

Tamils as sub-human - the Sri Lankan view

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Second generation Diaspora leads global protests against genocide

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NEWS

Diaspora Tamils protest in increasing numbers; call for ceasefire

TAMILS across the Diaspora took to the streets in unprecedented numbers calling for an immediate end to the Sri Lankan government's war efforts that are now targeting the estimated 300,000 civilians in the safe zone. Meanwhile, sit in protests have continued unabated, some since Monday 6 April. Also continuing are hunger strikes by Tamil Diaspora members, concerned about the plight of their relatives in the Sri Lankan government declared safe zone.

The UN has echoed the fears of Tamils that thousands of civilians will be killed or wounded as the Sri Lankan military keeps up its bid to crush the Liberation Tigers.

Colombo has resisted all calls for a truce, saying it would only help the Tigers. Though some military commanders have started talking about a potential truce, the Sri Lankan military continues shelling and bombarding civilian areas, and this has resulted in more Tamil taking to the streets, as the intensity of the conflict kills an increasing number of Tamil civilians each day.

London

In London, the sit-in in front of the British parliament continues, with thousands of Tamils gathered there each day. More than 5,000 British Tamils on launched the sit in outside the House of Commons in London on Monday 6 April demanding an immediate stop to Sri Lanka's "genocidal war" against Eelam Tamils.

The protest, led by youth, started in the green opposite the British parliament Monday noon and the demonstrators moved to Bridge Street blocking all traffic through Westminster Bridge and Victoria Embankment.

The protesters waved hundreds of Tamil Eelam national flags and carried signs and placards depicting the plight of civilians being killed in the attacks by the Sri Lankan forces and demanded an immediate ceasefire.

British Tamil students who organised the spontaneous protest said the sit in will continue until the British government responds positively to their demand.

Two men jumped into the Thames, protesting the lack of action against the Sri Lankan government's genocidal war

against the Tamils.

At many times, the Police was seen preventing further people joining the sit in. However Tamils continued to pour into Westminster to join the protest.

The police eventually moved the protestors back onto the green on Tuesday 7 April, using heavy tactics that saw a number of people injured. Six people were also arrested, but most were released soon after.

Police say the demonstrators' action is unlawful because they did not give notice of the rally, which initially led to the closure of Westminster Bridge. And officers requested that flags bearing images representing the Tamil Tigers be removed.

But it was not all confrontational with the police. "This is not a public order issue but a political matter. Involvement by politicians at the highest level is what is needed," was the comment of a senior police officer at the site of the demonstration.

Suren Surendiran, of the British Tamils Forum, said the protest had been led by students, but that people of all ages from across the UK had joined in.

"These are people who have relatives and friends in Sri Lanka; people who have lost brothers and fathers and sisters," he said.

"As British citizens, they want the UK government to act. Rather than just calling for a ceasefire, they should go to the UN security council to demand one."

Vijay Mahalingam, 28, of Harrow, said: "We are here to call on the British Government and other governments of the world to wake up to the problems in our homeland, Sri Lanka."

"Last week, the most powerful men in the world were here in London but there was no mention of the struggle lots of our people have to face on a daily basis."

Meanwhile a rally through the streets of London drew more than 200,000 Tamils through central London Saturday 11 April to demand a truce in Sri Lanka.

Waving flags and placards and chanting for a truce, they streamed through the city's Trafalgar Square and on to Hyde Park behind a large banner reading "Britain act now! Immediate and permanent ceasefire in Sri Lanka."

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The Diaspora turned out in large numbers in cities like London (top) and Sydney (above), carrying Tamil flags and calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to provide respite for the civilians

Sri Lanka strip Norway of peace-broker role: official

SRI LANKA on Monday 13 April stripped Norway of its role as broker of the island's moribund peace process, a government official told AFP.

The decision comes as the Sri Lankan government says it is on the verge of totally crushing Tamil Tiger rebels, and ends a decade-long effort by Norway to bring an end to one of Asia's longest-running ethnic conflicts.

"The government of Sri Lanka perceives that there is no room for Norway to act as (peace) facilitator," the official said, adding that a formal letter was handed over to Norway's ambassador to Colombo, Tore Hattrem, on Monday.

The dismissal of Oslo as peace broker followed an attack against Sri Lanka's embassy in Norway by Tamil demonstrators.

Colombo said repeated appeals to the local authorities to protect the diplomatic compound had been ignored.

The Sri Lankan government decision also removes an important conduit for communications with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) - either from Colombo, the United Nations or other countries promoting the peace process.

Sri Lanka has recently taken exception to Norway arranging a telephone conversation between a senior LTTE leader and a UN envoy to discuss the island's humanitarian crisis.

Sri Lanka had formally invited the Scandinavian nation to act as peace broker in January 2000, and Oslo managed to secure a ceasefire which came into force

in February 2002.

Norway's peace role was backed by the United States, the European Union, Japan and Sri Lanka's immediate neighbour India.

The Sri Lankan government, however, officially pulled out of the truce in January last year, accusing the Tamil Tigers of frequent ceasefire violations and saying they had been using the break in fighting to re-arm.

For their part, the Tamil Tigers have accused the island's ethnic Sinhalese majority of not being interested in a peace settlement.

The first round of peace talks was held in September 2002 in Sattahip, Thailand and after six rounds of talks the process came to a halt in March 2003. It was briefly revived in 2006 before collapsing.

NEWS

2/3 of Tamils in Britain march for ceasefire, Eelam

IN A historic show of solidarity, more than 200,000 British Tamils, nearly two thirds of Tamils resident in Britain, marched through the streets of London Saturday 11 April demanding immediate ceasefire and recognition of Tamil Eelam.

Sparked off by the initiative of second generation Diaspora Tamil youth and students four days earlier, Saturday's march became an unprecedented rallying point for the entire community, attracting the old students associations of the educational institutions of Eelam Tamils, functioning in London.

The spirited participation of teens and mothers with babies in pushchairs significantly marked the level of community involvement in the agitation.

Student groups and networks such as Students Against Genocide of Tamils (SAGT) and the representative Tamil associations of various British universities were at the forefront in organising the agitation.

Several thousands of banners and placards carried by them read: "Stop the war", "Tamil Eelam must be free", "Stop genocide in Sri Lanka", "Tamil Tigers are freedom fighters", "Our Leader Pirapaharan" and "We want Tamil Eelam". Many participants had made their own posters, banners and cutouts.

Marchers carried several thousands of the Tamil Eelam flag. Some of them were seen carrying British flags also.

There were also balloons floating in the sky, displaying Tamil Eelam flags.

The marchers began gathering at Temple and marched from there to Hyde Park. They went along River Thames and turned onto the Piccadilly and from there

onto Park Lane near Hyde Park.

The British Police blocked off all these routes to make room for the marchers. A large number of British Police personnel mingled with the crowd.

It took nearly 2 hours for the procession to pass a point.

Abirami Pararajasingam, 21, a neuroscience student on the London rally, said her parents did not know whether close relatives were still alive as the Sri Lankan army seeks to crush the remaining Tamil Tigers. "People in the West do not realise how bad the situation is," she said.

Suren Surendiran, of the British Tamils Forum, which organised the London march, described the situation as a "genocide."

He said that Britain, the former colonial power in Sri Lanka and one of the five United Nations Security Council permanent members, had a "moral obligation" to intervene.

Tim Martin of Act Now, a UK based charity that sponsored the launching of the "Vanangkaamann" humanitarian mercy mission ship, the Chairman of All Party Parliamentary Group of Tamils Vireindra Sharma and a number of parliamentarians including Andrew Pelling and Simon Hughes were present and addressed the gathering.

The wide spectrum of Tamil activists who participated in the march, included 21-year-old Sivatharsan Sivakumaravel, who had been on a hunger-strike demanding ceasefire and Kieran Arasaratnam, a young British-Tamil investment banker who recently announced an expedition to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, to raise awareness and funds to the mercy mission.



The British police show of force at the Westminster bridge protest resulted in a number of injuries to the Tamil protestors, including broken bones, black eyes and heart attacks.

Tamil protesters in London clash with police

Homa Khaleeli
The Guardian

AS the storm over last week's G20 protests continues to rage, another major demonstration, over the fighting in Sri Lanka, has been going on in London. So how have these other, far less high-profile, protesters been policed?

On Thursday 10 April, in London's Parliament Square, I found around 300 Tamil protesters; it was day four of their protest.

Two students were lying under plastic sheets in the light rain as friends and paramedics gathered round them.

Sivatharsan Sivakumaravel, 21, and Parameswaran Subramanian, 28, were on a hunger strike; they had not eaten since Tuesday morning. That was the day they were demonstrating on Westminster bridge until, they claim, police hit and dragged protesters back to the square.

"We started on Monday on a peaceful protest," Sivakumaravel said. "But the police used force to push us here [into Parliament Square] and beat us. The police said we were disturbing people.

We don't want to cause a disturbance so we chose to go on a hunger strike. I'm doing it for my people who are being killed by the Sri Lankan government."

The demonstrators are calling for an end to what they say is a "Tamil genocide". Currently 100,000 civilians are trapped in the war-torn north of Sri Lanka as the government battles the Liberation Tigers of Eelam.

The protesters insist they cannot leave while their relatives are being bombed, and are in need of medical and food supplies. Frustrated that earlier protests had not resulted in action, on Monday afternoon thousands of demonstrators blocked Westminster bridge.

Janani Paramsothy, 18, from east London, said she spoke to police beforehand. "The chief inspector told us if we kept things peaceful they would not touch us. They said, 'If you trust us, we will trust you.'"

Although many protesters left during Monday night, by Tuesday morning the bridge was still

blocked. As the stragglers slept, the police changed their tactics, with officers forcibly removing the activists, according to Ragu-ram Raveendramany: "They told us we had to go. We weren't fighting, but we were arguing with the police, so they forced us to move. They grabbed my belt and then one pushed me in the back and one kicked me. A police officer hit my eye and I got a black eye."

Kethees Yogarasa was also on the bridge at 9.30am. He said: "The police were using violence so we held hands. They just pulled me up. They stamped on my head." Santhi Moorthy, a 50-year-old housewife, said she was terrified as the demonstrators fell over in the rush away from the bridge. "They were pushing everyone, even those with pushchairs and babies. I didn't hear any warning."

Chief Inspector Russell Taylor, who was on the scene, said he could not comment on the events of Tuesday morning as he was not at the demonstration. But he said: "The crowd is extremely compliant. Not all the officers [available] are being deployed - we are trying to keep things balanced and proportional".

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NEWS

Youth lead protests across the globe

TAMIL youth came to the forefront, organizing and leading the protests across the globe. And both the face of protest and the method of organization are reflecting this new reality.

In London, the sit-in in front of the British parliament was organized mainly by youth, utilizing the technology of the twentieth-first century.

This followed on the 120,000 people march held on 31 January, which also saw unprecedented numbers of younger Tamils take to the streets of central London.

When a protest is organized, text messages are sent out virally, from each phone to ten or twenty other contacts. Notices go out on Facebook pages and MySpace sites. Emails are forwarded from one concerned Tamil to another.

All these communications set out location, date and time of the protest. But then it is left to the individual Tamil to both make the decision to come and also to determine what placard they will carry and what slogans they will shout.

Similarly, those who thought to bring their own loud-hailers (again mainly the second and third generation Tamil youth) lead the chants and slogans and other protestors follow.

This change in both the instigators and the participants in seen in the increasingly younger faces pictured on Tamil websites and newspapers - and now increasingly speaking to the mainstream press as well.

As with the protestors, most

of the hunger strikers across the globe are also young, mainly under 30. This includes the two in London, Sivatharsan Sivakumaravel, 21 and Parameswarn Subramaniam, 28, both students from south London.

"This generational change will have consequences for the countries in which the Tamil Diaspora live," noted one participant at a rally in the UK. "It means that unless a solution is found, this is going to be a long lasting issue in these countries."

"It also means that there will be voices for the Tamil cause long after I am gone," said another marcher, pointing to his 15-year-old daughter who was marching with a group of her friends, carrying the Tamil flag.

The younger Tamils stepping forward to more vocally express their concerns often speak with broad accents from across Britain. They sound British and demand their rights as British citizens, but see no need to hesitate about expressing their Tamil identity too.

"It is to draw attention to our people dying that we are here," said one of the young protestors at Westminster. "Sri Lanka is killing Tamils. It is genocide."

"Every single person here has relatives in Sri Lanka. They are killing them. We have a responsibility to save them and the British Government has a responsibility to save them," said Sivakumaravel.

"I'm protesting to get freedom and stop genocide of the Tamils in



Protests were held wherever Tamils resided, from large cities to small towns, all with the common theme of calling for a permanent end to the conflict that is disproportionately targeting Tamils

my homeland Tamil Eelam," said Kavitha Sathiyamoorthy, who had been injured by the police and had her arm in a sling.

"I will stay here even if they were going to kill me ... there's so many of my brothers and sisters getting killed, there's no harm in me losing my life for them," she said.

The Tamil flag too is being flown with pride by the younger Tamils, who see it as part of their identity.

"Those flags are not just in support of the LTTE. To Tamils around the world they represent our suffering and our national struggle. We are not supporters of terrorists but we are treated like terrorists simply because we dare to say that there is genocide in our homeland or raise a flag in Parliament Square," said Mathavi Uthayanan, a 26-year-old medical student.

"Those are our flags. How would you feel if someone snatched the British flag off

you?" asked Inthu Rubarajah, another young protestor in front of Westminster.

"They took our flags. That's our flags. They wouldn't like it if we done it to their flags," said another young protestor.

However the actions of the police, and especially the force used against protestors, have raised questions among the younger Tamils about how Britain sees them.

"Personally I was physically man-handled, even though I was willing to get up," said Rubarajah. "One male police officer flung me across the floor."

"We were moving but they pushed us like animals," she said. "They were herded us like animals when we were willing to move."

"We had permission to stay where we were. We don't understand why they charged at us," said Siva, another young student at Westminster. "All of a sudden they charged at us, without no

confirmation, no telling us anything."

British-Tamils are also questioning the 'Britishness' of their identity.

"If you do not treat humans like humans, what's the point of saying British?" Siva asked. "We were all university students at the front, girls, boys, kids."

"I've never seen that side to police" Rubarajah said with tears in her voice. "[The actions of the police] are making us more angry. We are fighting for our human rights in Sri Lanka but we thought we had them here."

"I'm a British citizen, I was born here. And yet we still get treated like animals," said Sathiyamoorthy of her encounter with the British police.

"The mood of the crowd is angry. They don't know who to trust," said another, speaking after the police forcibly moved the protestors off the bridge. "We thought we could trust the British government."

Diaspora Tamils protest in increasing numbers ...

Continued from p2

London's Metropolitan Police estimated 100,000 people were on the march and said three arrests were made for public order offences.

It was the latest in a series of protests in recent weeks staged by the Tamil community in Britain which numbers between 250,000 and 300,000.

Leicester & Coventry

In cities around the UK too, Tamils took to the streets in anger, calling for an immediate ceasefire and demanding that the UK government intervene immediately.

On Tuesday 7 April, Tamils in Leicester gathered in front of the city centre Clock Tower to express their concerns about Tamil civilians dying in Sri Lanka

and their opposition to the actions of the Sri Lankan government.

Similarly in Coventry, students organized a sympathetic fast on Monday 6 April to express their solidarity with Tamil civilians in the war zone.

Paris

Protests against the carnage of innocent Tamil civilians in Vanni, held by French Diaspora Tamils in order to draw the attention of the International Community and launched in several popular places in Paris, continue unabated.

The hunger strikes also persist, as four Tamils continue to not take food as a means of pressing for a truce in Sri Lanka.

On Saturday April 11, up to 3,000 Tamils marched in central Paris, organisers said, while

police put the number at around 1,700. "No genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka," "Sri Lanka is a terrorist state," and "President (Nicolas) Sarkozy help us," the protestors said.

Ottawa

Protest by Canadian Tamil expatriates continued Saturday 11 April with several thousands joining the protest, CTV news broadcast announced.

"The demonstrators, who arrived largely from Toronto and Montreal, are part of worldwide Tamil protests against what they describe as a deadly military offensive by the Sri Lankan military. Shouting "Tamil Tigers, freedom fighters," the protestors called on Canada to reverse its 2006 decision to list the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

as a terrorist entity under the Anti-Terrorism Act. They are also calling for an immediate ceasefire," Canadian daily Globe and Mail reported.

"We don't even know if [our family] are living or not," said protestor Kalyani Nagarajah, who was born in Sri Lanka and lives in Toronto.

"They just want to destroy the Tamil people, that's what they want," the Globe report said.

"We've asked [the United Nations] for an immediate ceasefire. We're very worried, of course, of the hostilities that are taking place but particularly worried for the civilians that are in the combat zone [in Vanni]," said Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon Thursday, according to a report in National Post.

Liberal Leader Michael

Ignatieff also called on Canada to pressure the UN secretary general to appoint a special representative to Sri Lanka to push for a ceasefire. "The humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka has continued to deteriorate, causing grave concern to the international community and demanding urgent and co-ordinated action to end this conflict," Mr. Ignatieff said in a statement, according to the National Post report.

Sydney

More than 4,000 Australian Tamils converged in Sydney Wednesday 8 April, causing police to block Elizabeth Street and bringing evening peak hour traffic to a standstill.

The rally which was organised

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NEWS

Diaspora Tamils on hunger strikes demanding permanent ceasefire

ACROSS the globe Tamils are conducting hunger strikes to draw attention to the situation in Sri Lanka and to call for an immediate ceasefire to give respite to the civilian population that is the target of the Sri Lankan government onslaught.

As with the protests and marches, youth have taken the lead in the hunger strikes too, with some staging token fasts while others vow to fast until there is a permanent ceasefire or until their governments do something to pressure Sri Lanka into having more regard for Tamil lives.

Many supporters compared the efforts of the hunger strikers to that of Lieutenant-Colonel Thelepan, a Tamil Tiger commander who is venerated for fasting to death in 1987.

London

Two men began a hunger strike at 5am on 7 April in London, vowing not to take food or water until their demands had been met. One has since temporarily given up his fast since British MPs have promised to arrange meetings with the UN, US and EU. The other faster has agreed to take liquids so as to delay any medical damage from the hunger strike, while these meetings occur. Both have vowed to return to their fast with no food or liquids if the meetings prove unfruitful.

Sivatharsan Sivakumaraval, 21, ended his protest after gaining assurances that he can travel to the United States, European Union and United Nations to discuss the plight of Tamil civilians with the authorities. Sivakumaraval said he had agreed to drink water after being promised he would be able to take part in talks on the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils.

His mother, Vanisri, 38, told the Observer through a translator: "It's dreadful for a mother to see her son in pain and hunger. I only learned that he was going on hunger strike the day after he began. I was horrified."

At one stage, too weak to move, Sivatharsan lay with his head in his mother's lap. "I had no idea he was planning this. I tried to dissuade him, but it was too late. He was completely determined."

His fellow hunger striker, 28-year-old student Prameswaran Subramaniam, agreed to take liquids on Friday but was continuing his fast next to the Houses of Parliament in London, with doctors monitoring his condition.

The hunger strikers have demanded that food and medical aid should be allowed to reach the civilians immediately with international monitoring committees and to allow "Mercy Mission," the Diaspora organised ship car-



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rying humanitarian supplies to deliver aid to the region. The main demand of the hunger strike is "immediate and permanent Ceasefire."

While talking to media, Sivakumaraval said that they demanded the UN to conduct a referendum on Tamil sovereignty if the International Community needed to prove the will of the Eelam Tamils. The UN-led referendum should be conducted in a free and fair environment without military occupation and that the members of the Tamil Diaspora, forced to leave the island due to the military aggression by the Sri Lankan state, should also take part in the referendum.

Sivakumaraval agreed to suspend his hunger strike in order to travel to the United Nations in New York with Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes, who has been involved in negotiations on behalf of the Tamils, and Labour MP Des Browne, the government's special envoy to Sri Lanka.

Subramaniam has relaxed his hunger strike only as far as agreeing to take a few sips of water each day. Subramaniam, who arrived in Britain only three weeks ago, said his mother, his sisters, his brother and his nephew had been killed in the past few days.

"I'm going to stay here until

we get what we want," he whispered. "I'm not going to step back from my demands until my death. I will take a little water each day to prolong the hunger strike until my friends come back, but the deadline is 21 April and, if our demands have not been met by then, I will stop even taking water. I am not afraid."

Sivatharsan said his grandmother and cousins are in the area under attack by the Sri Lankan military and that he has not been able to contact them. He stated that: "I don't know what has happened to them."

David Parajasingham, a spokesman for the British Tamils' Forum, said that he was concerned the hunger strike would spread. "If our demands for the cessation of the genocide in Sri Lanka are not met, I fear this protest will escalate by others joining them," he said. "In our culture, when people do this, they follow it through. They are not afraid to die."

Sivakumaraval said that, although he had agreed to suspend his hunger strike to enable him to travel to the US, he will return to it if the government does not meet his demands by the deadline in 10 days' time.

"All over the world, Tamil students are doing hunger strikes to pressurise the international com-

munity and governments to open their eyes and look at the genocide that's happening to our people," he said. "I am not afraid to die. I have sat in my living room and watched on TV as more than 200,000 of my people are shelled and bombed to death. They are afraid. I am just doing what I can in support of them."

Paris

In Paris, four Tamil youth under 30 are vowing to fast unto their death if there is no change in Sri Lanka. They began their fast on 9 April, sitting near the Wall for Peace in Paris near the French Military Academy. Members of Tamil Youth Organization (TYO) in France distributed pamphlets describing Sri Lanka government's genocide of the Tamils to the tourists who visit the Wall for Peace monument from all over the world.

Selvakumar Alfred, 27, Anandakumaraswamy Raviraj, 26, Vigneswaran Varunan, 23 and Shanmugaraja Navaneethan, 26 are the four Tamil youths who continue to fast unto death joining in the worldwide protest demonstrations by expatriate Tamils. Their demands are an immediate ceasefire to stop the genocide of Tamils by Sri Lanka state, immediate humanitarian assistance for

the people trapped in the 'safe zone', a cessation to attacks on civilians using chemical weapons by the Sri Lankan and Indian armies and a lifting of the proscription on the Liberation Tigers.

Day and night, thousands from the Tamil Diaspora in France, including mothers, children and elderly, sit with the faster, taking part emotionally in the protest in the face of lashing rain and the biting cold.

Zurich

In Zurich, four Tamil youth fasted from Monday 6 April to Saturday 11 April as a protest against the actions of the Sri Lankan government. More than a thousand Diaspora Tamils of all ages participated in protests across the country, with many travelling to Zurich to sit with the hunger strikers and share their emotional burden.

Ottawa

In Ottawa, six Tamils, V. Yogendran, M Sivaneswari, 54, K Thulasigamany, 59, Julius James, 34, N Pushparajamani, 46, and N Thaiyalnayaki, 67, are also on a hunger-strike. They have undertaken this extreme form of self-deprivation to highlight the plight of their friends and next of kin who are facing a dire situation in Vanni.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

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WEDNESDAY APRIL 15, 2009 No. 396

Great Expectations

How will Western liberal states respond to the Tamils' appeals?

These are momentous times for the Tamil liberation struggle. On the one hand, the Sinhala state has escalated its genocide, slaughtering civilians in the Vanni with impunity. It is doing so in plain sight of the international community, including those Western states that have long styled themselves as the global custodians of human rights, states' responsibility to protect and so on. Let's be clear. Sri Lanka's genocide is financed, armed and legitimized by the international community: under the slogan of 'fighting terrorism', the Sri Lankan state has been given a carte blanche to annihilate the Tamil challenge to its authority. And as far as Colombo - and some of Sri Lanka's allies - are concerned, the mass killing of civilians is not an unintended consequence of defeating the LTTE, but an integral part a strategy for crushing Tamil insubordination to Sinhala rule: 'shock and awe'.

One the other hand, the Tamil nation has come together as never before. Across the Diaspora, Tamils are agitating, organising protest marches, petitions, and hunger strikes. The protests are directed squarely at the West and the demands are simple: an immediate and permanent ceasefire, recognition of their right to independence from the murderous Sinhala state and recognition of the LTTE as the Tamils' representatives. Even in those parts of the Tamil homeland under the terrifying rule of the Sinhala army, Tamils are expressing their solidarity with their people being bombed and starved in Vanni. The point here is not that these things will in themselves stop the slaughter, but rather that the Tamil nation has begun mobilizing in resistance.

This newspaper has oft-repeated the truism that it was deepening Sinhala oppression since independence that has spurred escalating Tamil demands. It is often forgotten that the demand for an independent Tamil Eelam emerged and was democratically endorsed by the Tamils several years before the LTTE's first major attack. Similarly, it is international efforts to coerce and discipline the Diaspora into accepting Sinhala sovereignty that has resulted in the strident commitment to Tamil Eelam that is visibly sweeping the Diaspora. Last weekend, a staggering 200,000 Tamils, over two thirds of those living in Britain, marched through London. Equally striking was the message sent by the 10,000 large Tamil

Eelam flags fluttering in the chill.

Whilst Western states, looking at Sri Lanka through a 'security' lens, believe that the island's conflict will soon be settled by the Sinhala military's offensive and that peace will thereafter follow, in fact the possibilities of any reconciliation between the communities has long disintegrated, along with the shredded bodies of thousands of Tamils. No amount of development aid is going to bridge the gap between the two peoples now. The strident chauvinism amongst Sinhalese that has been fuelled by international support for their war against the Tamils is matched by renewed determination amongst Tamils that independence is the only goal acceptable to them. International intervention in Sri Lanka has rendered liberal peace an impossibility and, until Tamils are free, perpetual war a certainty.

There is no doubt that the international community very much hopes - even expects - that the LTTE will be annihilated in the coming weeks. Whilst, as always, we will refrain from making tactical military predictions, we can confidently assert that the conditions for protracted struggle for Tamil liberation are fast emerging and that includes near hegemonic support for the LTTE's project. Those who cared to listen to the chants of the Tamil crowds which marched through Western cities in recent weeks will know this. Those international actors who expected Tamils to turn against the LTTE in response to the Sinhala onslaught have woefully misunderstood the dynamics of Sri Lanka's ethnic politics. Instead, it is the international community which stands to lose its respect and moral authority amongst the vast majority of Tamils.

Notably there has been no effort by the West or other states to restrain the Sinhala state. Whilst there has in recent days been an increasing effort by some Western states, including the US and UK, to engage with Diaspora - the Indian government has also started to cast about for some sign of concern to show - it very much remains to be seen if this will amount to much. Indeed, the assurances from Western capitals that 'everything possible' is being done have only served to raise expectations amongst those sections of the Diaspora. If the genocide in Vanni continues, it will soon dawn on the majority of Tamils that they, and only they, are capable of ensuring the future safety and security of their people.

Tamils are sub human

As in the medieval Mahavamsa, so today, the Tamils are no longer human.

J T Janani

Tamil Guardian

LEADING media in Sri Lanka's Sinhala South compare, with renewed fervour, the war-time successes of President Rajapakse to the victory of the first century BC, Sinhala King Duthu Gemmu (witness a recent article in the Island newspaper, entitled "Mahinda: Liberator or conqueror?"). And yes, there is much in common. Most obviously, the utter disregard for Tamil life.

The Mahavamsa, the central book of Sinhala Buddhism, describes how after Duttu Gemmu's successful siege and invasion of the Tamil country, thereby creating a unified Sri Lanka, he "knew no joy, remembering that thereby was wrought the destruction of millions (of beings)." It explains how a delegation of Buddhist holy men were sent to comfort him. Their philosophy, as enshrined in the Mahavamsa, is as relevant today as it was then.

The Buddhist holy men explained to the Sinhala King that no harm was done by the slaughter of "millions" of Tamils: "From this deed arises no hindrance in thy way to heaven. Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O lord of men... Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts"

Unlike other holy books, the Mahavamsa has no new theology or ideas: it is simply a chronicle that relates and glorifies the colonisation of Sri Lanka by the Sinhala Buddhists. But its ideas are central to Sri Lankan politics today.

If the Tamils and native peoples of Sri Lanka, were labelled "demons" in the Mahavamsa, to be righteously dislodged by the arrival of the Sinhala and Buddhism, then, so too can contemporary Tamils be labelled as terrorists and terrorist sympathisers.

This seamless melding of the Mahavamsa race theory with the Tamils as terrorist myth is the central driver behind the mass destruction visited on the Tamil people today.

The approach is personified in Defence Secretary Gothabaya Rajapakse. As he explained to the BBC: "I have only two groups - people who are fighting terror and the terrorists. Either you are a terrorist or you are a person who is fighting terrorists" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDM9ztLo0mE&feature=related>)

So naturally, the Tamil civil-

ian population of the Vanni, who are clearly not fighting the terrorists, are terrorists. Presumably the Tamil people of Jaffna are also terrorists as are the Tamils in the South. This would explain why, for example, Tamil newspaper editor, Mr Vithyatharan was a terrorist. Equally, members of the Tamil Diaspora are also terrorists.

Mr Rajapakse goes on to explain the importance of his mission: "We are not going to another country - we are fighting to save our country - the sovereignty of our country". As Mr Rajapakse's loyal military chief Sarath Fonseka told Peter Foster: "the country belongs to the Sinhalese".

So the Tamil homeland does not belong to the Tamil people - it belongs to "us", the Sinhala Buddhists. Mr Rajapakse is fighting to save the Sinhala Buddhist nation. No wonder is wildly popular in the Sinhala South.

In the last decade Sri Lanka's Mahavamsa racism has morphed seamlessly into the anti-terror rhetoric pioneered by Karl Rove and the Bush administration. So too, in parallel, has the State's disregard for law.

Nazi-like race superiority theory is delivered and internationalised via a veneer of "terror" rhetoric. This is the only understandable motivation for the colossal illegality that underlies the current Sri Lankan enterprise.

Like Duttu Gemmu, Rajapakse chose to invade the Tamil homeland. His first act prior to invasion was to expel the UN and other independent aid agencies.

If there had been no intent from the very outset to break the laws of war, this expulsion would not have been necessary. It follows that, from the outset, Rajapakse intended to do some very illegal things, and for this he needed to ensure there were no foreign witnesses.

In the racist Mahavamsa mindset Tamil witnesses do not count, and even if they did, presumably, it was not intended that they would survive to tell the tale.

There is no proper alternative explanation for the expulsion of the UN. If the concern had been for safety, then surely the safety Tamil children and pregnant mothers, for example, took priority over the safety of adult UN staff who are paid to work in conflict zones.

It follows that Mr Rajapakse

OPINION

was eliminating witnesses ahead of some illegal enterprise.

But we need to look more closely at what kind of illegalities Mr Rajapakse could have had in mind, which would require the elimination of non-Tamil witnesses.

He intended from the outset that the Tamil area would be ethnically cleansed, save for a small "safe zone" of some 20 sq km. But the Rajapakse regime has never been shy to openly admit this.

From Gotabaya's interview with Sky TV we have this admission: "Nothing must live outside the safe zone." This, he said, was why an operating hospital was a legitimate target - because nothing must be allowed to live in the hospital, the hospital being outside the safe zone.

This objective of cleansing the Vanni region of Tamils is illegal from the outset. The 1949 Geneva Conventions, additional protocol II of 1977, Art. 17(2) states "Civilians shall not be compelled to leave their own territory for reasons connected with the conflict."

Yet the Rajapakse regime was never shy to admit to it intent to violate this particular Geneva protocol - as evidenced by their interviews.

Presumably because they knew that the international community would back them up in achieving their stated aim. And judging from their statements the European Union and the American government have been quite happy to break Article 17(2) of the addition protocol, 1977, of the Geneva conventions: it was acceptable for civilians to be made to leave their own territory for reasons connected with the conflict.

The European Parliament for example called for a temporary ceasefire "to allow the civilian population to leave the combat zone" notwithstanding the government had turned the area into a combat zone precisely in order to force the civilians who lived there to leave.

The EU Parliament did not call for a permanent ceasefire that would allow the civilians to stay in their homes.

The US government also proposed to send a military mission to evacuate the civilians and hand them over to the Sri Lankan government, again meeting the stated goal of the Sri Lankan state, namely to cleanse the area of Tamils.

It follows that international witnesses were not removed because of concerns related to this particular illegality.

If the civilians were to be forced to move, then where are they to be moved to? But here we find another illegal proposal. The Rajapakse regime openly states that civilians are to be indefinitely held in detention centres.

The detention centres wholesale ignore the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ref: <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/cpr.html>), specifically:

- i. The rights to liberty: Article 9, Article 11, Article 12
- ii. The right to life: Article

6

- iii. Prevention of torture, cruel, inhuman treatment: Article 7

Again, the European Parliament did not object to the evacuation of civilians to these detention camps, notwithstanding that in the 21st century no human population should be expected to live in indefinite captivity.

The European Parliament merely asked that the ICRC and other be able to monitor the captivity of the Tamil civilians, notwithstanding that no amount of "monitoring" will render the deprivation of liberty legal. Perhaps (illegal) torture may be reduced via ICRC monitoring, but it cannot be eliminated - the conditions exist in the detention camps to enable torture to be carried out.

Similarly on Monday the 13th of April, British Foreign Minister, David Milliband, repeated his call for an evacuation of civilians out of the "safe zone", but failed to object to the government's unlawful internment camps that awaited them on the outside. By failing to object to conditions that are clearly unacceptable he implicitly endorsed the camps.

But as Gotabaya tells us: "If you are not fighting terrorists, you are a terrorist." So the Sri Lankan detention camps are just one big extension to Guantanamo - an extension that will hold Tamil children, women, the elderly and of course, military men, who will be screened and disappeared, a la Srebrenica. As with Srebrenica, all these parties will be separated from each other, wives from husbands, children from mothers, siblings, grandparents, until the fabric of the Tamil community can be broken.

Raphael Lemkin would recognise all this as a method of genocide. But the European Parliament, the co-chairs, the United Nations and all the other good people involved are not complaining about the proposal to incarcerate Tamils en masse.

So the existence of mass concentration camps is not the illegality the Rajapakses were trying to cover up when they expelled non-Tamil witnesses. Because that particular illegality has the support of the international community.

So what is it that is being covered up?

Firstly, it is the fate of the missing civilians. There were 330,000 civilians to start with and the Rajapakse regime now says there are between 40,000 to 60,000 in the "safe zone". The up to 270,000 missing civilians are not all in the detention centres: only a fraction are.

Secondly, it is also the means and scale of destruction. The weapons that are being used against to force civilians to move from the Vanni (against the additional protocol II of the Geneva Convention) are also unlawful: cluster bombs, white phosphorous delivered via bombs, shells, and now, we are told, poison gas.

This - the exact weapons used - is one thing that the Rajapakses have been shy about. But it has been raised in parliament as early as August 2001, by none other



Mahinda Rajapaksa is compared to the Sinhala king Duttu Gemunu who is praised in the Mahavamsa for defeating the 'sub-human' Tamils, with millions of Tamils considered equivalent to 1.5 men

than (now-assassinated) Member of Parliament Joseph Pararajasingham, that the government has been stockpiling chemical weapons.

Additional methods employed include starvation and an embargo on medicine. The by now many times displaced Tamils are to be left to die of their injuries from air-raids, or to succumb to disease from overcrowding, inadequate clean drinking water or exposure to the elements.

To track the rate of destruction of life - and thus to square up numbers - one would need to know about the methods used.

The International community's complicity extends beyond their endorsement of the plan to force Tamils en masse in to concentration camps and their willingness to exit the war-zone to avoid having to bear witness to the atrocities.

For Sri Lanka is bankrupt. Its unlawful array of weapons are purchased on credit. The Sri

Lankan state now requires further financing from the International Monetary Fund to prevent default and to keep credit lines to its arms suppliers, among others, open. An International Monetary Fund team visited Sri Lanka last month for negotiations and will present to the IMF board on the 25th of April. April is a crucial month for the war effort.

In the beginning of April the Central Bank of Sri Lanka issued a press release, explaining now that the war had been won and IMF Funds were needed for development of the North.

This needs to be true and the war needs to be over in April. Within a week of this press release, there have been credible reports of the use of poison gas. For nothing quite accelerates the end of a war as the use of poison gas.

Would the IMF have been better advised to delay their negotiations until after a ceasefire had been achieved? But the IMF says

that while they have a mandate not to support "terror" funding, they have no mandate to refrain from encouraging or financing the use of chemical weapons, cluster bombs or concentration camps. Surely (say the IMF), the IMF cannot be blamed for putting pressure on Sri Lanka to finish the war in order to be eligible for a \$1.9 billion dollar hand out.

For the genocide of the Tamils, has not been a concern for the IMF, the UN or for that matter any international body or leader. Sri Lanka has successfully packaged the Mahavamsa race theory into the rhetoric of a war on terror and exported it, along with its other physical exports of tea and textiles.

Anti-Tamilism is the new anti-semitism: as with the Nazi ghettos, Tamils are to be packed off to camps for sub humans. As the Mahavamsa says of the slaughtered Tamils "Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts".

DIASPORA



LONDON, UK



LONDON, UK



GERMANY



NETHERLANDS



DENMARK



AUSTRIA



NEWZEALAND



FINLAND



MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



BRUSSELS, BELGIUM



NEWYORK, USA



OTTAWA, CANADA



VANCOUVER, CANADA

NEWS



US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert Blake and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher met with a Diaspora Tamil delegation in the US where they emphasised the need for a political solution. This followed an earlier meeting between Mr Blake and SLA head Sarath Fonseka to discuss the war progress

Tamils meet with US State Department on crisis

AS the Tamil diaspora in the United States and around the world staged huge protest rallies and launched hunger strikes, in a massive show of solidarity with Eelam Tamils being subjected to a genocidal war, in an unprecedented move, US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher, and US Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Robert Blake (via video conference) met a group of American Tamils representing different diaspora organizations to discuss the current humanitarian crisis Tamils face in Sri Lanka.

The Tamil groups pressed for an immediate ceasefire and pointed out that no durable political solution is possible without the participation of the LTTE, and told the State Department officials that "...[N]egotiations should not preclude separation as a solution, and that confederation with power sharing at the center may be a viable alternative to total separation."

The Tamil Diaspora group attending the meeting held on Wednesday April 8 in Washington, D.C. released a detailed press release. Full text of the press release follows:

Tamil American Diaspora Groups Meet with US-State Department on Sri Lanka Crisis

Washington, DC: Americans for Peace in Sri Lanka (APSL), a US based human rights activist group, led a delegation of 11 Tamil American organizations for a meeting at the United States Department of State with Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher and US

Ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert Blake. The meeting to discuss the current humanitarian crisis Tamils face in Sri Lanka took place on 8 April in Washington, DC, with Ambassador Blake joining by video conferencing.

Assistant Secretary Boucher referred to the heightened anxiety of the Tamil Americans over the plight of their loved ones in the Tamil homeland, and expressed solidarity with them in this difficult time. The discussion was divided into two parts, humanitarian situation, led by Ambassador Blake, and views on political solution, led by Assistant Secretary Boucher. The APSL team gave its own presentation under both topics. Tamil Americans thanked Secretary of State Clinton for her call for a ceasefire and phoning Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa to halt directing fire into the "no-fire zone". They noted that Secretary Clinton's call was not heeded by the Colombo government.

Ambassador Blake gave an update on the US led efforts to care for the 120 - 150,000 Tamil civilians in the "safe zone," which included 60% of the food aid going through the World Food Program, and evacuation of more than 4,000 wounded civilians. He spoke of continuing problems with medical aid and gave an update on the visit by UN Secretary General's special representative for the internally displaced, Walter Kaelin, who has extracted concessions from the GoSL in the administration of the IDP camps in Vavuniya. APSL pointed out the real figure of encircled civilians in the "safe

zone" is 330,000 as given by the additional government agent of the district.

Tamil Americans asked for the support of the US administration to obtain clearance to any Diaspora initiative to take direct medical aid to the crisis zone. Ambassador Blake informed that the government of Sri Lanka now plans to resettle 80% of the IDPs within one year, and after clearing mines. Tamil Americans cautioned that the over emphasis of mine clearing operations can be a ruse by Sri Lanka to delay the resettlement while they engage on creating high security zones and colonization of Sinhalese in the Vanni area.

APSL made an urgent plea to Ambassador Blake and Secretary Boucher to check on reports over the weekend that the Sri Lankan military has used chemical weapons killing hundreds of civilians and combatants. The news of the possession of internationally banned chemical weapons in the hands of the Lankan forces has created alarm among the Tamil Diaspora that the Colombo government could engage in mass killings in the "safe zone" with intent of a genocidal outcome.

Tamil Americans continued to press for an immediate ceasefire. Ambassador Blake asked the Tamil Americans whether they can ask the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to let the Tamil civilians leave. APSL responded that the Tamil civilians are given a Hobson's choice, and appealed for expanding the current safety zone and creating a demilitarized zone under the pro-

UN 'lays off' Sri Lanka fearing criticism

EVEN as his humanitarian affairs chief warned of an impending 'bloodbath' in Sri Lanka, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon refused to call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

According to an Inner City Press (ICP) news report, following Sri Lankan government's fierce resistance to his call for a 'ceasefire' on February 23, Ban does not want to call even for a humanitarian pause.

Meanwhile, in a commentary for Britain's Guardian newspaper, John Holmes, the U.N. under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, wrote on Wednesday, April 8, that "a bloodbath on the beaches of northern Sri Lanka seems an increasingly real possibility".

Like his boss, Holmes also indicated that UN has resigned from attempting to secure a long term ceasefire from Sri Lankan government and hoped for a temporary halt to hostilities.

"As a full-scale, long-term ceasefire is unlikely to be agreed now, the only way to get the civilians out of harm's way is a temporary humanitarian lull, during which aid workers and relief supplies must be allowed into the conflict zone, and those who want to leave must be given the chance to do so," wrote Holmes.

With the situation for civilians living in Vanni, in Northeast Sri Lanka, growing direr by the day, Ban on April 7 was asked if he would call for a ceasefire.

Ban's 127-word answer, while describing two phone calls to President Mahinda Rajapaksa, did not use the word ceasefire, or even Ban's previous phrases, a

suspension of fighting or humanitarian pause, reported ICP.

When ICP sought clarification stating 'it is unclear whether you are asking actually for a ceasefire' Ban responded by saying: "hope that the Sri Lankan Government takes all necessary measures so that these civilians can move freely, without any danger, without threat, to the safety zone."

Commenting on UN strategy in Sri Lanka ICP said, in recent week's UN approach has been to put more pressure on the LTTE than the government.

A senior UN official confirmed this to ICP saying 'since the government of Sri Lanka has so openly ignored Ban's calls: to pressure instead the Tamil Tigers and their supporters overseas, threatening prosecutions, and to "lay off" the government'.

This was evident when UN Spokesman Farhan Haq read out a statement that the LTTE are violating international humanitarian law, while the government is merely "reminded of its obligations."

ICP also noted that a statement by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs described "aerial bombing of the No-Fire Zone" in northern Sri Lanka, but stopped short of naming the perpetrator.

Particularly given the reports that the Tamil Tigers' air force has been destroyed, to say "aerial bombing" is to say "Sri Lankan government", ICP noted said.

Given the number of deaths that have been caused by shelling and aerial bombing by the government, to "lay off" is to be complicit, ICP concluded.

tection of the UN agencies. Only then the Tamil civilians can be asked to choose between staying with the LTTE, or leave for protected zone or distant IDP camps. Assistant Secretary Boucher then emphasized need for a political solution to end the conflict.

Tamil representatives pointed out that no durable political solution is possible without the participation of the LTTE. Tamil Americans opined that negotiations should not preclude separation as a solution, and that confederation with power sharing at the center may be a viable alternative to total separation. Ambassador Blake stated that a viable political solution is one that the Tamils would be willing to accept, and appealed to the

Tamil Diaspora to take part in such political discourse.

Several senior high ranking officials from the State Dept and from the office of the United States' Ambassador to the UN, Dr. Susan Rice were also present during the discussions.

The following US Diaspora groups were represented in the meeting: Americans for Peace in Sri Lanka, Federation of Tamil Associations of North America, HELP Advocates Sri Lanka, Ilankai Tamil Sangam, North Carolinians For Peace, People for Equality and Relief in Lanka, Tamils Against Genocide, Tamils of California, Tamils of New England, Tamils of Ohio, and World Tamil Organization - USA.

NEWS

UK's ceasefire call draws flak

THE United Kingdom has again appealed for the urgent need for humanitarian ceasefire in Sri Lanka saying that it was concerned at the plight of civilians caught up in fighting between the Government troops and Liberation Tigers. Whilst one Sri Lankan minister regretted UK's call another ridiculed it as an "International joke".

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband on Thursday, April 2 renewed his call for an "urgent humanitarian ceasefire" to "allow the remaining civilians to leave the conflict area" and sought unhindered access for humanitarian agencies to the civilians displaced by the fighting, including those, whom he referred as "still trapped" in the conflict area. Miliband said he condemned the killings of civilians in the strongest possible terms and urged the parties to take action to avoid further civilian casualties.

He stated that the actions of the LTTE "cannot excuse any failings by the Sri Lankan government to meet the higher standards naturally expected of democratic governments in a conflict."

The appointment of Des Browne as British Prime Minister's Special Envoy to Sri Lanka was a measure of the UK's commitment to contribute to an

improvement in the humanitarian situation and to the search for a sustainable political solution to the conflict, he said.

Reacting to Miliband's statement, the Sri Lankan government said it regretted the statement of the British Foreign Secretary expressing disappointment at the continued rejection of the appointment of the British Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama reiterated in Parliament the position that the British Government had failed to adhere to the time honoured tradition in diplomatic practice of consultation and following the procedure in making the appointment.

Meanwhile, another Sri Lankan Minister declared that UK has no right to accuse Sri Lankan military of harming civilians considering the heinous war crimes the British have committed in the past.

Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Patali Champika Ranawaka also ridiculed the US and the UK saying that it was an "International joke" that they were lecturing Sri Lanka on halting the war when scores were dying in Afghanistan and Iraq and suggested the British and American military take lessons from the Sri Lankan military.



His role as peace negotiator did not mean he could compel the parties to take action, said Erik Solheim

Co-chairs urge humanitarian pause in 'futile fighting'

IN a statement released by the US embassy in Sri Lanka, the co-chairs of the now defunct Norwegian initiated peace process 'expressed urgent concern for the safety of more than 100,000 people trapped by the conflict' and 'stressed the importance of a humanitarian pause and of ensuring that adequate supplies of food, water and medicine reach the civilians in the zone.'

The four-nation group, dubbed the Tokyo Co-Chairs, on a conference call held on Friday April 10, discussed "how to best end the futile fighting without further bloodshed," a U.S. State Department statement said.

The statement from the United States, Britain, Japan and Norway

came as Sri Lanka's military said it had begun military operations targeting the no fire zone, calling it "the largest hostage rescue operation in the world".

Full text of the US embassy release follows:

Representatives of the Tokyo Co-Chairs convened a conference call this morning to discuss the humanitarian situation in northern Sri Lanka. Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher participated for the United States.

Co-Chair members expressed urgent concern for the safety of more than a hundred thousand people trapped by the conflict between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil

Eelam (LTTE) in a narrow strip of land in northern Sri Lanka. They call on the Tamil Tigers to permit freedom of movement for the civilians in the area. They discussed the need for the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to respect the 'no fire zone' and protect the civilians trapped there. They reaffirmed the need to stop shelling into the 'no fire zone' to prevent further civilian casualties. They stressed the importance of a humanitarian pause and of ensuring that adequate supplies of food, water and medicine reach the civilians in the zone. Assistant Secretary Boucher and the other Co-Chair representatives discussed how to best end the futile fighting without further bloodshed.

Canada calls for immediate ceasefire

CANADA'S Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon has called for an immediate ceasefire and wants to "engage the United Nations as fast as possible" to find a peaceful solution to the decades old conflict. The announcement came amidst continued Tamil protests that severely disrupted the traffic in Ottawa.

"We've asked [the United Nations] for an immediate ceasefire. We're very worried, of course, of the hostilities that are taking place but particularly worried for the civilians that are in the combat zone [in Vanni]," said Cannon Thursday, April 9, according to a report in National Post.

"We've made representations to the United Nations on this issue. We're following it closely and we will continue with like-minded countries to make sure that we want to bring a ceasefire to this area of the world," Cannon added. The Minister also rejected a call by the Sri Lankan high

commissioner to Canada to crack down on the protesters because they were waving banners that depict a tiger in front of a pair of crossed guns. "It's not up to me to put an end to protest," he said. "People are allowed to protest in Canada. We live in a democracy. People are allowed to go and express their ideas, their concerns."

Cannon's remarks fly in the face of the assessment of Sri Lankan envoy Daya Perera, who said that: "there is a limit; the freedom of expression has to stop somewhere."

Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff also called on Canada to pressure the UN secretary general to appoint a special representative to Sri Lanka to push for a ceasefire. "The humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka has continued to deteriorate, causing grave concern to the international community and demanding urgent and co-ordinated action to end this conflict," he was quoted as saying.

I can't cause miracles - Erik

RESPONDING to the spontaneous protests staged by Tamils in Norway demanding an immediate ceasefire in Sri Lanka, Norwegian international development minister Erik Solheim has said that he 'cannot cause miracles'.

"I can understand the level of desperation among the Tamils in Norway. But, I can't cause miracles," said Erik Solheim, who is also the topmost representative of the Norwegian facilitation to the peace process in the island of Sri Lanka, on Tuesday, April 7.

Responding to Erik Solheim, Ki Pi Aravinthan, a veteran former Tamil militant of the 1970's said that Solheim may not be able to perform miracles, but at least he should have refrained himself

from committing knowing blunders. "Diplomacy may be the art of the possible, but a liberation struggle is to make impossible, possible. Norway failed in grasping the point," he said. Posing as a neutral party to peace facilitation, Norway has no justification in joining the co-chairs demanding the LTTE to lay down arms. More serious is the stand expecting the civilians of Vanni to forfeit themselves into the genocidal hands of Colombo, Aravinthan said. "Through their procedural failures, the Norwegians have brought in discredit to the whole idea of international peace brokering. There is still time for them to mend their ways if they can come out really independent from

playing stooges to geo-political ambitions of powers and are prepared to commit themselves to the global norms of human civilisation," Aravinthan further said.

Aravinthan is the only surviving associate of Urumpiraay Sivakumaran, the forerunner of Eelam Tamil militancy.

Erik Solheim was responding to a question posed by the journalists of Norwegian state owned NRK after Norwegian Tamils in Oslo besieged the office of the Prime Minister of Norway. "I can talk to the demonstrators. I can talk to USA, Japan and EU once again to see if there is anything more that could be done to stop the war in Sri Lanka," he was quoted as saying by NRK.

NEWS

Eelam a top poll issue as election nears in Tamil Nadu

AS India gears up for general elections, the plight of Eelam Tamils is taking center stage in the election scene in Tamil Nadu for the first time in several years with all major political parties, including ruling DMK, main opposition AIADMK, Congress, BJP PMK, MDMK, CPI(M) and CPI, saying that the Eelam Tamils issue will figure prominently during the election campaign.

According to political analysts, politicians in India's southern Tamil Nadu state are trying to outbid each other in sympathising with the Eelam Tamils in order to take advantage of the pro-Eelam mood that has been sweeping the state in the past few months.

Since October last year, people from across the political spectrum have come out strongly in support of Eelam Tamils and the LTTE. Tamils in the state have staged many mass protests, awareness campaigns, human chains, famine protests and conferences urging an immediate ceasefire and a stop to the genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka. At least 11 people have killed themselves protesting the inaction of the Indian government in saving Tamils.

AIADMK calls for ceasefire

AIDMK General Secretary and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Jayalalitha Jeyaram released a strongly worded statement in which she called for 'an immediate ceasefire'.

"I strongly insist that an immediate ceasefire is the only way to save the Tamil civilians in the safety zone," said Jayalalitha in a signed statement in Tamil, issued on Wednesday, April 8.

Jayalalitha blamed Chief Minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi and the Central Government of India for the current plight of Tamil civilians.

"People of Tamil Nadu will wash their hands off of such elements whose hands are jointly at work causing misery to the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka," she said.

Mass agitations of Tamils are taking place in UK, France, Canada and Norway to put an end to the inhuman war that is killing Tamils, but Karunanidhi is maintaining a vicious silence as though nothing is taking place, she charged.

"Karunanidhi was watching with an assenting note when the

Central Government of India was supplying weapons and providing military training to Sri Lanka in the war against Tamils," she said.

"His sole aim was continuing in power and looking after the welfare of his family members. Had he challenged the Central Government that would have forced the government to change its course at the time itself, and the Tamils would have been saved. But, Karunanidhi didn't do it. Because of the selfishness of Karunanidhi, the Tamil ethnicity is facing extinction in Sri Lanka."

Jayalalitha cited reports on the condition of 200,000 Tamil civilians in the safety zone, including reports on the deployment of poisonous weapons by the Sri Lanka government. The whole world is shocked, she said.

If Karunanidhi cares anything for Tamils, he should demand the Central Government to stop the war immediately, she further said and added: "The Sri Lankan government should immediately announce ceasefire and the entire Tamil population should voice for it."

LTTE endorsement

LTTE political head B. Nadesan, in an exclusive interview to India Today, welcomed the statement by Jayalalitha, prompting commentators interpret it as endorsement of AIADMK.

"Leaders of AIDMK alliance are very much involved in the recent upsurge in Tamil Nadu towards our people. ADMK's founder, the legendary leader M.G.R, steadfastly supported the well-being and the political quest for self-determination of Eelam Tamils at all times. Jayalalitha has given voice to the Tamil people and she understands the Tamil people's political aspirations very well. Interestingly, she has discussed a solution based on the principle of self-determination in one of the recent statements. It is an encouraging development," Nadesan said.

Jayalalitha's allies, like MDMK chief Vaiko, PMK's S. Ramadoss and Left leaders from the state too came in for praise from the LTTE, according to India Times.

The paper further stated that Nadesan hoped MPs elected from Tamil Nadu would help change New Delhi's policy with regard to the conflict in Sri Lanka.

"We are generally expecting the new government will review



Vaiko and Jayalalitha have joined forces on a pro-Eelam Tamil platform for the next Indian elections. This is significant because the Eelam issue is thought to be a significant factor in the forthcoming polls

the present policy towards the conflict and Tamil aspirations with new realities. And I expect that elected representatives from Tamil Nadu will play an effective role in the re-shaping process," he said.

Asked about the DMK, Nadesan said the party had failed to bring relief to the Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka, the paper added.

"I can only say, the relief has not reached our people. The Tamil people are fighting against Sinhala armed forces and struggling against hunger and disease on the other hand. I believe that the DMK and the other political leaders of Tamil Nadu are fully aware of this situation," he added.

Nadesan's comments are seen as significant as the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka worsens and the Eelam issue has become major electoral topic in the state.

DMK rally for Eelam Tamils

Meanwhile, The DMK led by Karunanidhi organised a mass

rally on Thursday April 9, in solidarity with the Eelam Tamils. The rally was attended by thousands of cadres belonging to DMK, Congress, VCK, DK, IUML and other parties along with Ministers and leaders of parties. At the end of the rally, leaders of various parties addressed the gathering.

Speaking at the rally, Karunanidhi warned the Sri Lankan President, Rajapakse, "Irrespective of the consequences of the war and what happens to Pirapaharan, treat him and Eelam Tamils honourably and equally by sharing power. Otherwise, history will not forgive you".

Karunanidhi also made a desperate appeal to Congress leader, Sonia Gandhi to intervene in the issue and stop the war in the island.

Angry reaction

Karunanidhi's request to Rajapakse to treat Pirapaharan with honour and respect if captured drew widespread condemnation from many political parties in the state.

Pala Nedumaran from the Tamil National Movement condemned the chief minister's statement saying: "The malicious intention of Karunanidhi that the Tigers will be defeated will never come true...the Tigers will win the war and the DMK chief will witness that in his life-time."

PMK founder S Ramadoss said the DMK chief's request to Rajapakse had made Tamils throughout the world hang their heads in shame. "Instead of raising his voice for ending the war against the Tamils' struggle in Lanka, Karunanidhi is trying to write an epilogue to the war itself...it is shameful," he said.

Reacting angrily to Karunanidhi's statement MDMK leader Vaiko said: "The Tigers are fighting the Sri Lankan army. Here the hearts of Tamils is like a volcano. People have forgotten Sriperumbudur a long time ago. Pirapaharan is in the hearts of the people of Tamil Nadu."

"If anything happens to Pirapaharan, there will be blood bath in Tamil Nadu. Your police force cannot do anything about it"

Tamil Nadu majority back LTTE

MAJORITY of people in Tamil Nadu want the Indian government to support the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, according to an opinion poll.

Asked if the Indian government should support the LTTE in Sri Lanka, 66 percent of respondents said yes, the NDTV said in a release Tuesday, March 31, revealing the findings of the opinion survey.

The survey also showed that Chief Minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi of DMK and Leader of Opposition Jayalalitha Jayaram of AIADMK are in a neck-to-neck race to be the next chief minister, with 41 percent and 40 percent respondents backing them respectively.

The poll conducted by NDTV was part of an all-India and state-wide poll to understand the key concerns of the voters.

Meanwhile, another state-wide poll conducted by Ananda Vikatan, a popular weekly in Tamil Nadu, showed that the people in Tamil Nadu identified support for LTTE as the top most policy change that would make them vote for Jayalalitha in the coming elections. This is significant in light of recent statements by Jayalalitha, who has recently come out strongly in favour of the Eelam Tamils and the LTTE.

NEWS

Colombo uses chemical weapons: LTTE

SRI LANKA Army extensively used chemical weapons on LTTE combatants at Puthukkudiyiruppu (PTK) during the weekend, according to Lawrence, a senior commander of the LTTE, who personally encountered the attack and escaped, LTTE sources told TamilNet Tuesday, April 7.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan Defence Ministry has claimed that it killed hundreds of Tiger combatants including senior commanders in PTK last weekend. The use of chemical weapons were the suspicion of many who have seen the photographs released by the SL Defence Ministry, but now the accusation comes from the LTTE. The Tiger sources neither confirmed the type of the chemical weapon nor said anything on the casualties claimed by Colombo.

Not matching with their tall claims, Colombo's websites have released comparatively fewer photographs of LTTE combatants it killed in action this time. Yet, the released photographs were enough for viewers of forensic experience to suspect the use of chemical weapons.

Chemical weapons such as nerve gas were strictly prohibited by international conventions after world experiencing gruesome mass deaths of combatants during the World War I (1914 - 1919).

Colombo government was already on record for clandestine purchase of prohibited chemical weapons and accessories in 2001.

The use of chemicals is prohibited even on animals and in catching fish. Whether excuses are given when governments label combatants as "terrorists", asked 38-year-old activist T. Kajan who was participating in a protest in Paris on Tuesday, amid rain.

"As the war-criminal profile

of the Colombo government is increasingly becoming clear, how to expect the Tamil civilians to trust this government and get into its hands and how to expect the Tamils to place their hopes for future with such a genocidal government? What has happened to the LTTE combatants can happen even to civilians," Mr. Kajan who talked to media said.

Colombo government, its president Mahinda Rajapaksa as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Gothabaya Rajapaksa, defence secretary and Sarath Fonseka, army chief, may have to face indictment as serious war criminals if the accusation of using chemical weapons is proved.

Diaspora observers believe that by setting an agenda to finish the war before mid-April to suit its electoral ambitions, the Indian Establishment and a biased few behind it, are largely responsible for Colombo adopting such foul means to win the war.

Any government that is abetting or justifying Colombo's illegal war, may have to bear the responsibility for the war crimes, the diaspora protestors said.

For quite some time now, Colombo has been accusing the LTTE as possessing chemical weapons. This was in fact a calculated propaganda to shield Colombo's own deployment of chemical weapons, the observers said.

"It is to escape from indictment on many counts from the use of prohibited weapons to human rights abuses, the Colombo government systematically kept international media and foreign aid workers out of the war scene. The International Community, the UN and reputed media agencies also abetted Colombo's idea to conduct this war without witnesses," said Kajan.



Pictures of burnt bodies and eyewitness reports support claims that the Sri Lankan government is using chemical weapons against the Tamil population in the so-called safe-zone

Abductions and arrests of Tamils spike outside conflict zone

ABDUCTIONS and arrests of Tamils have sharply increased in recent weeks with at least 59 cases of abductions or disappearances reported in the Eastern province and over 391 mass arrests made by the Sri Lankan security forces outside the South and East of the country.

According to complaints made by relatives of 17 abductees from Moothoor East in Trincomalee district and Thirukovil in Batticaloa district, in most cases, the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers and paramilitary military men who operate with them came to the houses of the youths in white vans and forcibly took the youths away. Some had gone missing after going to their work places.

Speaking at the Batticaloa District Development and Coordinating Meeting, Wellaaveli Pridesha Sabah President V. R. Mahenthiran said that 42 civilians had gone missing in Wellaaveli and Paduvaankarai in recent weeks. Many civilians had gone missing or abducted by unidentified armed men in Paduvankarai area in the past few months and the complaints made by their relatives in the respective police stations have not brought forth any constructive results, he further said.

The residents of Wellaaveli area and Paduvaankarai live in constant fear and anxiety due to the abductions and forced disappearances, Mahenthiran told the attendees of the meeting.

The Eastern Province Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Edwin Gunathilake, however, brushed aside the statement saying that Liberation Tigers may have abducted them or they had joined the Liberation Tigers or had left the country under false names.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan security forces have arrested over 391 Tamils in the South and East of the island in the first two weeks of April alone.

The SLA and Sri Lanka Police from Thursday April till Friday, April 10 morning conducted several cordon search operations in Colombo and Ampaarai arresting 40 Tamils.

Police spokesman Ranjit Gunasekara told media that detained civilians had failed to prove their identity and justify their presence in the location. Most of the arrested Tamils are residents of Jaffna. 14 Tamil youths were taken into custody in Wellawatte area, he said.

Another 26 Tamils were taken into custody in cordon and search operations conducted by the Special Task Force with the Police in police divisions of Kalmunai, Sammanthurai and Paandiruppu in eastern province, police spokesman Ranjit Gunasekara said.

Few days earlier, the SLA and Police conducted dusk-to-dawn cordon and search operations in several parts of Gampaha town and its suburbs on Tuesday April 7 through to Wednesday April 8 and arrested about 219 civilians majority of them Tamils from North East and upcountry Tamils working in business establishments and other private sector institutions.

Sri Lankan armed forces had subjected about ten thousand civilians to interrogation and searched about 1400 vehicles. Tamil civilians arrested in the operation failed to prove their identity and justify their presence in the location, according to police.

Arrested were detained in several police stations in Gampaha district and interrogated.

On the same day, Special Task Force (STF) commandos and police arrested 46 Tamils in a joint cordon and search conducted in Kalmunai and Chammaanththurai police divisions in Ampaarai district.

More than a hundred persons were taken into custody and released after interrogation. 25 of them in Kalmunai police station and 5 in Chammaanththurai police station have been detained for further investigation, sources in Ampaarai said.

Another 21 Tamils were arrested in the search conducted in Paandiruppu area from early morning till noon while 5 Tamils were taken into custody in Valaththaappiddi in Chammaanththurai.

Meanwhile in Colombo, Sri Lanka police took into custody 14 Tamil youths in a search operation conducted in Wellawatte, a suburb of Colombo city, according to complaints made to Deputy Minister P. Rathakrishnan by the youths' relatives. The arrested youths are from Jaffna, the police said.

Rathakrishnan also stated another 24 Tamil youths were arrested few days earlier, on Saturday April 4 and Sunday April 5.

In addition, 10 Tamils were arrested in Trincomalee district in a cordon and search operation in several areas in Uppuveli police division on Sunday April 5 and another 12 Tamils were arrested in Nuwereliya, Bogawanthalawa, Aniawathe in Kandy in a cordon and search operation conducted Thursday April 2.

Many more were arrested in the two cordon and search operations but were released after interrogation, according to local sources.

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NEWS

Economy down awaiting IMF decision

THE head of Sri Lanka's Central Bank has admitted that the country confronts significant economic problems and hoped the long anticipated military victory in the decades long ethnic conflict would improve the fortunes of the island's economy. Presenting the 2008 Central Bank Report, on Monday, April 6, Central Bank of Sri Lanka governor, Nivard Cabraal, said the country's economic woes were the direct result of three economic catastrophes faced by Sri Lanka, the unprecedented escalation of global oil prices, global food crisis and the global economic meltdown.

However, economists blame the ever increasing cost of military operations against the Liberation Tigers which Sri Lanka has been waging for the past three years, poor fiscal policies and mismanagement as the real reasons behind the island faring far worse than other South Asian countries affected by the global downturn.

All key economic indicators including Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, value of the local currency and foreign currency reserves were down as the spiralling cost of war, revenue drop in tourism and garment exports and a fall in remittance from Sri Lankans working overseas hit the economy hard. Realising the gravity of the situation, the Sri Lankan government had given up borrowing from other countries at high interest, and had approached the IMF for a \$ 3.2 billion loan.

Growth, exports down

According to the central bank economic expansion could fall below three percent this year. "If things get worse, we expect economic growth to slow down to between 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent this year," Cabraal said. "At best, it will grow to between 4.5 percent and 5.0 percent, but that is being a bit too optimistic," he added. Sri Lanka's economy posted 6.0 percent growth in 2008, down from 6.8 percent in 2007.

Foreign revenue from key exports including tea and garment has dropped as the global financial downturn has led to poor demand. Also, tens of thousands of Sri Lankans working in Middle East have lost their jobs as the host countries tighten expenses.

According to Dushani Weerakoon, Deputy Director of the Institute of Policy Studies, export growth has fallen from 12.2 percent in 2007 to 6.8 percent in 2008. Trade deficit had been growing and stood at \$ 5.8 billion. According to Wasantha

Sama-rasinghe, President of the Inter Company Employees Union, 50,000 workers have lost their jobs in the last three months. Pal-itha Athukorala of the Progressive Union said that out of the 832 factories set up in 2004, only 403 survive now.

Rupee, reserves down

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's rupee hit a life low of 116.00/10 versus the dollar on Wednesday, April 8, on import demand for the U.S. currency. The central bank's chief economist Nandalal Weerasinghe said the rupee has lost seven percent of its value against the US dollar since last September, despite the bank pumping in millions of dollars to prop up the currency.

Sri Lanka's foreign currency reserves are also at a dangerously low level. Foreign currency reserves fell from 3.5 billion dollars last August to 1.7 billion dollars by December as the central bank battled to defend the rupee, make loan repayments and pay out investors pulling out. Cabraal commenting on the foreign reserves said the Central Bank had adopted several short and long term strategies to strengthen the foreign reserves which have been depleted in the recent past and that there was a drain of 50% of the country's foreign reserves.

Sri Lanka's ballooning foreign debt repayments is a major concern with the country expected to pay out 900 million dollars to service its loans, from about 500 million dollars paid in 2008, the analyst said. In addition, further draining the foreign reserves, the central bank has paid out 506 million dollars to foreigners who withdrew from rupee-denominated treasury bonds, according to an economist. "At the peak, foreigners had invested 527 million dollars in treasury bonds by last September. Since the crisis they have been withdrawing and now the foreign investment in bonds stands at 19 million dollars," he said.

End of war

Economists say the cost of the government's military campaign against the LTTE has hurt the economy, with the defence budget taking up 1.6 billion dollars this year. Cabraal expressed hope that the end of the war would boost economic growth as foreign investments would be more forthcoming. "The end of the war will be looked at positively by foreign investors," he said. "We are at a crossroads, notwithstanding global developments."



Central Bank governor Cabraal blames the economic downturn on global crises rather than the war

Sri Lanka's finances busted

SRI LANKA'S government finances had been busted in 2008 with revenues 95 billion rupees below target, 118 billion rupees being printed by the central bank, while foreign financing turned negative, a local media reported citing the latest official data show.

Accusing the Sri Lankan government of always over-estimating revenue and under-estimating expenditure, Lanka Business Online (LBO) said, in the 2008 budget, Sri Lanka originally projected revenues of 750.7 billion rupees, current expenditure of 712.8 billion rupees and capital expenditure of 331.2 billion rupees.

In November, with only one month to go, the revised out-turn was presented to Sri Lanka's law-

makers as 709 billion rupees of revenue, 743.3 billion in current expenditure and 278.1 billion as capital expenditure.

The provisional data released in the central bank annual report now show that the finance ministry has only raised 655.2 billion rupees in revenue (95.5 billion rupees below target) and current expenditure was 743.7 billion rupees (30 billion above target), said LBO.

Capital expenditure was 252.4 billion rupees or 78 billion rupees below target, whilst a projected 37.8 billion surplus in the current budget (total revenues less current expenditure) turned into a record 88.4 billion rupee deficit, the news report further said.

The overall budget deficit was also higher at 340.8 billion

rupees, up from an originally projected 293.4 billion rupees, added LBO.

Meanwhile the central bank had printed 118.4 billion rupees to finance the deficit, triggering a balance of payments crisis as it defended a dollar peg, according LBO.

Rapid acquisitions of domestic assets (money printed to buy treasury securities) by a central bank results in either currency depreciation or an equivalent loss of foreign reserves, if the exchange rate is not allowed to fall, LBO added.

Sri Lanka has now turned to an IMF bailout with the interventions ended to conserve foreign reserves and new taxes being imposed to shore up revenues and reduce money printing, LBO said.

Deutsche sues Sri Lanka over oil

ONE of the world's largest banks, Deutsche Bank, has filed an arbitration claim against the government of Sri Lanka in a dispute related to oil derivatives entered into by Sri Lanka's state-run petroleum utility.

Deutsche Bank has filed an arbitration claim against the government of Sri Lanka in relation to the hedging contracts, registered with the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) on 24 March 2009. In its claim, Deutsche Bank argues that the government of Sri Lanka has violated the German-Sri Lanka bilateral investment treaty. Deutsche Bank has declined to comment on the case.

The state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) entered

into hedging contracts with a number of foreign and local banks in 2007 to protect against a surge in oil prices. While the contracts were originally profitable for CPC, they led to heavy losses when oil prices fell steeply in the fall of 2008.

Following heavy losses, the Supreme Court alleging corruption played a part in the contracts, leading the court to order CPC to temporarily suspend payments under the contracts. While that order was lifted in January 2009, The Sri Lankan Central Bank has also stepped in, ordering CPC to suspend the hedging transactions, on the grounds that they were "materially affected and substantially tainted."

Another Bank involved in the

hedging deal, Citibank, is also rumored to have turned to arbitration in order to enforce the hedging contracts. A Citibank official said he could not comment, because a case related to the contracts is pending in the Sri Lankan Supreme Court.

Deutsche Bank sold a contract worth 100,000 barrels to the CPC. Citibank had sold contracts worth 400,000 barrels, Standard Chartered 300,000, People's Bank 100,000 (including 50,000 bought from Commercial Bank), and Commercial Bank 20,000 direct (and 50,000 via People's Bank).

The original contracts were at half the volumes, but under the terms of the contract, volumes doubled when prices collapsed, incurring heavy losses to CPC.

OPINION

Sri Lanka's war on Tamils is racism, not terrorism

Arundhati Roy

The Age

THE horror that is unfolding in Sri Lanka becomes possible because of the silence that surrounds it. There is almost no reporting in the mainstream Indian media - or indeed in the international press - about what is happening there. Why this should be so is a matter of concern.

From the little information that is filtering through, it looks as though the Sri Lankan Government is using the propaganda of "the war on terror" as a fig leaf to dismantle any semblance of democracy in the country and commit unspeakable crimes against the Tamil people.

Working on the principle that every Tamil is a terrorist unless he or she can prove otherwise, civilian areas, hospitals and shelters are being bombed and turned into war zones.

Reliable estimates put the number of civilians trapped at more than 200,000. The Sri Lankan army is advancing, armed with tanks and aircraft.

Meanwhile, there are official reports that several "welfare villages" have been established to house displaced Tamils in Vavuniya and Mannar districts. According to a report in The Telegraph, these villages "will be compulsory holding centres for all civilians fleeing the fighting".

Is this a euphemism for concentration camps? Former foreign minister Mangala Samaraveera told The Telegraph: "A few months ago the Government started registering all Tamils in Colombo on the grounds that they

could be a security threat, but this could be exploited for other purposes, like the Nazis in the 1930s. They're basically going to label the whole civilian Tamil population as potential terrorists."

Given its stated objective of "wiping out" the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, this malevolent collapse of civilians and "terrorists" does seem to signal that the Government of Sri Lanka is on the verge of committing what could end up being genocide.

According to a United Nations estimate, several thousand people have been killed. Thousands more are critically wounded. The few witness reports that have come out are descriptions of a nightmare from hell.

What we are witnessing, or should we say what is happening, in Sri Lanka - and what is being so effectively hidden from public scrutiny - is a brazen, openly racist war.

The impunity with which the Sri Lankan Government is being able to commit these crimes actually reveals the deeply ingrained racist prejudice that is precisely what led to the marginalisation and alienation of the Tamils of Sri Lanka in the first place.

That racism has a long history - of social ostracism, economic blockades, pogroms and torture. The brutal nature of the decades-long civil war, which started as a peaceful protest, has its roots in this.

Why the silence? In another interview, Samaraveera says that "a free media is virtually non-exi-



The continuous targetting of Tamil civilians, including children, supports the argument that Sri Lanka's war is racially motivated, rather than a fight against terrorism as claimed by the government

stent in Sri Lanka today". He talks about death squads and "white van abductions", which have made society "freeze with fear".

Voices of dissent, including several journalists, have been abducted and assassinated. The International Federation of Journalists accuses the Sri Lankan Government of using a combination of anti-terrorism laws, "disappearances" and assassinations to silence journalists.

There are disturbing but unconfirmed reports that India is lending material and logistical support to the Sri Lankan Government in these crimes against humanity. If the reports are true, it is outrageous. What of the governments of other countries? Pakistan? China? What are

they doing to help or to harm the situation?

In the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the war in Sri Lanka has fuelled passions that have led to more than 10 people immolating themselves. The public anger and anguish, much of it genuine, some of it cynical political manipulation, has become an election issue.

It is extraordinary that this concern has not travelled to the rest of India. Why is there silence here? There are no "white van abductions" - at least not on this issue.

Given the scale of what is happening in Sri Lanka, the silence is inexcusable. More so because of the Indian Government's long history of irresponsible dabbling

in the conflict, first taking one side and then the other.

Several of us - including myself - who should have spoken out much earlier have not done so, simply because of a lack of information about the war.

So while the killing continues, while tens of thousands of people are being barricaded into concentration camps, while more than 200,000 face starvation, and a genocide waits to happen, there is dead silence from this great country.

It's a colossal humanitarian tragedy. The world must step in. Now. Before it's too late.

Arundhati Roy is a writer and activist who won the Booker Prize for her novel, The God of Small Things.

Diaspora Tamils protest in increasing numbers ...

Continued from p4

overnight, called on the Australian government to use their diplomatic powers to pressure Sri Lanka into entering a ceasefire. "Tamil Tigers! Freedom Fighters!" cried the crowd as they waved the national flag of Tamil Eelam and carried placards of LTTE leader V. Pirapaharan.

"Until the world stops Sri Lanka's genocide of the Tamils, we will gather and rally again and again and we will not rest until we get our Tamil Eelam!" called out John Yogan as he addressed the crowd in Sydney.

Melbourne

In Melbourne a car rally for peace was attacked by Sinhala protestors as they drove through the centre of the city on Saturday 4 April noon.

A group of around 50 Sinhala expatriates, some of them allegedly inebriated, attacked the car-rally demonstration organised

by the Eelam Tamil Diaspora protesting genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka and demanding immediate end of the war waged by the Colombo government.

A few Eelam Tamils were injured and their cars were damaged in the attack.

One of the attackers also reportedly got injured in the melee.

The attack is said to have taken place while the cars in the rally were waiting for signal on Exhibition Street. The attackers were reportedly returning from a parallel demonstration by them that took place 2 km away from the junction.

A young journalist who was taking photographs of the demonstration said that the mob tried to snatch his camera and that he was injured on the neck.

The Sinhala demonstrators also snatched away the flag and banner displayed by one of the cars of the Tamil rally that strayed close to the venue of their demonstration.

New York

Meanwhile, in New York, three days of hunger-strike and protest against Sri Lanka's egregious rights violations and horrific killings against the more than 200,000 Tamil civilians caught up in the war were held between Tuesday 7 April and Thursday 9 April.

Several hundred protesters from different states took positions in front of the Indian mission from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., protested in front of the Mexican mission from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., and assembled to protest in front of the U.S. mission between 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm on the final Thursday.

The protesters appealed to the UN missions to take steps to facilitate a ceasefire.

The protesting Tamils submitted memoranda appealing to the UN missions take urgent steps to ensure that adequate medicine and food reach the civilians trying to survive in the safe zone.

The memoranda expressed appreciation to Mexico for its efforts in the UN to keep the Sri Lanka issue alive. UN Security Council's presidency is taken over by Mexican Ambassador Claude Heller from April. Heller on April 2 told the press that he is open to additional briefings on the "important" situation in Sri Lanka.

Scandinavia

About 400 demonstrators gathered outside the Norwegian parliament in Oslo, for protests similar to those around the globe, with the protests continuing on a daily basis.

"We're calling for an immediate ceasefire, to send food and medicine into the conflicted area and to condemn the so-called 'welfare camps,' where people are dying and women are getting raped," spokesman Godfrey Manoharan told AFP in Oslo.

In Copenhagen, about 50 demonstrators gathered near the foreign ministry building, with

the protest continuing for a fourth straight day.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands a peaceful fast a protest turned ugly when the Police interfered on Friday 10 April and tried to stop it.

Protestors had gathered in front of the Dutch parliament on Monday 6 April and had been staging a peaceful protest demanding an immediate ceasefire in Sri Lanka.

Five of the protestors began a hunger strike, vowing to fast until a ceasefire was declared or until they died.

Dutch police said that the hunger strike was illegal and tried to stop it. When the hunger strikers and their supporters refused to stop, the police cordoned the area and moved in.

In the ensuing melee, about 30 Tamils were arrested, reports said. All those arrested were released the next day and the hunger strikers continue their fast.

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