But more than 18 years have gone by and the Sri Lankan government is yet to take action against the soldiers and officers of the Sri Lankan army camp at Sathurukkondan who raped, hacked and killed innocents on that September night.

In 1997, TamilNet's Batticaloa correspondent met Krishnakumar and others who lost kith and kin in Kokkuvil, Sathurukkondan Panichchayadi and Pillaiyarady.

Many children who lost either of their parents live in poverty, their growth stunted by severe malnutrition. Krishnakumar is frequently stung by severe pain from the knife wound he received during the massacre. The doctors have told him he has to go through another operation. Krishnakumar now ekes out a living as an assistant to the butcher at a mutton stall in the Batticaloa market. He is paid 80 rupees (1.35 USD) per day. He said that he has lost hope that justice will be done.

He had no objection to his picture being taken. He said he has undergone so much that he no more worries about his role in the search for justice for the victims of the Sathurukkondan massacre.

He related to the correspondent what he saw of the massacre.

"The villages were cordoned off by the Army around 10 a.m. It was almost 7 p.m. by the time the villagers - including infants, women, pregnant mothers and the old - were herded to the Sathurukkondan camp and locked inside.

"Four masked men walked into the hall and selected me, T. Kumar, C. Sinnaththamby, and K. Jeevaratnam. Our shirts were removed and our hands behind our back with them. Then we were taken to the camp's back yard. We were dragged about fifty meters further, where we saw a pit about 20 ft by 5ft. There was a Cashew tree by the pit and well which was about 10 meters from it.



Even today, Tamils in Sri Lanka live in fear, as the constant military presence and the targetting of Tamil civilians make even the necessities of everyday life - such as getting to school - potentially dangerous journeys. Photo Ishara S. Kodikara/AFP/Getty Images

"In the dim light I saw 25 soldiers armed with long swords and cudgels standing round the pit and the well.

"I was hit with a cudgel and I fell face downward. When the other three screamed the soldiers stripped them and stuffed cloth into their mouths. One by one they were taken to the edge of the pit and hacked with swords and were pushed in.

"A soldier came up to me and slammed me against the Cashew tree, pulled out a long kris knife, and stabbed me through the chest. He then pushed me into the pit. He stabbed me again on my back. Though I was bleeding, I didn't lose consciousness.

"Four more men were brought there, hacked to death and were pushed in to the pit. The soldiers went again and brought two pregnant women. They were stripped naked and their breasts were sliced off. The soldiers then cut open the stomachs of these women with their swords and pushed them into the pit.

"Later they brought many girls stark naked. Sand was stuffed in the girls' mouths and all were raped repeatedly. Then the soldiers cut off their breasts with the swords. Three of these girls were pushed into the well.

"As the area was dark, I was able to slowly crawl out while they were busy raping, killing and pushing bodies into the pit. When the soldiers left, I crawled towards the camp fence and hid in shrub jungle behind the camp.

Later the soldiers brought tires and set fire to the bodies in the pit. The fires burned till 3 about a.m. in the morning. Once the pyre died out, the pit was filled with sand. With the help of a passerby I went to the hospital."

Our correspondent also spoke to Thambi Ayya Kirubaratnam who lost his wife in the incident.

"My wife was also taken by the army. The next day I informed the ICRC. They contacted the brigadier and we went to the Chat-hurukkondan camp.

The Brigadier denied any knowledge whatsoever regarding my wife being taken by the soldiers."

"In the back yard of the camp I found my wife's clothes and the pair of Bata slippers she was wearing when she was taken away by the soldiers. The brigadier was silent. He had nothing to say."

"I also testified to the Presidential Commission on the incident, but nothing has happened so far" he lamented.

The Sri Lankan government first denied that the massacre ever took place. The Divisional Secretary of the area submitted a report to the government on the incident soon after. But the government at that time stood by the local brigadier who insisted that no untoward incident took place in the area. Later the Human Rights Task Force which was appointed by President Ranasinghe Premadasa recorded evidence and mentioned the Sathurukkondan -Kokkuvil massacre in its report published in April 1994.

In early 1997 the Special Presidential Commission to Inquire into Disappearances in the East under Justice K. Palakidnar also recorded evidence about the Sathurukkondan -Kokkuvil massacre.

The Sri Lankan government is dragging its feet on many other atrocities as well. The judicial proceeding on the massacres of Tamil civilians at Mayilanthanai,

Kumarapuram and the fourth Colony are stagnating in courts due to inaction. Witnesses in these cases have been threatened and intimidated by Sri Lankan security forces personnel who were involved in the massacres.

For Krishnakumar's people and scores of others like them Human Rights remain a luxury they cannot afford.

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