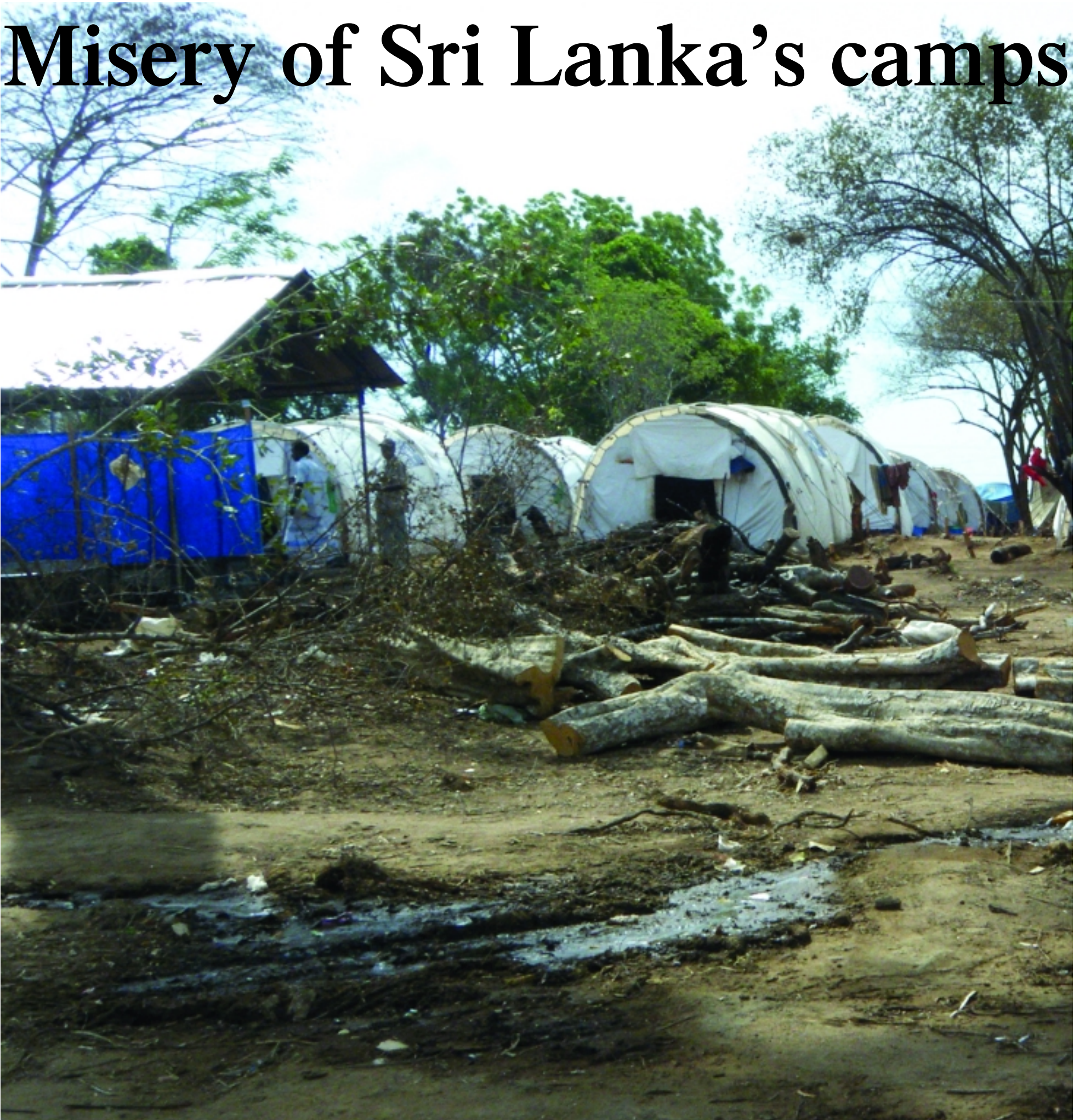


Railroaded by the needs of the terrorism industry

PAGE 9

Misery of Sri Lanka's camps



NEWS

Pathmanathan in Sri Lankan custody

SELVARASA Pathmanathan, who had been appointed Head of International Relations by the LTTE leader and chosen to lead the 'next steps of the freedom struggle' by the Executive Committee of the LTTE, was announced to be in the custody of the Sri Lankan government on August 5.

Pathmanathan was reported to have been seized from a hotel in Kuala Lumpur on August 5 by a Sri Lankan intelligence team acting with support from Malaysian officials.

Diplomats in Colombo said Pathmanathan had not faced an extradition hearing while human rights campaigners said they feared he could be tortured in detention. They compared his arrest with American 'rendition' detentions, reported the Telegraph newspaper.

Pathmanathan had left his home in Bangkok, where he is believed to live with his Thai wife and daughter, for a meeting with other senior LTTE figures, the British Telegraph newspaper cited Tamil sources as telling it.

One was Balasingham Balendran, the brother of the Tigers' former political chief, Nadesan, and Nadesan's son, both of whom are understood to be based in London, the paper said.

Pathmanathan had been in a room at Kuala Lumpur's First Tune Hotel when he received a call and left the room to continue

his conversation, reported DBS Jeyaraj, a Tamil political commentator.

He never returned to his guests, DBS said, adding that his caller has said he had heard a 'thud' on the line and a commotion before the line went dead.

The Malaysian authorities have refused to comment on his arrest, while Human Rights Watch has called for an explanation of how he was deported, and expressed concern for his welfare in Sri Lankan custody.

"The Sri Lankans do not have a good reputation on the treatment of terrorism suspects. We're approaching the Sri Lankan government and Kuala Lumpur for further information. We remain concerned about the detention process. He should have received the [proper] judicial process before a court," said Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia spokeswoman for Human Rights Watch.

Earlier reports had said that Pathmanathan was picked up on Thailand, but the Thai government denied that claim.

"The Tamil Eelam leader was not arrested in Thailand as was reported by a foreign news agency," Panithan Wattanayakorn, acting government spokesman, said on Friday August 7.

He admitted that the person concerned had made visits to Thailand. State security agencies were checking information relat-

ing to the case, he said.

The manner in which Pathmanathan was 'arrested' and ended up in the custody of the Sri Lankan state that is widely accused of war crimes, genocide and state terrorism, raises serious concerns about the world outlook to political justice, Tamil circles told TamilNet.

Meanwhile, acknowledging Pathmanathan's custody, Colombo's minister and spokesperson Keheliya Rambukwela said on August 7: "There was some false hopes that after the LTTE was crushed that movement could be revived with Pathmanathan. But we have proved that we have the capability of getting to them from wherever they emerge."

Colombo refused to identify the country where he was arrested but said that its personnel were involved in the act.

For quite some time now, certain intelligence and journalistic sections were pressing for the arrest of Pathmanathan. Some of them were dubious with seeming sympathy to him in order to deviate blame and ultimately to confuse the course of Tamil nationalist struggle, said Tamil circles.

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan spokesman Keheliya Rambukwela said Friday, August 7, that his government would "allow any country to question Mr Pathmanathan now in custody keeping with the agreements and



Selvarasa Pathmanathan's fate is unknown since he was abducted in Malaysia and transferred to Colombo. Human rights groups expressed concern about this 'extraordinary rendition'

conventions with those respective countries."

India and Sri Lanka have registered cases against him with the Interpol long back.

Colombo's track record about Tamil political prisoners is notorious for more than quarter a century, ever since the 1983 brutal prison killings of the leaders like Kuttimani and Thangadurai and humanitarian workers like Dr. Rajasundaram.

Sri Lankan state has graduated now, with what seems to be international assent, to incarcerate

cadres of the liberation struggle in tens of thousands and civilians in hundreds of thousands as war prisoners without any guarantee to their lives.

Currently there are fears about the lives of hundreds of senior LTTE leaders.

As war criminals and terrorists hide behind the banner of state and the world doesn't care for a whole nation incarcerated, a revealing news was Reuter reporting that stock market significantly went up in Colombo with the arrest of Pathmanathan.

Tissainayagam awarded for 'courageous and ethical journalism'

J. S. Tissainayagam, a Tamil reporter sentenced on August 31 to 20 years in prison, has been named the first winner of the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism.

Tissainayagam was selected for the award, by the US branch of RSF and Global Media Forum, a company founded by Mackler to train journalists and non-profit organizations to use the media as a tool for social change.

The Peter Mackler Award, named for a 30-year veteran of Agence France-Presse (AFP) who died last year, rewards journalists who fight courageously and ethically to report the news in countries where freedom of the press is either not guaranteed or not recognized.

Tissainayagam will be formally awarded the Peter Mackler prize at a ceremony at the National Press Club in Washington on October 2. Marcus Brauchli, executive editor of The Washington Post, will be the keynote speaker.

"We are happy to reward J.S. Tissainayagam in 2009, a terrible year for Sri Lanka," AFP quoted Jean-Francois Julliard, secretary-general of the Paris-based press rights group Reporters Without Borders (RSF), as saying.

"This country needs journalists who are determined and concerned with finding the truth," Julliard said in a statement issued hours after Tissainayagam was jailed for 20 years on charges of supporting terrorism.

"J.S. Tissainayagam is one of those and should never have been imprisoned," Julliard said. "Sri Lanka will never know peace if the press is not free to play its role of fourth power," Julliard said. "Sri Lankans have the right to be informed about what is happening on their island."

"They have the right to read words written by men like J. S. Tissainayagam."

Tissainayagam, who has been cited by US President Barack Obama as an "emblematic exam-

ple" of a persecuted journalist, was sentenced to 20 years of hard labor.

He was found guilty on charges of receiving money from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and causing racial hatred through his writings about Tamils affected by the LTTE war for a separate homeland.

Tissainayagam contributed to Sri Lanka's Sunday Times and ran a website, Outreachsl.com, that focused on the island's Tamils.

RSF condemned the "extremely severe" sentence imposed on Tissainayagam saying it "suggests that some Sri Lanka judges confuse justice with revenge."

"With the help of confessions extracted by force and information that was false or distorted, the court has used an anti-terrorism law that was intended for terrorists, not for journalists and human rights activists," it said.

The Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism was founded in June 2008.



Tissainayagam given 20 years hard labour for his journalism

NEWS

Video of Sri Lankan 'war crimes'

Andrew Buncombe

The Independent

THE naked man, his hands bound behind his back, is pushed to the ground. Then a man in military uniform delivers a forceful kick to the back of the prisoner's head with the heel of his boot. As the prisoner slumps forward, another soldier points his automatic weapon and fires a single shot. The man's body jolts. "It's like he jumped," laughs one of the giggling soldiers.

As gunfire rattles, the camera pans left to reveal a further seven bloodstained bodies, all handcuffed and bound, and – with one exception – similarly naked, strewn on the ground. The camera then pans right again, as another naked man is forced to the ground and shot in the back of the head. This time the body falls backwards. These scenes, captured on video, allegedly show extra-judicial killings of Tamils by Sri Lankan troops earlier this year in the bitter and bloody endgame of the country's civil war. As government forces made a decisive thrust into the stronghold of rebel forces to end the decades-long conflict, a Sri Lankan soldier apparently took this footage, which was then smuggled out of the country by activists. It may constitute the first hard evidence for those who believe war crimes were committed in the effort to crush the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The significance of this footage – particularly shocking for the seemingly casual way in which the killings were carried out – is even greater given the way that journalists and independent observers were prevented by the government from reaching the war zone. The UN estimated that 10,000 civilians were killed in what was, in effect, a war with no outside witnesses.

The Sri Lankan army dismissed the footage as the latest in a series of fabrications designed to damage the country's image. But campaigners and Tamil politicians said it was vital that a full inquiry be carried out into the alleged killings. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has voiced his support for an investigation into possible war crimes if convincing evidence emerged.

So too has Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific director, Sam Zarifi, who said: "We have received consistent reports that violations of the laws of war, as well as international human rights law, were committed by both sides in the conflict and we call once again for an international, inde-

pendent and credible investigation into what took place during the final days of the conflict."

The footage was obtained by Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS), an organisation made up of several dozen Sri Lankan journalists who have fled into exile in recent years as the intimidation and killing of media professionals has soared. The group, whose members now live mostly in Europe, said the film was taken by a Sri Lankan soldier in January using his mobile phone as the army was battling to take the LTTE's de facto capital, Kilinochchi. A spokesman for the group, who asked not be identified, said: "It was as if someone was filming it for fun. This was being circulated by the soldiers. It has been going round for a while. It was taken as if it was a souvenir." He said rumours of such footage had existed for a long time but this was the first time such film had entered "the mainstream".

There is no way to confirm the authenticity of the footage, first broadcast by Channel 4 News. Likewise, there is no way of proving that the people apparently shot dead are Tamils, as the JDS has claimed. But this is not the first time that images from the war zone, captured on mobile phones, have been circulated within Sri Lanka. Earlier this year a man in the eastern city of Trincomalee showed The Independent pictures of a naked, dead woman. He said the woman was apparently an LTTE fighter, killed as government troops advanced.

Nor is it the first time that the army has been accused of carrying out summary justice. In May, it emerged that two LTTE leaders had been shot dead while trying to surrender. Tamils living outside Sri Lanka said the two men were carrying a white flag when they were shot by troops. A senior government official admitted that the two men had been trying to give themselves up for several days. At the time, the EU called for an inquiry into possible human rights abuses committed during the final months of the war.

A spokesman for the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights (UNHCR) said: "If it can be verified, this footage could be evidence of the sort of war crimes we fear were committed by both sides. We have repeatedly said there should be an investigations into the closing stages of the conflict. There needs to be some sort of accountability."



This is not the first footage of extra judicial killings, but this is the first to make the mainstream media

Call for international probe

INTERNATIONAL human rights organizations led the call for an international inquiry into possible war crimes in Sri Lanka, following the airing of a video showing men in Sri Lankan military uniform shooting dead naked and blindfolded men in a field.

A UN expert also joined the call, as did Norwegian external affairs minister Eric Solheim, who was involved in the Norwegian facilitated peace process in Sri Lanka between 2002 and 2006. The summary execution of prisoners is a violation of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and a war crime.

The video shows men in Sri Lankan army uniforms firing assault rifles point-blank at two naked, blindfolded, and bound men sitting on the ground. Eight other bodies are visible on the ground nearby, all but one unclotted. According to Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka, a multiethnic exile organization, the video was taken by a soldier with a cell phone in January 2009.

Sri Lanka's military had said the video was a fabrication designed to "discredit" its armed forces.

Philip Alston, the UN Special

Rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions, said Colombo had categorically denied the allegations, but stressed the need for an investigation.

"If the government's position [of categorically denying the allegations] is validated as a result of an inquiry, the international community can rest easy and the government will have been vindicated," AFP quoted Alston as saying.

"There is no justification for not moving ahead with such an investigation in view of the government's confidence that such atrocities were never perpetrated by its armed forces," he was quoted as adding.

The images, which he described as "horrendous," indicate a serious violation of international law if found to be authentic, he told AFP. Alston also pointed out that he had asked permission to visit Sri Lanka on several occasions in recent years, but Colombo had not given him the green light, according to the AFP report.

Sri Lanka Army soldiers action, of stripping naked the Tamil victims before summarily executing them, is more akin to what the Nazis did to the Jews, depriving

their victims of the last shred of their humanity before dying," Professor Boyle of Illinois College of Law observed to TamilNet.

The "disturbing video ... showing the apparent summary execution of prisoners by Sri Lankan soldiers underscores the need for an international commission of inquiry into possible war crimes committed by both sides during the armed conflict in Sri Lanka", Human Rights Watch said.

The organizations announced that while it could not confirm the video's authenticity, an independent expert it had consulted found nothing in the video that would dispute its authenticity.

"The blood, blindfolds, and mud of this apparent atrocity makes nonsense of President Rajapaksa's claims of a clean war against the Tamil Tigers," said Steve Crawshaw, UN director at Human Rights Watch. "An international inquiry needs to get to the bottom of this and other war crimes committed during the past year's fighting."

Human Rights Watch called for the United Nations secretary-general or other UN body to cre-

continued on p17

Sri Lanka denies troops involved

SRI Lanka "categorically denied" that its troops were involved in war crimes against Tamils after a video surfaced allegedly showing a government soldier shooting two naked men in the back of the head.

A spokesman for the Sri Lankan high commission in Delhi said his government "categorically denied" the report of atrocities.

"We have seen many cases where unverified video and photographers have been used to undermine Sri Lanka. This appears another example," he said.

"The troops only engaged in a military offensive against the LTTE."

The Sri Lankan High Commission in London refused to be interviewed by Channel 4, which aired the video, but provided a written statement.

"The High Commission of Sri Lanka categorically deny that the Sri Lankan armed forces engaged in atrocities against Sri Lankan Tamil community. They were only engaged in a military offensive against the LTTE," it said.

"The High Commission has

noted that in many instances in the past, various media institutions used doctored videos, photographs and documents to defame the Sri Lankan government and armed forces. Therefore, we request you to verify the authenticity of the video footage before the telecast".

Sri Lanka's military said the video clip was 'a fake'.

Sri Lankan army spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara said the footage was a fabrication designed to discredit security forces.

NEWS

Thousands of Tamil civilians affected by Manik Farm floods

HEAVY rains flooded nearly 2,000 makeshift shelters housing Tamil war refugees detained by the government, raising concerns about their health.

The strong rains in mid August lashed the northern Vavuniya district where over 280,000 people displaced during the final stages of the ethnic conflict live in military-run camps under tight security, the United Nations said.

The rain, which fell heavily for much of the afternoon on Saturday, sent rivers of muck cascading between tightly packed rows of flimsy shelters, overflowed latrines and sent hundreds of families scurrying for higher ground.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said 1,925 shelters had been "damaged or completely destroyed" in the biggest of a series of displaced persons camps known as the Manik Farm area after three days of heavy rains and flash flooding.

It also warned that nearly 100 toilets have been flooded and that the water there was "stagnant and contaminated."

The rains washed away wooden toilets and damaged sewer lines and water treatment plants, government officials said.

The heavy rains came two months ahead of the monsoon season in the north of Sri Lanka. Aid groups and diplomats have expressed concerns about overcrowding and outbreaks of disease because of poor sanitation.

Monsoon rains are expected in October, and many aid groups worry that the hastily built camps will not survive the inundation.

"If only three or four hours of rain cause this much chaos, only imagine what a full monsoon can cause," said David White, country director for Oxfam.

An internal U.N. memo obtained by CNN indicated more than 300 families marched to the main access gate at one camp to protest the conditions.

"Though ... not violent, they seemed disgruntled and agitated due to the sufferings and expressed their resentment by hooting and making noises," the memo read.

"If the rain continues, which is very likely, then the overall situation may go out of control of the management and lead to serious security threat," the memo said, adding that contingency plans were being "discussed and worked out."

The government says the affected people have been moved to higher grounds within the camp, which is run by the government.

Nearly 1,000 families have been relocated, said Keerthi Ekanayake, senior official from the government's agency for dis-

aster management. He said the floods were receding and the situation was under control. The families were being provided with cooked foods, water and other facilities, he said.

Sri Lanka's Resettlement Minister Rishard Bathurdeen has blamed UN agencies for what he calls a poorly constructed drainage system that collapsed during the floods.

But Human Rights Watch said the government must take "full responsibility" for the squalid conditions. The New York-based group urged Colombo to release inmates to live with their families and friends, a demand consistently rejected by authorities.

"Locking families up in squalid conditions and then blaming aid agencies for their plight is downright shameful," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "This is illegal, dangerous, and inhumane," he said, adding the floods had "heightened the risk of outbreak of disease".

The government has severely restricted access to the camps and does not allow journalists to visit the area on their own.

The government has promised to resettle around 80 percent of the displaced people by year end. Colombo says people will have to remain inside the camps until the military screens out remaining Tamil Tiger fighters.

Sri Lanka's former premier and main opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe said the camps threatened to sully Sri Lanka's international image.

Meanwhile, the government released nearly 600 Hindu and Catholic priests and their families who had been held in the internment camps.

"We are taking measures to free the remaining members of the clergy at the earliest," P.S. Charles, the senior civil servant in the area, told AFP.

A total of 571 Hindu priests and their families, five Catholic priests and two nuns were allowed out, she said, adding another 220 were still in the camps.

Other reports said the Catholic priests were weighing whether they should return to the camps to serve there or work in parishes as their bishops have asked.

"It is an ethical dilemma," acknowledged one of them, Father E.S.C. Mariathas, parish priest of St Anne's Church in Mullaitivu, who spoke to UCA News over the phone.

Father Anthony Victor Sosai, vicar general of Mannar diocese, likewise described the priests as "now in a dilemma about their future." He confirmed that the bishops of Jaffna and Mannar had asked the priests to take other assignments.



Over 2000 shelters were flooded as Manik Farm was deluged in three days of heavy rain. Aid workers are concerned over the fate of the trapped civilians when the monsoon hits in October.

The priests, released on August 26, are mentally and physically drained, he added. "They are still haunted by images of death and destruction from the war."

Oblate Father S.E. Reginald,

who served in a counseling center in Kilinochchi, Jaffna diocese, is still in a refugee camp, although authorities have not explained why.

There is also uncertainty surrounding the fate of an elderly

priest, Father G.A. Francis Joseph, who has been missing since the final stage of fighting, which ended three months ago, when tens of thousands were displaced. He had been working in a church at Ampalkulam in Kilinochchi.

NEWS



Displaced Tamil civilians continue to be held in the sprawling Menik Farm complex with its deteriorating sanitary conditions, despite government pledges of resettlement

Token IDP release ahead of elections

FOUR thousand Tamil refugees from Internally Displaced Persons ("IDP") camps have been resettled in the lead up to the elections in a rare stunt to win election support. These were special cases where the refugees were either originally residents from Jaffna or the East but had got caught up in the IDP camps and were not originally residents of the conflict zones of the final stages of the conflict. The first of the refugees released were 1,100 IDPs from Manik Farm. These were originally residents from Jaffna and the East who got stranded when visiting the conflict zone and were later detained in Manik Farm. This was followed by the release of 3,112 IDPs from the long standing Jaffna IDP camps. These too were originally Jaffna residents who had visited Vanni but were then brought back to Jaffna and detained in the Jaffna IDP camps.

They were released at a ceremony in Jaffna where Basil

Rajapakse, the brother and advisor of President Mahinda Rajapakse, attended. Basil Rajapakse congratulated the Minister Douglas Devananda of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (an armed paramilitary group which was also standing in the recent elections) for his work towards the release of the IDPs. Ratneswaran, a SLFP (the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party headed by Rajapakse) candidate also claimed credit for the release of the IDPs. In the meantime, the IDPs were left to wait for about 12 hours in the scorching hot sun in Jaffna for the ceremony to begin before their release. These are believed to be the first set of releases from the IDP camps for anyone of the ages between ten and sixty years.

There are estimated to be about 280,000 IDPs in the Manik Farm complex, situated near the town of Vavuniya. Conditions in Manik farm have been appalling with limited food, water and sanitation.

IDP release suspended

SRI Lanka authorities, without prior notice and without citing any reason, have suspended Saturday, August 29, a planned release of a group of 600 persons out of about 3,000 internally displaced persons who are residents of Trincomalee district and fled from Vanni and currently being interned in military supervised Menik Farm in Vavuniya to their own villages, civil sources in Vavuniya told media.

More than 300,000 Tamil civilians are currently being held in the internment camps in Vavuniya.

The internees were brought from Menik Farm on Friday and were sheltered in Vavuniya Saivapragasa Girls Maha Vidiyalayam to be sent to their villages in Trincomalee district Saturday.

But on a sudden decision taken by the civil authority on the orders of higher officials, the internees were sent back to Menik Farm internment camps.

About four hundred IDPs were sent back on Friday night. The rest IDPs were sent Saturday, sources said.

Meanwhile, quoting a source close to Sri Lankan President, Rvaya newspaper in Sri Lanka reported that the release of IDPs has been postponed indefinitely with the government focusing on

a plan to resettle them along with the new Sinhala and military settlements that are to be set up in the north.

According to Ravaya, the source further said that the plan is to resettle people in areas in Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, below Mannar and above Vavuniya, where there are currently no people.

Adding weight to Ravaya's claims, Northern Provincial Council (NPC) recently instructed government authorities to set up offices in Vavuniya and its surrounding area to carry out the administration of Kilinochchi and Mullaitheevu districts in Vanni which had ceased to function due to the war on Vanni.

Though it is said that the above decision has been taken due to Sri Lanka Army (SLA) refusal to resettle Vanni Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in their own villages in the near future, the real intention of the government is to hold the Vanni IDPs in the detention camps permanently, the sources added.

Government has directed high officials of the NPC to take action to set up temporary buildings along with the government offices in Vavuniya to house the government administrative structures of Kilinochchi and Mullaitheevu districts.

Besides, all government officials who had been serving in Kilinochchi and Mullaitheevu districts and given temporary permission to serve in Jaffna district and other areas have been instructed to immediately return to Vavuniya to assume duties.

The temporary permission granted to the above government officials has been cancelled with immediate effect, the sources said.

Though some high government officials had visited Kilinochchi and Mullaitheevu districts with the intention of reactivating the administrative structures their efforts had been blocked by SLA.

As SLA refuses to allow Vanni IDPs to be resettled in their villages, government is making plans to hold the IDPs in the detention camps permanently by relocating the entire government administrative structures to Vavuniya, the sources said.

Half of the government stipulated period of 180 days to resettle the displaced persons has lapsed.

Meanwhile, Disaster Management and Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe told parliament on Wednesday, August 19 that the displaced would be resettled by December 31.

Dolphin Van scare in internment camps

DISPLACED Tamil people are being daily abducted from camps in Vavuniya by people who come in vans, a displaced person told the BBC. Speaking with BBC Sandeshaya from a camp for internally displaced people (IDP) in Vavuniya, the IDP said all the displaced try to hide in their tents as the 'Dolphin vans' arrive in the camps. "We do not know what exactly happens as everybody

hides as soon as they see the vans. But I know that two to three people are disappearing daily," he said. Some IDPs may also be secretly leaving the camps by paying the authorities, he said. "Some people have suddenly disappeared. I don't know whether they were abducted or left with the help of the authorities." Those who have been already identified as LTTE operatives are some-

times helping the security officials to recognize those who have earlier supported the LTTE, according to the man. The Tamil man who did not want to be identified due to fear for his safety said they are only allowed to meet relatives separated by a barbed wire fence. "There are special tents outside the camps to meet the relatives. They are not allowed to touch anybody as both parties have to

stay five metres away from the fence. If they need to hand over something, biscuits, fruits, etc, they have to throw it over the fence." Three meals are provided in the camps, he said, but as the food is prepared for thousands of people at once, they are unpalatable. When food is delivered the IDPs have to stay in queues for more than an hour, depending upon the camp, to get their quota

of meals or dry food. As the rainfall continues, he said, it is very difficult to live in the camps due to floodwaters and bad smell from the lavatories that have overflowed. The IDP says that it might even take about three years for the authorities to resettle all the displaced at the current pace. Nearly 300,000 IDPs are held by the authorities in different camps in Vavuniya.

NEWS

US warns of conditions in camps

EXPRESSING serious concern over humanitarian condition of people in refugee camps, the Obama Administration renewed its call for Sri Lanka to release 300,000 Tamil war refugees from their camps.

Speaking to journalists on World Humanitarian Day, Wednesday August 19, Eric Schwartz, the US assistant secretary of state for population, refugees and migration charged the Sri Lankan Government of virtually forcing the Tamil people to be confined to a particular area against their will.

"Involuntary confinement is especially a source of concern given the recent rains and given the coming of the monsoon season," said Schwartz. "It makes it all the more important that release from confinement be an issue that friends of Sri Lanka continue to raise," he told reporters.

Sri Lanka which is forcibly holding 300,000 Tamils in internment camps since the end of the war in mid May says it needs time to weed out suspected Tamil Tigers from the camps to prevent a revival of the Tigers' four-decade struggle for an independent Tamil homeland, one of Asia's longest and bloodiest conflicts.

Schwartz, who visited a camp in Sri Lanka last month, said the conditions were "not great."

"There is concern about communicable diseases, especially when you're in a temporary facility," he said. "When things like rain happen, the trees get washed away and the potential for communicable diseases get much greater."

He said that a survey also showed a "relatively high" level of malnutrition among children, although he said part of the reason may have been the conflict itself rather than life in the camps.

Heavy rains this week flooded nearly 2,000 makeshift shelters in the camps, making the risk of disease spreading amongst the malnourished and sick inhabitants.

Extracts from the press session relating to Sri Lanka follow:

SCHWARTZ: In Sri Lanka, the continued confinement against - involuntary confinement is especially a source of concern given the recent rains and given the coming of the monsoon season, and it makes it all the more important that release from confinement be an issue that friends of Sri Lanka continue to raise. This - I had told my counterparts in Sri Lanka that I would be returning to continue our engagement with the government and others in Sri Lanka on these issues. I very much welcome the

fact that they welcomed my coming back, and I certainly intend to do that in the near future.

Q: Can you talk about the couple of euphemisms, really - the freedom of movement is at play, as you said in Sri Lanka, and then you spoke of the continued confinement. Could you speak a little bit more about your trip?

SCHWARTZ: I don't think there's anything ambiguous about the word of "confinement against their will." That phrase - I'm not sure what other meaning you can draw from the phrase "confinement against their will," and that's what I said, in Sri Lanka. I spoke about three minutes ago - I used the phrase "release from confinement." I'm not quite - and I spoke about freedom of movement, and I said that displaced persons everywhere around the world make their own decisions and choices about when they feel they want to go home. So I think all of those sentences and phrases, you know, are pretty unambiguous. You know, so our position is that people who are displaced should be agents of their own destiny. If I could think of another way to say it, I would.

Q: So how many people are you talking about? What are the figures that you have? Did you go to that area, have a look and see the conditions the people who were being confined in?

SCHWARTZ: Well, I went to this very large facility in Vavuniya, and it's a very large displaced person camp and it looks like displaced person camps in many other parts of the world. And conditions were not great. People were getting basic services. The camp administrators and the nongovernmental organization partners and the international organizations that are on the ground were doing, I think, everything within their power to make life as livable for these people as possible.

But nobody wants to be in such a place. And there were a number of issues that I identified that I felt, if acted upon, could make the conditions of that situation better. And those included providing more access to information for people. In my limited encounters with people in the camp, I was struck by the fact that they really had no sense of - or little sense of what was going to happen to them, what the plans were for them. And I think people, generally speaking, who are in difficult circumstances, can deal with those circumstances more effectively emotionally and psychologically if they have some sense of what the future brings.



Robert Blake has been meeting Tamil Diaspora groups in the US and warning that unless a political solution acceptable to the Tamils is reached soon, there remains a chance for the LTTE to regroup

US discusses 'political reconciliation' with Diaspora

IN a meeting with representatives of US Tamil diaspora organisation, the US State Department urged the Sri Lankan government and the US Tamil community to seek opportunities to engage one another on political reconciliation and the reconstruction of Sri Lanka. US Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake and Chargé d'Affaires in the US embassy in Colombo, James Moore (participating by video link) held discussions with representatives of sixteen Tamil groups on Tuesday August 11.

A statement released by the US state Department following meeting stated, the US officials welcomed the opportunity to discuss the Tamils' concerns and per-

spectives and had "underscored the importance of political reconciliation".

The US government has meanwhile stressed to the Sri Lanka government that "to achieve a lasting peace, it must promote justice and political reconciliation for all parties" the statement also said.

In an interview with rediff.com, the Indian news portal, before the meeting, Blake had pointed out that Sri Lanka has to involve the Tamil Diaspora in its dialogue with the Tamil community to resolve the island's ethnic crisis.

"We hope that our friends in Sri Lanka will make progress towards political reconciliation

because really that's the only way that there's going to be a definitive end to terrorism," Blake told rediff.com. "And that means figuring out ways to have a dialogue with the Tamil community."

This includes "the wide Tamil community inside, but also outside Sri Lanka, about exactly what those measures should entail," he told rediff.com.

He emphasized that this "needs to take place sooner rather than later," the news portal said.

The Obama administration has expressed its deep disappointment with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse for relegating the power-sharing with the Tamils to the back-burner, rediff.com said.

US warns of renewed violence

A senior US diplomat has warned that the Sri Lankan government's failure to share power with the minority Tamils could lead to renewed violence, reported BBC.

Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake told the BBC a delay in devolving powers might create new opportunities for the Tamil Tigers to regroup.

Mr Blake also urged Colombo to resettle swiftly the hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians displaced by the war. This would have a bearing on US aid for reconstruction and resettlement, he said. The warning by the US assistant secretary of state is a clear sign that Western nations are getting increasingly frustrated with the delay in the political reconciliation process in Sri Lanka.

There was optimism that the

end of the conflict between the majority Sinhalese-led government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would pave the way for a power sharing agreement with the Tamils. But the Sri Lankan President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, recently said any political solution could come only after his re-election, which may happen next year, reported BBC.

The delay has not impressed many in the West, including Mr Blake.

"There is a possibility that they will alienate the Tamil community further, and again exacerbate the divisions and perhaps even give new opportunities for the LTTE to organise," he told the BBC.

"So, it is very, very important for Sri Lanka to engage in their

own dialogue with the Tamils not only inside Sri Lanka but also outside Sri Lanka, and again to hasten the process of reconciliation," he added.

The senior US official also appealed for the rapid resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians displaced by the war and now confined to government-run camps in the north.

Mr Blake said the condition of these internally displaced people was linked with Washington's financial aid to Sri Lanka.

"Our ability to provide money for reconstruction and for resettlement and livelihood and other activities will depend a lot on the progress that Sri Lanka makes in terms of abiding by its commitment to resettle the IDPs as quickly as possible," he said.

NEWS

Australian politicians troubled by Sri Lanka conditions

A group of Australian parliamentarians have expressed concern for the plight of thousands of refugees being held in Sri Lankan military run camps at a meeting with members of the Tamil youth at Parliament House on August 18. In a free flowing discussion covering conditions faced by displaced civilians and a lack of independent access to refugee facilities, the panel also condemned reports of intimidation directed at the Tamil Diaspora from the Sri Lankan Government, before citing the promised resettlement of the 300,000 refugees within a 6 month period as the basis for future engagement.

In an hour long meeting, the parliamentarians discussed at length various concerns raised by a youth delegation headed by Vishna Sivaraj and Seran Sri-balan, who had been welcomed just minutes after completing a 300km walk over eight days from Sydney to Canberra to raise awareness of the imprisonment of Tamil refugees in military run camps.

The politicians shone a critical eye over recent actions carried out by the Sri Lankan Government, including the blocking of the Vanangaman Mercy Mission, an aid ship organised by members of the Tamil Diaspora to deliver essential goods to thousands of refugees that was turned away by authorities.

"This should be of great concern to all of us because we are talking about the fundamentals of human existence. If you can't get food and medical aid to the people who so desperately need it, we have got to speak out against it" said MP John Murphy.

Responding to a letter he received highlighting the Sri Lankan Government's threats of arresting anyone who was seen speaking out against authorities upon return to Sri Lanka, MP Murphy said: "We are very concerned, at the heart of what we want to do here in Australia is ensure that human rights and dignity of those people are preserved, and if we are getting a message now that the government now don't even want the Diaspora of the world speaking out for the poor people...this gravely concerns us as parliamentarians".

Discussing possible avenues for future action, the delegation,

consisting of Senators Mark Furner and Claire Moore, and Members of Parliament Jill Hall, Laurie Ferguson, John Murphy and Julie Owen, cited Mahinda Rajapakse's seemingly doomed pledge to resettle civilians detained in government camps within 6 months as the basis for higher level discussions with Australian Foreign Minister Steven Smith.

The ministerial representatives also praised the efforts of Vishna and Seran for their inspiring dedication and resolve in raising awareness of the issue, describing the Tamil Diaspora as "fine citizens who have made invaluable contributions to Australian society".

Earlier in the day, addressing a welcome event Liberal party Senator Gary Humphries said the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka must remain at the forefront of the global conscience amid the "very serious prospect of continued breaches of human rights" faced by over 300,000 Tamil IDPs at the hands of the Sri Lankan Government.

Citing allegations of abuse and continued censorship imposed by the Sri Lankan Government throughout military controlled refugee camps to dismiss claims of post war stability, senator Humphries urged the international community "to be vigilant, to watch carefully what is going on, to ask questions about how the Sri Lankan government is treating people" in order to force the Rajapakse regime to address the plight of thousands of Tamil civilians.

The Senator voiced growing concern that "the end of the phase of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka between the Government and the Tamils has unfortunately only marked the beginning of another phase, which has by all reports led to some very serious abuses of human rights".

In a wide ranging speech illustrating concern over the Tamil issue from all sides of Australian politics, senator Humphries told awaiting media and members of the public that it is vital to ensure that "people are aware that the apparent end of the armed conflict should not mean that we cease to have an interest in what is happening in Sri Lanka or things have now 'settled down', they clearly haven't".



The Canadian government voted in favour of an IMF loan to Sri Lanka despite mass protests

Canada missed opportunity to right Sri Lanka's wrongs

Jo Becker
Toronto Star

IN voting last month to approve a \$2.6 billion (U.S.) IMF loan to Sri Lanka, the government of Canada squandered an opportunity to press the government of Sri Lanka on its treatment of war-affected civilians following its military victory over the Tamil Tigers in May.

The United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Argentina – holding more than 30 per cent of the IMF's shares – made the highly unusual move of abstaining from the vote, largely because of human rights concerns. It's too bad that Canada, with 3 per cent of IMF shares, didn't join them.

During the final months of fighting between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), both sides were responsible for grave violations of the laws of war that resulted in thousands of civilian deaths. As their territory shrank, the Tamil Tigers used the civilians under their control as human shields, shooting and killing people who tried to flee the war zone. The government urged civilians to congregate in so-called "no-fire" zones, but then fired artillery indiscriminately into these densely populated areas. Both sides refused to take adequate steps to allow a humanitarian evacuation, despite public UN concerns regarding the unfolding bloodbath.

IMF officials and their directors typically insist that human rights are outside the IMF's mandate, but in this case members' revulsion with Sri Lanka's conduct during and after the war delayed the vote on Sri Lanka's

requested loan by three months. In May, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said it was "not an appropriate time" to consider the IMF loan, while U.K. Foreign Secretary David Miliband called the situation a "civilian catastrophe" and expressed concern about whether the government would use IMF funds in a "responsible and appropriate way."

Once the vote was finally scheduled, they and others used abstentions to register their strong disapproval. Germany has never before abstained from an IMF vote on human rights grounds. The U.K.'s last abstention was in 2004.

Unfortunately, Canada's vote to support the loan may be interpreted as an endorsement of Sri Lanka's practices. Sri Lanka's pro-government Daily News claimed that the vote "vindicated" the government and boasted that by refusing to make human rights concessions, President Mahinda Rajapaksa had "refused to compromise the country's sovereignty and independence." The government's minister of export development and trade, G.L. Peiris, called the loan "a clear vote of confidence."

On July 22, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon wrote to Human Rights Watch, stating that the government would "evaluate any request for IMF financial assistance in terms of how effective it would be in helping to support the country's public finances and lead to meaningful improvements in the welfare of all Sri Lankans, particularly those affected by the humanitarian situation."

However, the government's conduct since the end of the war shows little regard for the humanitarian crisis. Instead, it is undermining hopes for stability and creating more bitterness and resentment among the country's Tamil minority.

The government has virtually imprisoned up to 300,000 people displaced by the war in overcrowded government-run camps, refusing to allow them to leave to stay with family or friends and even refusing family members access to the camps. To keep information emerging about the conduct of the war, it is severely restricting the operations of relief organizations, and refusing access to journalists and human rights monitors. It has placed thousands of suspected LTTE members in incommunicado detention, and it continues to accuse journalists who criticize government actions of being LTTE sympathizers.

In these circumstances, IMF members must question whether loaning money to Sri Lanka is a good investment or can achieve its objectives.

In reality, the vote on the loan has only given Sri Lanka immediate access to \$313 million. Canada and other members of the IMF board will have to approve subsequent tranches of funds each quarter over the next 20 months. Canada still has a chance to use these quarterly reviews to make sure human rights progress is made. It should make clear that if it sees no progress, it will abstain from future votes. That's the best way to ensure that the loan benefits all Sri Lankans.

Jo Becker is an advocate for Human Rights Watch and the author of *Living in Fear: Child recruitment by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and Funding the Final War: LTTE Intimidation and Extortion in the Tamil Diaspora*.

EDITORIAL AND OPINION

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Laid Open

Sri Lanka's defiance exemplifies the core of the crisis.

The engineered humanitarian crisis engulfing the Tamil people is deepening. Despite the alarm and concern expressed by various governments and other international actors, the Sri Lankan state continues to heap new miseries on hundreds of thousands of Tamils it has incarcerated in barbed wire-ringed and militarized camps. At the same time, the Sinhala state continues to subject the Tamil areas of the island to further economic blockade and other forms of military repression, while those Tamils living in the south live on a knife-edge of arbitrary arrest, murder and rape by its various forces. This is not a question of state weakness, but the contrary: it is racist authoritarianism.

The Sinhala state's rabid defiance to external calls over even basic humanitarian issues is instructive. The international community should recognize that a Sinhala polity which so deliberately and blatantly subjects the Tamils to deprivation is simply not going to recognize Tamils' rights, let alone accommodate their grievances or political aspirations. The Tamil people should realize the futility of relying on Sri Lanka being embarrassed into behaving by international condemnation alone.

Something more needs to be done if the - now open - Sinhala chauvinism long embedded in the Sri Lankan state and polity is to be checked and a secure and stable peace made possible. Racism, especially when entrenched thus, cannot be effaced by suasion and engagement, but by making it utterly impossible for it to hold sway. In short, as in the case of racist regimes that dominated peoples in other parts of the world, the international community must be prepared to isolate and exclude the Sri Lankan state until it is prepared to adhere, no matter how reluctantly, to international norms of governance.

As Professor Sankaran Krishna has succinctly put it, "Sri Lanka's movement from a peaceful, indeed idyllic Ceylon to a synonym for macabre ethnic violence is the story of a majority community's attempt to fashion a nation in its own image through monopolisation of the state and of the consequent emergence of a secessionist ethnonational movement." For much of the recent past, a succession of Sinhala leaders have been able to use the rhetoric of liberalism - democracy, free markets and peace - to secure international financial, military and political support as they continued to fashion a Sri

Lanka in which the minorities may exist at the pleasure of the majority.

This is why, having defeated the military resistance of the Liberation Tigers, the Sinhala polity is pursuing a particular set of governance practices. Herein lies the rub. Whilst international actors are bewildered by the Mahinda Rajapakse regime's recalcitrance and violent conduct, both Tamils and Sinhalese recognise that these practices are fully in keeping with the 'Sinhala-Only' - or 'Sinhala-First' - ethos that first sparked communal separation and antagonism in the island since almost immediately after independence.

The crisis in Sri Lanka now, more than ever before, reflects the irreconcilable contradiction between two different visions of what Sri Lanka should be: a liberal state and a Sinhala-Buddhist one. The international community aspires to an equitable, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious state in which the rule of law and absolute equality of individuals hold. But the Sinhala-Buddhist nation-building project - of which the ethnic conflict is both consequence and form - aspires to a Sinhala-land in which the majority's culture, religion and ethnicity is privileged above those of others.

This is not some shrill exaggeration on our part. This logic is clearly embedded in Sri Lanka's constitution and flag, for example, and in state practices, including recruitment to the military, the direction of state investment, discrimination in humanitarian provision and so on. It is reflected in the unguarded rhetoric of all Sinhala leaders - including those embraced by the global liberal community.

The Tamils are not going to accept Sinhala domination. Indeed, it is the violence and deprivation unleashed on the Tamils by successive Sinhala governments that have sedimented an uncompromising commitment within the Tamil psyche to securing equality between the two nations. The conduct of the Rajapakse regime has resulted, especially since the Sinhala state declared victory over the LTTE, in a welcome closing of ranks amongst Tamils of various political hues: the case for an independent Tamil Eelam has been incontrovertibly made.

These are therefore formative times for Sri Lanka's future. The central question is will the international community be able to contain and constrain the Sinhala nationalism now rampant in Sri Lanka. The future peace rests entirely on this.

Searching for peace in a kingdom of vultures

Nirmanusan Balasundaram

Generation C Magazine

"PEACE is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part."

The armed conflict in Sri Lanka came to an end by mid May 2009 - after more than three decades - with a 'military victory' of the Sri Lankan government. The Rajapakse regime won the Eelam War IV, but a Tamil spirit for autonomy remains - as it occurred - due to misrule, an identity-based state patronage, exclusion and mismanagement of scarce natural resources, underdevelopment, and violation of human rights.

The Tamil people's political aspirations were once again proved through the recent Jaffna Municipality and Vavuniya Urban Council elections (both districts are in the Northern part of Sri Lanka). Even though the government has won their battles, it has failed in the resettlement, reconciliation and reconstruction process so far. Whether nonviolent or violent, the struggle of Tamils is closely related to the denial of their basic human needs.

The international community has already failed to deal with the grievances of the Tamils. They actually have a moral responsibility and an obligation to protect the rights of the Tamils, at least within the present context, because they supported the brutal war, led by the Government of Sri Lanka, which destroyed nearly 400 thousands structural and cultural lives of the innocent Tamil people.

It was pathetic that the international community appealed to Tamil people to enter into the Government controlled territory at the peak of this war. In fact, the situation of Tamil people who came from their traditional homeland to military-run camps is appalling. Nearly 300 thousand Tamils are detained inside these internment camps. The war on the displaced people is persisting in a different manner. "This 'war' against civilians must stop," said James Ross, legal and policy director at Human Rights Watch.

Even after the defeat of the LTTE, the government has not yet terminated their military establishments despite the fact that grave sufferings of Tamil people affected by the war is still continuing. The defence-expenditures of Sri Lanka are increasing dramatically year by year. Only for 2009 it is \$177.1 billion and growing. Sri Lanka is the most militarized state in South Asia,

and has the greatest percentage of its GDP contributing to military expenditure in the world.

The current and immediate main responsibility for the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL), the international community and the Tamil Diaspora is to protect detained Tamil people and ensure their right to live. The role of the GoSL is to take appropriate action, such as to treat internally displaced persons in accordance with international standards, this includes guaranteeing their freedom of movement, access to international and independent local media, human rights and humanitarian organization to the internment camps and other war affected areas in the Northeast. Especially, to take steps to form a UN human rights monitoring body.

The international community should put pressure on the GoSL in order to bring about a state of normalcy on the island. This would ensure the fulfilment of all nations' basic needs and that all nations are to be treated equally and respectively - with dignity. The Tamil Diaspora should re-strategize their activities in order to provide their kith and kin with a better future within both their soil and soul. Graves are crying to create peace on this earth. Atrocities are being sought by justice. Victims are struggling for survival. Enough is enough! The oppressed people cannot bear further pains. The international community's geopolitical interests and the self-interest of politicians based on "peace" approaches may divide polarized communities even more. There are wounds. We have to treat them properly, instead of hiding. Just and sustainable peace can be achieved only through addressing the 'real' root causes of the conflict, not through deprivation of basic human rights. And this durable peace will be emerging with the victory of justice.

Hence, meaningful steps should be taken by the international community in order to facilitate a just peace. Steps which come about through genuine international intervention in Sri Lanka, which was earlier known as "the pearl of Indian ocean". And while we are waiting for the international community to hear our solemn cries, we do by no means limit our involvement. The spirit for self-autonomy of the Tamil people is growing, even though they are facing severe challenges every day in the hope of a free and just home land.

OPINION

Terrorists or tomorrow's allies?

Bruce Haigh

The Canberra Times

AS they say, history is written by the victors. Equally it might be said that commentary and analysis are provided by those with access to power and influence.

During negotiations over the formation of Israel, frustrated Zionists, members of an organisation known as the Stern Gang, murdered the British ambassador to Egypt, Lord Moyne.

In 1946 they blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, killing 91 guests.

Today, at least in the Western media, the role of Zionists in the formation of Israel is not portrayed as terrorism, nor is the role of the Israeli Defence Force in the invasion of Gaza in early January 2009.

The Viet Cong were once referred to as terrorists, but no longer, not since they and the North Vietnamese Army won the war.

Nelson Mandela was convicted of sabotage under white South Africa's notorious terrorism laws in 1964 and sentenced to life in prison on Robben Island.

A substantial shift in power between white and black South Africans saw Mandela become president of South Africa in 1994.

At Mandela's trial, known as the Rivonia Trial, a lawyer on the defence team, Harold Hanson, said that a nation's grievances could not be suppressed people would always find a way to give voice to those grievances.

"It was not their aims which had been criminal, only the means to which they had resorted."

He pointed out to the judge that the Afrikaner people, to whom both he and the judge belonged, had conducted an armed uprising against British imperialism and had been charged by the British with rebellion and treason.

After the Boer army was defeated by the British in 1900, the Afrikaners conducted guerrilla warfare for a further two years; in fact they invented it in its modern form. Guerrilla warfare to some is another form of terrorism, but that did not worry Western governments in their relations with Afrikaner governments from the 1950s to the mid-1980s.

The struggle in Sri Lanka is a civil war, just as it is in Afghanistan.

Without undertaking a detailed analysis, the Australian government accepted the position

of the Bush government and declared both the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Taliban terrorists, ignoring that in the case of the latter many were once members of the Mujahideen, supported by the United States in the war to expel the Soviets from Afghanistan. The situation in Afghanistan appears to defy rational analysis now that the Taliban have been branded terrorists and supporters of al-Qaeda.

The civil war in Sri Lanka began with bullying and attacks on Tamils in the north by the majority Sinhalese not long after Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948.

The first act of bastardry was when the Sinhalese Sri Lanka Freedom Party made the demand in 1954 that Sinhala should be the official language. By the election of 1956 it was the dominant political issue.

Under constant and growing pressure, relations between the two communities became worse until in 1977 attacks by members of the Sinhalese community killed 125 Tamils.

From 1983 the conflict between the Sinhalese majority in the south and the northern Tamil minority came to dominate Sri Lankan politics.

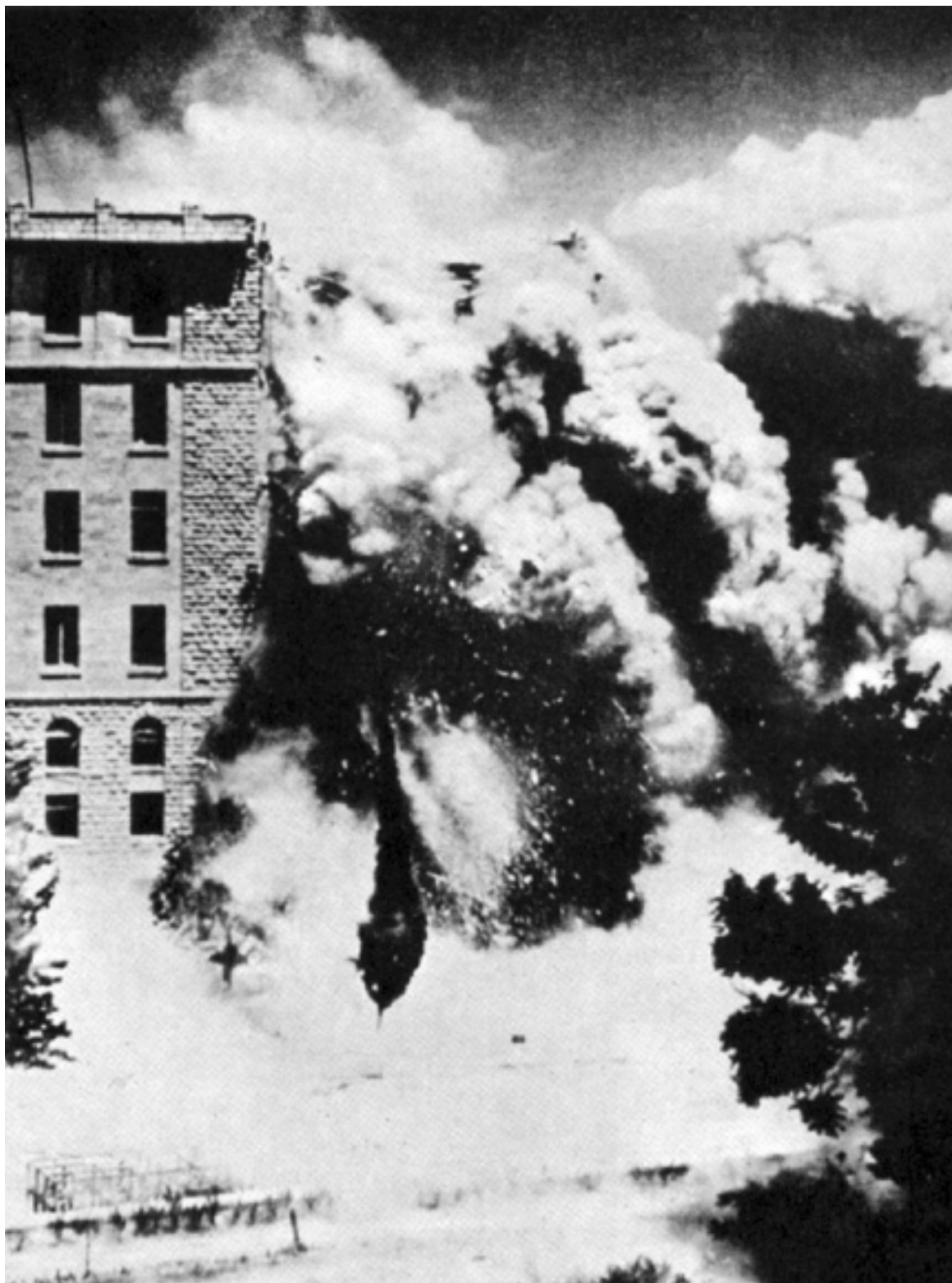
And so it continues to this day. The Sinhalese Government has a monopoly on military power.

The response of the Tamils to this imbalance was similar to the Palestinians and the African National Congress they undertook acts of random terror designed to bolster their limited military resources and create an environment for negotiation.

As with the IRA, secret negotiations with organisations deploying terror as a weapon can take many years, in this case complicated by the fact that the Sinhalese also employed the use of torture and terror. A peace settlement was brokered in 2002 by a representative of the Norwegian government, Erik Solheim.

However, by 2006 it had broken down.

Backed by the Bush administration, who provided military equipment and training in the cause of the war against terror, a revitalised Sri Lankan army launched a massive assault against the Tamil Tigers in the second half of 2008. The result was a massacre of Tamils.



The bombing of the King David Hotel killed 91 guests but Israel is now a close British ally

Around 300,000 were rounded up and put into concentration camps where conditions for the occupants remain in violation of UN Human Rights Conventions relating to the treatment of prisoners of war, women and children.

These conditions are a breeding ground for hatred. The Sri Lankan Government argues that it is holding Tamils in detention in order to weed out members of the Tamil Tigers, but the process has taken far too long and looks more like retribution.

The media has been denied access to these camps which, in view of recent clandestine evidence of the extra-judicial killing of Tamil males by the Sri Lankan military, is understandable.

Tragically, Australia has taken sides in the Sri Lankan civil war. Instead of offering humanitarian assistance to those in the camps, it sent the deputy chief of the navy, Rear Admiral Davyd Thomas, to Colombo in June 2009 to urge that young Tamils be prevented from coming to Australia.

His plea amounted to an

endorsement of the continued detention of Tamils in appalling conditions. Kevin Rudd supports this position and said as much in an interview with Greg Cery on ABC Brisbane on July 1, 2009.

In the meantime, Sri Lanka has become a military state. Despite the ending of the war, the Sri Lankan army will expand from 200,000 to 300,000 to become an army of occupation in the north and east. The Tamils are the big losers. Hated by the Sinhalese, where will they go? They cannot be held in camps indefinitely, where the child mortality rate is estimated to be in the hundreds each month. Another Australian response has been to give the expanding terrorism industry, driven by an unsophisticated and ill-advised Australian Federal Police, its head.

They continue to pursue through the Supreme Court of Victoria charges of terrorism against three young Tamil men for allegedly being members of the Tamil Tigers and sending funds to that organisation. Why pursue the case when the Sri

Lankan Government says that organisation no longer exists? In any case, funds dispatched to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam when it existed could have been used for any purpose, humanitarian, educational as well as military, given that the organisation constituted the governing authority in the north. What a changed nation we are when we send admirals to argue for incarceration of innocents rather than act as a vehicle for humanitarian assistance. We have been railroaded by the needs of the terrorism industry, which has fuelled apprehension and fear, when what is required is a more sophisticated understanding of the causes of terrorism. Dealing with poverty, racism, the disproportionate distribution of power, abuse of power and the debilitating effect of corruption would enable the causes of terrorism to be addressed before violence is embraced as a course of action against injustice.

Bruce Haigh is a political commentator and former diplomat who served in Sri Lanka.

Unlock the camps launched

MARKING 100 days since the end of the bloody conflict in Sri Lanka and the imprisonment of over 280,000 Tamil civilians in deplorable 'concentration camps', British Tamils Forum launched an unprecedented "Key" campaign, calling for the 'unlocking of the camps.

The launch event, attended by UK Parliamentarians, human rights activists, councillors and me-mbers of community organisations, was held at the Boothroyd Suite, Portcullis House in Westminster on Thursday, 27 August from 4pm.

In an effort to raise awareness of the plight of the Tamil civilians who remain incarcerated in military-run camps, the UK Tamil Diaspora launched a "continuous campaign", vowing to take action until all the illegally detained people are freed and resettled in their own homeland.

The British Tamils Forum announced that it joined the calls by UK parliamentarians, human rights groups and international institutions to demand for an int-ernational commission of inquiry into war crimes and gross violations of international human rights laws. It also urgently appealed for international pressure to be exerted on the Sri Lankan government to free the imprisoned civilians in light of increasing evidence of ethnicity based violence and extrajudicial killings by government forces.



US Tamil boycott campaign targets Victoria Secret, Macy's

TamilNet

U.S. Tamil expatriate groups in New York as part of their continuing campaign urging U.S. companies to avoid trade with Sri Lanka, targeted Victoria Secret, the lingerie giant with \$5.6b net sales in 2008, and the retail giant Macy's which had \$26.3b sales in Fiscal Year 2007, Saturday 15th August in Manhattan at 34th street and Broadway junction, on Tuesday 18 August.

MACY'S and Victoria Secret have retail stores across from the area where the protesters stood, and carry many garments Made in Sri Lanka. 55million of the 70m Victoria's Secret panties made every year come from Sri Lanka, according to US media reports in 2006. Many shoppers did not know that Sri Lanka exported over 50% of its garments to US, and that Sri Lanka was forcibly holding 300,000 Tamils in concentration camps.

"This is slavery," many shoppers said after reading the hand-out, according to those present at the protest.

"Check the label before you buy, for Sri Lanka is committing genocide," said a message in the flyer the protesters were distributing to the interested shoppers.

"Ethical shopping is in the natural psyche of US shoppers, and we believe a sustained campaign of small scale protests, held widely in different states in front of identified big-label stores that sell Colombo-made clothing and other consumer items, will likely have a debilitating effect on Sri Lanka's economic performance," said Siva Nathan, the organizer of the protest.

"We hope to slowly expand the scope of the boycott campaign, and anticipate the protests to spread to other major cities in the US in the coming months, and get the attention of the Tamil diaspora worldwide."



White House Tamil protest draws media attention

TamilNet

COMMENTING on the increase in number of protests after President Obama came to power, Politico.com, a site run by a Virginia-based popular American political group and edited by former Washington Post staffers, noted that the "most memorable crowd of protesters outside Obama's door [White House]" was a Tamil expatriate group which has "caught the attention of administration officials and jour-

nalists alike with its unflagging, mind numbing chants."

Tamils from several states in the US and Canadian Tamils have been protesting in front of the White House for the 102nd contiguous day Thursday, August 20, urging the Obama administration to take steps to safeguard Tamil civilians and to enforce a just and fair solution to the Tamil National question.

"President Obama! President

Obama!" women and men on a megaphone would call as the rest of the crowd - sometimes as large as 300 people - echoed, "Stop the genocide".

Politico commented on the chanting, adding that White House reporters have complained on the repetitive chanting distracting reporters' concentration on other matters.

"We are going to keep going until our loved ones are freed from concentration camps and they can live in their own places without any torturing," said one Tamil Tiger protester who would identify herself only as coming

from Canada.

"The babies are starved to death. Even the old people are dying in the concentration camps," Politico quoted a Canadian Tamil protester as saying.

"When slaughtering of Tamil civilians by the Sri Lanka military inside the "Safe Zone" reached unprecedented levels we decided to start a protest on a continued basis in front of the Lafayette park in full view of the White House. 11th May was the first day, and we have continued since that date. We will continue until U.S. takes some concrete measures to alleviate the tragedy that

had befallen on the Tamil people," Dr Thayaparan, the main organizer of the protest told TamilNet.

Evidence gathered by The Times newspaper has revealed that at least 20,000 Tamil people were killed on the Mullaiththeevu beach by Sri Lanka Army shelling. While UN remained silent, confidential UN documents acquired by The Times record nearly 7,000 civilian deaths in the 'no-fire' zone up to the end of April. UN sources said that the toll then surged, with an average of 1,000 civilians killed each day until May 19.

NEWS

Municipal polls: strong showing by TNA despite low turnout

IN the first local elections in 11 years in two towns in northern Sri Lanka, concluded with a record low voter turnout indicating a Tamil decision to boycott the elections despite the big show made by the Colombo government. According to the BBC, voter turnout was just 20 percent in the town of Jaffna, and 52 percent in Vavuniya, both of which are in the northern region largely controlled by the Liberation Tigers for years and are now depopulated, since the government has not yet given more than 300,000 ethnic Tamils permission to leave internment camps and return home. Despite such a large number of missing Tamil voters, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) won the most seats in Vavuniya's local government and the second most in Jaffna.

The government coalition, which included Tamil politicians, did win control of Jaffna, but finished third in Vavuniya, behind another Tamil party. Government forces captured the Jaffna area from the Tamil Tigers in the 1990s, but the town of Jaffna remained behind a LTTE-held section of territory for years.

The government coalition had

been expected to win in both towns. BBC's Charles Haviland commenting on the results said that it is difficult to say exactly why the vote went the way it did, since independent journalists were barred from the region by the government. Mian Ridge writing for the Christian Science Monitor's suggested that the Tamils voted for TNA, a party seen as sympathetic to the LTTE, as they shared LTTE's aspiration for a separate Tamil state.

Jehan Perera, executive director of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka, a nonpartisan advocacy group also shared the view of Ridge. Perera said: "The vote in the north was very clearly for Tamil rights and autonomy," he says. Tamil political observers pointed out that with only 20 percent turn out in the municipal elections, the clear verdict of the Eelam Tamils is no confidence in the Sri Lankan state and its institutions. They cited the manner in which the elections were conducted denying entry to outside witnesses, while 40 percent of the voters not present, 50 percent of polling cards not delivered, Colombo-sponsored forgery of ID cards and people coerced.



Monitors observe as Tamils line up to cast their vote in the Vavuniya local government polls

'Winners never charged'

DISMISSING calls for war crime investigations as something for losers and not winners, Sri Lanka's foreign secretary and newly appointed permanent representative to the UN denounced the need for a political solution for the Tamil national question.

"If you look at the history of war crimes there isn't one instance where a winner of a war has been tried before a Tribunal. They have always been set up for losers. And if you were to take winners then the start would have to be taken elsewhere. Sri Lanka did not drop atom bombs or destroy entire cities during the war," said, Palitha Kohona in an interview to Daily Mirror, Thursday August 20.

However, Francis Boyle, Professor of International Law at the Illinois College of Law, mocked Kohona's statement pointing to the fate of Slobodan Milosevic, and added, "Milosevic died on trial before the ICTY for these international crimes, including the genocidal massacre at Srebrenica."

Boyle said, as legal counsel for the Mothers of Srebrenica and Podrinja, he had convinced the Honorable Carla Del Ponte, the Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), to indict Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for every crime in the ICTY Statute, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"Today, Milosevic's henchman Radovan Karadzic—self-styled President of the self-styled Republika Sprka - is on trial before the ICTY for every crime in the ICTY Statute, including the genocidal massacre at Srebrenica," Prof. Boyle said.

Commenting on international calls for a political solution to the ethnic division in Sri Lanka, Kohona said: "There is this thinking that all our problems can be solved by applying a political

solution. I fail to see the logic behind this,"

The foreign secretary while justifying uselessness of political solution, made a special reference to a bunch of Tamils in the diaspora with whom his government had made a rapport.

"The government has engaged expatriate Tamils in a very constructive manner. The government in February brought in a representative group of Tamils with whom we had a dialogue for 2 days. We continue to do that," he said adding, "I learnt from the BOI recently that there are 31 buildings coming up in Colombo all being built by expat Tamil people. Our efforts to engage them is certainly bearing fruit."

The foreign secretary was of the opinion that there was no need for a political solution to North and East, as Tamils are not living there anymore.

"Where are we going to apply this solution? Are we going to do that to the 54% of those living in and around Colombo or those in the North and East? In the North the entirety of the Tamil population is 750,000. There were 300,000 in the Wanni area who are now in the camps. There's no one outside the Wanni area. The total number in the Jaffna peninsula is miniscule compared to the rest of the island," he said rejecting any problems to Tamils.

"If there were a problem with them why have 54% of the entire Tamil speaking people of this country migrated to Sinhala speaking areas? They did it on their own. If they had a problem why did they voluntarily come to these areas?" was his question.

"It is easy to suggest that a political problem will solve, when, even if we have problems, they are certainly not in a political form. Like in every other country people have problems with job opportunities or getting children to school etc. We need to address them but not through an

ethnic approach", he said.

On APRC, his response was: "We made the mistake in the past of trying to impose the solution from the top. But on this occasion President decided that any changes would carry the majority support."

He was confident that Rajiv vision of 1987 is the ultimate contentment of India: "India has been very supportive of our issues. We are confident of this support. Their own suggestion is that we should implement the 13th amendment. And the President has said he will. I don't think India has gone beyond that in their discussions."

On the conditions of the internment camps he cited a British delegation: "The cross party delegation from the House of Commons publicly said that these camps were better than they had seen elsewhere."

Palitha Kohona accused the international agencies for not agreeing to make 'permanent' facilities in the internment camps: "The latest is the rains. Of course the conditions would deteriorate. When the government asked the international agencies in paving the paths and roads in the camps they refused on grounds that these would be converted to permanent camps. Today the same agencies are complaining that the roads are unusable. The same with the lavatories."

The foreign secretary who was jubilant of the support of India, Pakistan, China, Russia and some other countries not just in the 'tasks' of Colombo but in the human rights council too, in 'disgracing the opponents,' ended his 'interview' with Colombo's FO agenda deviously put as a question.

According to reports, militarization of diplomacy in the lines of certain totalitarian regimes has changed the face of Colombo's foreign office in a drastic way in recent times.

Jaffna Municipal Council

| Party | Votes Received | Seats Won |
|---|----------------|-----------|
| UNITED PEOPLE'S FREEDOM ALLIANCE (UPFA) | 10602 | 13 seats |
| ILANKAI TAMIL ARASU KADCHI (ITAK) | 8008 | 8 seats |
| INDEPENDENT GROUP 1 | 1175 | 1 seat |
| TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT | 1007 | 1 seat |
| UNITED NATIONAL PARTY | 83 | no seat |
| INDEPENDENT GROUP 2 | 47 | no seat |
| Valid Votes | 20922 | |
| Rejected Votes | 1358 | |
| Total Polled | 22280 | |
| Registered Electors | 100417 | |

Vavuniya Urban Council

| Party | Votes Received | Seats Won |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| ILLANKAI TAMIL ARASU KADCHI | 4279 | 5 seats |
| DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT | 4136 | 3 seats |
| UNITED PEOPLE'S FREEDOM ALLIANCE | 3045 | 2 seats |
| SRI LANKA MUSLIM CONGRESS | 587 | 1 seat |
| UNITED NATIONAL PARTY | 228 | no seat |
| SRI LANKA PROGRESSIVE FRONT | 10 | no seat |
| INDEPENDENT GROUP 1 | 6 | no seat |
| INDEPENDENT GROUP 3 | 1 | no seat |
| INDEPENDENT GROUP 2 | - | no seat |
| Valid Votes | 12292 | |
| Rejected Votes | 558 | |
| Total Polled | 12850 | |
| Registered Electors | 24626 | |

NEWS

MNCs flock to get 'fruits' of war

TamilNet

ROMAN Scott of Calamander Group, who believes Tigers have been effectively contained, suppression of free expression by Colombo will not affect business, and economics is not really that strong related to democratic principles, is an early bird in the island for investment, says the latest issue of Forbes India. Sri Lanka is going to be "one of the best investment opportunities on the planet for the next two to three years," said the Singapore based British equity manager.

According to Forbes, companies from some countries have a natural advantage either because they have the trust of the Sinhalese or understand the local nuances better. China falls into the first category and India into the second. These two countries are likely to play a major role in the reconstruction.

A 'political solution' not to meet Tamil aspirations but to 'facilitate' the interests of the multinational corporations (MNC) is what in the agenda, Tamil circles said adding that even such a 'package' will be delayed until the 'stake-holding' powers and their MNCs are firmly established in the 'conquered land.'

The bankruptcy of the totalitarian regime in Colombo and the situation in which political decision making for the Tamil homeland is snatched away from Tamils have become ideal for the multinational corporations and the powers behind to have their ways, Tamil circles said.

Chandra Lal de Alwis, president of the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka, which recently sent a business delegation of 43 businessmen to Jaffna, told Forbes: "China, being a large country, is putting a lot of money here. Also, politically they are not bothered. With India, there were some political issues. But all that is getting cleaned."

An old Tamil village in the Puththalam district, Nuraichchola, is now the location of a Chinese-built thermal power plant. The ceremony marking its completion was attended by Buddhist monks from China and a statue of Buddha brought from China is to be installed at the plant. This was illustrative of how 'communist' China gets the trust, Tamil circles pointed out.

Meanwhile, the IMF loan has facilitated financial stability to Colombo, attracting the arrival of MNCs. Asian Development Bank is expected to give an assistance of \$300 million.

Apart from India's thermal power project in Trincomalee and under sea transmission by Power Grid Corporation, the Indian enterprises in the fray are such as Larsen and Toubro, Indian Oil Corporation, Ashok Leyland,

Asian Paints and Bharti Airtel.

Pakistan will be provided with an exclusive industrial zone in the island, media reports said. China has already been given with such a facility by Sri Lanka's investment promotion agency.

However, according to Forbes, "the sweet spot for the foreign investor is not the war zone. The relatively peaceful Western Province, where Colombo is located, is a ready market waiting to be tapped fully. The infrastructure and a consumer economy are already there, but the war kept away many providers of goods and services. They will come now. This province, which accounts for half of Sri Lanka's \$40 billion economy, will be the first to gain from peace."

But, Rajapaksa is offering a 15-year tax holiday for investments in the north and east and India has already started pumping hundreds of millions of dollars into Sri Lanka for the rehabilitation of 280,000 internally displaced persons living in government camps, Forbes said.

Two weeks ago, a Bangalore based Concerned Citizens Forum of South Asia met the Indian foreign minister S.M. Krishna and submitted a memorandum to government of India: 'A roadmap for relief, resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced and war-affected people of Sri Lanka by the Government of Sri Lanka.'

The forum that included some academics, human rights organisations and Sri Lanka's former foreign minister, Mr. Mangala Samaraweera, raised the issues of resettlement, rehabilitation, human rights, damage control and respect to demographic and cultural patterns. But, there is nothing said on restoring the sovereignty of Tamils in their homeland, which would sort out all the issues that had been raised by them.

"First brutally abusing the human rights of a people to shatter their spirit and then in the guise of restoring them blunting the basic political question is the trick experimented with Eezham Tamils by the forces of the new order. Powers, their MNCs, politicians, academic institutions and media - all are in the game," Tamil circles said.

Forbes India puts a choice to Sri Lanka: "All said, Sri Lanka has two choices today. It can shrink back into a protectionist regime and miss this historic opportunity to become an economic power. Or, it can take foreign capital and expertise to rebuild itself, solve the ethnic problem, add the Tamil population to the work force and forget violence forever."

Adding the Tamil population to the work force is the answer of the MNCs to the Tamil national question.



Multinational corporations lining up to profit from the end of the war in Sri Lanka are concerned that access to labour is restricted by the Tamils being held in camps and by the delay in opening the North

Sri Lanka eyes peace dividend after end of war

Mel Gunasekera
AFP

CONFLICT-TORN Sri Lanka is banking on foreign cash to rebuild shattered infrastructure as the island emerges from decades of ethnic civil war, officials say.

Analysts are expecting a large investment peace dividend in the country where bomb attacks and fighting dented investor confidence and kept high-spending tourists away from the tropical South Asian island.

There will be plenty of opportunities for investment once the former war zone in the north and east is open for business, said Chinthaka Ranasinghe, head of Research at John Keells Stock Brokers in Colombo.

"These areas have been virtually bombed out. This throws up enormous potential" for investment, Ranasinghe told AFP in an interview.

"A large number of houses need to be built" along with "new roads, schools, telephone and electricity lines... the investment rebound will be spectacular," he said.

Three months after the end of the war against the Tamil Tiger rebels, the government has yet to announce a timetable for when the once-embattled region will be fully open for business.

But the government hopes to resettle at least 80 percent of the nearly 300,000 people in the north who were displaced during the last stages of the conflict by the end of 2009 as mine clearing

work progresses.

The treasury estimates nearly three billion dollars will be spent by international donors and the government over the next three years to rebuild roads, bridges, electricity, water and sewer lines in the once troubled regions. No breakdown of the money has been given.

Through donors, public and private partnership projects, more than two billion dollars of that money will be spent in the north where the final battles of the war were fought in May, the treasury said. The rest of the money will be spent in the east which was wrenched back from the LTTE in 2007.

Dialog Telekom, the Sri Lankan unit of Malaysia's Axiata Group Berhad, was the first international company to set foot into the former war zone, by launching a mobile phone network -- initially meant for use by government troops there.

Dialog will spend up to 10 million dollars this year to install 60 base stations in the former war-torn areas, said chief executive Hans Wijayasuriya.

"We see pent-up demand once the government's resettlement plans get underway," Wijayasuriya said.

Home to about 14 percent of Sri Lanka's 20 million population, the island's north also has fertile farmland, fishing and mineral deposits, said Ranasinghe.

With a 2.6-billion-dollar bailout package granted by the International Monetary Fund to shore up the economy following the war that left tens of thousands dead, the central bank plans to tap

overseas markets in September to raise 500 million dollars through a sovereign bond.

The funds will be used to help offset the government's share of the rebuilding costs in the conflict areas, the bank said.

"There's strong investor interest in Sri Lanka now that the war is over," said the bank's assistant governor Nandalal Weerasinghe.

Sri Lanka is also forecasting a 20 percent increase in foreign investment to one billion dollars this year, mostly in IT and telecoms-related sectors.

Singapore-based HSBC economist Prakriti Sofat says Sri Lanka is on the foreign investor radar.

"Tourism, BPO (business process outsourcing) and manufacturing are key sectors ripe for foreign direct investments," she said.

The Manila-based Asian Development Bank also has announced plans to raise Sri Lanka's annual loan allocation to 300 million dollars in 2010 from 200 million dollars.

"Mainly this would be spent on infrastructure development in roads, power, and water sectors," the bank's Colombo-based economist Narhari Rao said.

Colombo's benchmark stock index has climbed 33 percent since the Tigers were defeated.

Securities and Exchange Commission chief Channa de Silva said he expects further gains. "Once the news the war has ended and the peace dividends that follow sink in, we're confident there will be a lot of interest from foreign fund managers," de Silva said.

NEWS

Sri Lanka is India's latest security nightmare

PC Vinoj Kumar
TruthDive

SRI Lanka is fast emerging as a security nightmare for India. Basking in its military success against the separatist Tamil Tigers, Sri Lanka is cementing its ties with China and Pakistan, ignoring Indian security interests. By embracing India's enemies and inviting them home, treating them as guests, and doing business with them, Sri Lanka is embarking on a dangerous foreign policy that has the potential to undermine India's national security.

The Chinese are developing a port in Hambantota in Southern Sri Lanka, which experts feel could be converted into a Chinese naval base at short notice. In a recent interview to Tehelka, Colonel (retired) R Hariharan, a Sri Lanka expert, had stated: "Though Hambantota is being developed as a merchant shipping port, it can be converted into a naval base by adding a few facilities."

The Chinese are building an expressway in Colombo and are also involved in an important power project in North Sri Lanka. As the two countries keep signing more collaborative projects, and the Chinese presence increases in Sri Lanka, it would bring the Chinese within breathing (or striking) distance of India's southern coast, where several sensitive installations including atomic power plants are located. Chinese personnel will be all over Sri Lanka.

In a recent article titled, 'Growing Chinese influence in Sri Lanka', Gunjan Singh at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, writes: "This increasing closeness between Colombo and Beijing is a reason for concern for New Delhi. During the construction of the (Hambantota) port a large number of Chinese experts are to be expected to be present in the region and this is proving to be a security concern for the Indian side."

Sri Lanka doesn't lose an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to one-China policy. By doing that Sri Lanka accepts Chinese claims over Taiwan. But Sri Lanka maintains a stoic silence on Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh. It doesn't want to spoil its relations with Pakistan or China by coming out with a pro-India stand on Kashmir or Arunachal Pradesh. For all the military and financial assistance it has got from India, Colombo has done

few favours in return.

Despite bending backwards to woo Sri Lanka, by providing it with arms and training its personnel, India has failed to win over Colombo to its side. Journalist Nitin Gokhale has revealed in his recent book, 'Sri Lanka: From War to Peace': "Publicly India maintains that it would not give Sri Lanka any offensive weapons. Yet, in early 2006, India quietly gifted five Mi -17 helicopters to the Sri Lankan Air Force...The only Indian condition was these helicopters would fly under Sri Lankan Air Force colours. New Delhi clearly did not want to annoy UPA's Tamil Nadu allies like the DMK unnecessarily."

Who are these Chinese whom the Sri Lankans are cozying up to? What intentions do they have about India? D S Rajan of the Chennai Centre for China Studies recently shook the Indian security establishment with his article titled, "China should break up the Indian Union, suggests a Chinese strategist." A China expert, with the added advantage of knowledge of the Chinese language, Rajan translated the contents of a Chinese article that advocated breaking up of India.

Rajan states in the article: "The writer (of the Chinese article) has argued... (that) China in its own interest and the progress of whole Asia, should join forces with different nationalities like Assamese, Tamils, and Kashmiris and support the latter in establishing independent nation-states of their own, out of India. In particular, the ULFA in Assam, a territory neighboring China, can be helped by China so that Assam realizes its national independence."

Strategic expert B Raman commends Rajan's analysis. Rajan concludes his article stating: "In any case, an approach of panic towards such outbursts will be a mistake, but also ignoring them will prove to be costly for India."

Raman writes in his blog: "What is wrong in this analysis? In the 1950s, a number of maps of the Indo-Chinese border started circulating in China and appearing in sections of the Chinese media. The Indian intelligence rightly brought these to the notice of Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister, who took up the matter with Chou En-lai, his Chinese counterpart. He assured Nehru that these maps were circulated by private individuals and had been prepared by the Taiwanese before 1949. He told Nehru that



Tamil Nadu police white out the word 'Eelam' in political posters put up in Chennai (top centre)

India should not worry about them. Nehru was shocked before the 1962 war when the Chinese used the very same maps, which Chou had described as not official, for claiming large parts of Indian territory and occupying much of it. Today, it is on the basis of the very same maps which the Chinese portrayed as not official that they are claiming Arunachal Pradesh as Chinese territory."

Discussing the combined threat posed by China and Sri Lanka, M G Devasahayam, a retired bureaucrat, writes in The Statesman dated 22 August 2009, "The premonition of Bharat Verma, editor of the Indian Defence Review, that 'China will launch an attack

on India before 2012 and there are multiple reasons for a desperate Beijing to teach India the final lesson, thereby ensuring Chinese supremacy in Asia in this century' has been in the making for the last few years. By that time Sri Lanka would be fully prepared with an Armed Force of 300,000 (the 8th largest in the world), near-fully trained and equipped by China and Pakistan, forcing India to open a massive land-sea front in the south, which till now has been peaceful. It is thus evident that India's 'foreign policy' on Sri Lanka has been palpably against national interest and security."

As if Chinese presence in Sri Lanka was not enough, Colombo

is now all set to train Pakistani army personnel in anti-guerilla warfare in soon-to-be established training schools in the Tamil dominated North Sri Lanka. Lankan army chief Lt General Jagath Jayasuriya has said that these schools would be established in Mullaitivu, Killinochchi and Vavuniya. The proposed training to the Pakistani personnel is to be provided based on a request from Islamabad to train their officers in 'small team operations.' What the Pakistanis are capable of doing to weaken India is known to everyone. Their presence near India's southern borders should ring the alarm bells in the Indian security establishment

India's hand in Sri Lanka's brutal war revealed

INDIA'S covert support to Sri Lanka in its war against the LTTE assumed many forms, ranging from back-channel talks and a tacit endorsement of Colombo's destroy-LTTE mission to supply of military hardware and sharing of real-time intelligence, according to a newly published book written by Nitin Anant Gokhale, NDTV's Defence and Strategic Affairs Editor.

New Delhi helped Colombo in myriad ways despite its public hands-off posture and denial of offensive weapons to the Liberation Tigers due to domestic political compulsions, contends Gokhale, in the book titled Sri Lanka: From War to Peace. "Outwardly, India did adopt a hands-off policy vis-a-vis the Sri Lanka conflict. But that was because of domestic political compulsions born out of the fact that the ruling United Progressive Alliance government in New Delhi was dependent upon the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party from Tamil Nadu for its survival in Parliament," Gokhale writes.

"Aware of DMK chief M Karunanidhi's soft corner for Prabha-

karan, the UPA did not think it politically prudent to annoy the DMK patriarch by openly supporting the Sri Lankan government against the LTTE. So, publicly India maintained that it would not give Sri Lanka any offensive weapons." According to Gohale Indian Air Force provided five Mi-17 helicopters to Sri Lanka which were used in operations against the LTTE to be used in combat operations. Indian Navy's Dornier aircraft fitted with powerful rad-ars actively flew reconnaissance missions over the high seas to locate LTTE's "floating Warehouses," that carried arms and ammunition.

"Whenever a suspicious ship was detected, the Indian Navy passed on the information to the Sri Lankans. The real time intelligence helped Sri Lankan Navy to track and then destroy the LTTE arms consignments," says Gokhale.

According to Indian and Sri Lankan Navy sources quoted by the author in his book, well-coordinated operations by the two navies between 2006 and 2009 actually broke the backbone of the LTTE's Sea Tigers.

The author quotes Sri Lanka's Navy Chief Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda to underline the Indian Navy's contribution in locating and destroying at least 10 'floating warehouses' owned and used by the LTTE for storing arms, ammunition and even armoured personnel carriers.

Gohale in his book singles out the Indian Navy for special praise. The Indian Coast Guard gifted a Sukanya Class offshore patrol vessel (OPV) to the Sri Lankan Navy in 2002, which played a major role in several daring missions launched by the Sri Lankan Air Force to rescue the Army's Deep Penetration Units when they were surrounded by LTTE's counter-infiltration units.

According to Gohale, there was close high level communication and coordination between Sri Lanka through out the brutal war, in which 50,000 Tamils were killed, with Colombo keeping New Delhi informed of every step. "Three top Sri Lankan officials were in constant touch with India's National Security Adviser, the foreign secretary and the Defence Secretary" Gohale adds.

NEWS

'Sri Lanka: worst perpetrator of enforced disappearances'

Jo Baker

Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka

AS President Mahinda Rajapaksa speaks of ushering Sri Lankans into a new era of peace, a slight, bespectacled man in his 60s watches him on television from across an ocean, with the weariness of a man who has tried and failed to call his bluff.

M.C.M. Iqbal was secretary to two of Sri Lanka's "truth commissions", presidential inquiry panels into the 30,000 or more forced disappearances that took place in the late 1980s and early '90s in the south, during a dirty war that many believe has yet to run its course. Mr Iqbal knows more than most about the skeletons that are locked away in the government's closet - enough, he says, for him to no longer be safe in his home country.

"I still remember when Rajapaksa was on the way to a UN session with photos of torture victims and was caught going through customs," he recalls during a recent visit to the Asian Human Rights Commission in Hong Kong. "As a minister he used to be at the front of the struggle against these incidents. Now I would consider his regime as one of the world's worst perpetrators of enforced disappearances."

In Sri Lanka, disappearances seem to accompany armed conflict, Human Rights Watch says. Government security forces are believed to have been responsible for tens of thousands of disappearances during the insurgency by the left-wing Sinhalese nationalist group Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna from 1987 to 1990, and the two decade civil war with the Tamil Tigers.

In 1994, Mr Iqbal was working as a senior government administrator when he was asked to join a truth commission. It was the first body of its kind - the result of an election pledge by the newly elected president, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. It was split up to cover three zones, and Mr Iqbal's role was to set up a system enabling just a handful of officers to document thousands of possible atrocities across four provinces in the centre of the country.

The team was to travel around for open question sessions. They were to compile a report for the president on the number and circumstances of the disappearances; who was responsible and to give opinions on charges; and deliver a final analysis of how things had been allowed to get so bad. Promises to the public had raised expectations that the report would lead to legal action against the alleged killers.

For two years, the small panel spent two-week stretches holding interviews, and at night, away from their families, its members would dictate and record the cases they heard that day.

"I had worked in public service for 40 years, 20 of them in courts, so this procedure of listening to complaints was not new to me, but it was harder in the sense that some of them touched me," Mr Iqbal says. "Sometimes I felt like sobbing."

He remembers many of the stories, but singles out one, which was not the worst, he adds. According to a woman whom the commission heard from in Badulla, the capital of Uva province, local police arrived at her house one night during the '90s and took two of her three sons. At the police station the next morning, the officers denied arresting the boys, but the woman made such a commotion that her sons heard her and they started shouting. She waited all day on the verandah of the station, and when the night-shift officers arrived, they invited her back inside and then they gang-raped her.

Mr Iqbal says the woman said she could hear her sons shouting throughout the ordeal. "She was almost dead from exhaustion, but she went home and she complained to the elders, who couldn't help her, and then finally she came to us."

A few days after her testimony, the same officers picked up her other son, a 17-year-old, over a robbery. Her two older boys were almost certainly dead, but the commission chairman was able to contact a magistrate and help prove the police were framing the 17-year-old. "She came running to the commission with her son, crying, and laying on the floor shouting 'thank you'," he says. "All we could tell her was that she had better take her son and get out of the area."

That was one of the more rewarding outcomes for Mr Iqbal's team. After two years in the central zone and more work with a follow-up commission, Mr Iqbal helped to write the report, and says that although some of the cases were clear-cut, it was not made public. Parts would be published in 2002, but without naming the accused.

"We thought we had enough materials; we thought that this would at least send a signal to prevent this sort of thing happening in the future, that all victims would get compensation and at least some perpetrators would be punished," Mr Iqbal says. "But

the compensation paid was a pittance for most ... Hardly any of the perpetrators were punished."

Not yet disheartened, Mr Iqbal took a job with the National Human Rights Commission and the US-based Asia Foundation, logging the same cases in a database and lecturing on human rights. Still, many of those implicated continued to hold high-profile positions.

The biggest blow came when members of the commission, which was considered relatively independent, were replaced. The new members were appointed by the Rajapaksa government, and, Mr Iqbal says, they had different priorities. The move was criticised in the international press.

"It had become a political commission," he says. "I still remember the chairman, the late Justice P. Ramanathan, telling me to abandon [our work]. To use the exact words, he said: 'Why are you raking up all the muck?'"

Mr Iqbal resigned, but he would still receive calls from the families of the disappeared, telling him that they saw one of the perpetrators getting into a car, or that another was still the officer in charge of the local police station. It appeared that the files had simply been put aside.

"I believe the president did not implement our recommendations because she would have alienated the military and police on whom she depended - terrorism was at its height then and they protected her," he says, referring to Ms Kumaratunga.

With no legal reforms and very few people held to account, disappearances continued in Sri Lanka. In 2006, 17 locals working for a French non-governmental organisation were massacred in a military zone. Scandinavian monitors pointed the finger at security forces but no one was charged. Mr Iqbal refused an invitation to join another such inquiry.

However, in 2007, when a group of international observers arrived to monitor the new commission's work, the United Nations office in Sri Lanka suggested they take on Mr Iqbal as an adviser.

"I said, 'Look at this list of perpetrators: so-and-so is now commander in chief there, so-and-so is minister of this district and the president [Mr Rajapaksa] knows and he keeps them there. Now he wants you to start making recommendations?'"

Mr Iqbal recalls what he describes as the shock and displeasure of the attorney general and the higher-ups three months later when the observers publicly backed the earlier recommendations. That was when the death threats started again.



Tamils continue to disappear in Sri Lanka, not only from the streets, but also from the government run internment camps where over 300,000 Tamil civilians are held in unsanitary conditions

"I'd had such calls in the past, but I didn't take them very seriously. But these were too frequent and sounded a little more genuine," Mr Iqbal says. "They were made to me and my wife, and to me, they would say: 'You'll be killed if you keep working there'. Finally the observers' security services monitored the calls and told him he needed to leave immediately."

Late in 2007, without a word to anyone, the Iqbals locked up their house and left the country.

And now, from a colder climate, with six months in a refugee camp behind him, a schedule of seminars and workshops ahead and his name kept out of the phone book, this reluctant keeper of grisly secrets watches the latest Sri Lankan

leader with a weary, wary eye.

He has no regrets about the path he took, although it essentially led him into exile, but he doubts he can say the same for the president.

"When Rajapaksa came to power, he had the option of doing something," Mr Iqbal says.

"He was a minister at the time of all this, he knew the contents of these reports and that nothing was being done. He knew who was involved in all the killings, and yet he has put all those people around him, given them positions."

Last month the president declared that he only wanted to look to the future now, that the past, essentially, was dead and buried. To Mr Iqbal, this is eerily close to the truth.

NEWS

China beats India's foothold in Sri Lanka

TO the dismay of India, China has further extended its foothold in Sri Lanka with the signing of \$350 million worth oil and highway deals. China and India are competing to win lucrative and strategic investments in Sri Lanka since the military defeated the Tamil Tigers and ended a 25-year war in May. However, whilst China has won number of key deals, India has ended up number of funding projects with little strategic or monetary return.

Both countries backed President Mahinda Rajapaksa's government when it came under Western-led criticism for refusing to slow its offensive against the Tigers.

China, Sri Lanka and China's Exim Bank signed deals worth more than \$350 million to build a highway and an oil bunkering facility near one of the world's biggest shipping lanes, Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry said on August 14. The bunker terminals will be built at the Hambantota port on Sri Lanka's southern coast, where the state-run Exim Bank has already pledged \$360 million to the initial construction phase being carried out by Chinese firms.

The other agreement will finance the building of highway from the capital Colombo to the international airport 30 km north in Katunayaka. Currently, the journey can take hours because of the narrow, traffic-clogged roads.

"The signing of the two agreements will pave the way for much needed infrastructure requirements which will have an immense impact on the country's future socio-economic development," the ministry said.

China in July won the rights to Sri Lanka's first exclusive economic zone, located in Mirigama with easy access to the Colombo port and airport. Hong Kong-based conglomerate Huichen Investment Holdings Ltd. will pay \$28 million to build the turnkey business park, where Chinese firms can set up shop. It follows a model China has used successfully in African nations, to house manufacturing and other businesses alongside their mainstay mineral and resource extraction firms.

China has also offered an \$891 million, 20-year loan with a 2 percent interest rate to build the second and third phases of the 900 megawatt coal-fired Norochcholai power plant.

India is wary of the Chinese beachhead in Hambantota, widely viewed as part of China's "string of pearls" policy to give it coaling stations around the region. New Delhi views it as part of its giant neighbour's plans to strategically encircle India. India in its budget this year has pledged a minimum 5 billion Indian rupees to Sri Lanka's post-war development and has already staked a claim to do much of the construction in the former war zone in the north.

In the latest move curry favour with Sri Lanka, India on August 3 handed over bank drafts worth Sri Lanka Rs. 117 million to Sri Lanka for Palaly military-cum civilian runway rehabilitation project in the Jaffna peninsula.

Palaly houses the main base of the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) in the Jaffna peninsula. The air base is also used by civilian and military aircraft carrying Jaffna-bound passengers.



Having defeated the Liberation Tigers with its indiscriminate arterial shelling and bombing, the Sri Lankan Army is to pass on its successful methods to the Pakistan Army so that these methods can become de rigour in all countries fighting ethnic conflicts.

SLA to train Pakistan Army

SRI Lanka's army says it has received a request from Islamabad to train Pakistani soldiers in counter-terrorism activities and it will be happy to fulfil the request.

"We received a request from Pakistan to train their officers on our small team operations, so we have decided to open several new training schools in Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi and Vavuniya to train local and foreign military officers," said Colombo's new Army Chief Jagath Jayasuriya, reported Daily Mirror newspaper on Friday, August 21.

The newspaper further quoted the military chief as saying that there was a big demand from foreign countries to have their forces trained by Sri Lanka.

The apparent interest in the tactics deployed by Sri Lankan forces in its war against the Tamil Tigers has caused alarm amongst

human rights groups which have accused the government in Colombo of war crimes over the shelling of civilians in a tiny "no-fire" zone in the last weeks of the war.

However some political observers say the Pakistani military training request is a ploy of Colombo, Pakistan and probably some others too, to check the current presence of Indians in Vanni.

According to General Jayasuriya, the Sri Lankan military envisaged specialist courses lasting up to six weeks, directed towards small groups from interested armies and even wished to construct a written military doctrine in English.

The Army chief told Daily Mirror that the Sri Lankan army would set up permanent military camps in the 'liberated' North and it has ordered pre-fabricated buildings from China to build

military camps that would be installed soon.

"In response to numerous requests from the region and elsewhere, the Sri Lankan Army is planning to provide military training for foreign security forces taking into account the successful and innovative military strategies that were put in place to defeat the LTTE," the military chief was quoted by Daily Mirror.

Sri Lanka and Pakistan have long enjoyed warm relations and India, which is trying to keep the island neighbour within its influence, will be uncomfortable at this news of the Pakistanis' interest in being trained.

In late May, Pakistan - like India, China and Russia - helped Colombo win a brutal war against the Tamil tigers and defeat a motion at the UN which criticised the government for violating humanitarian law during the war.

China hailed as a 'major stakeholder' in development

SRI Lanka hailed China as a "major stakeholder" in the island's development and declared Beijing had offered financial support and had stood by the country in "crucial situations".

"China has extended its support to us... despite some international pressures on Sri Lanka in recent times," senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa said, while addressing a ceremony to mark the completion of the first phase of a power plant build with Chinese assistance in North-western province.

"China came forward to help Sri Lanka in crucial situations," he said, thanking Beijing for its financial support for the \$455 million project.

The 900 MW coal-fired power plant, work on which was inaugurated in May 2006, is being built with Chinese financial assistance in Norochcholai and its first phase is expected to become operational next year.

"As the largest commercial project between Sri Lanka and China, the plant is unique and very important for Sri Lanka

because it can satisfy one-fourth of the island's electricity requirement when the two phases are completed," said Rajapakse, who is also President Mahinda Rajapakse's brother.

The total estimated cost of the project is put at \$455 million out of which EXIM Bank of China is providing a soft loan of \$300 million. Rajapakse said that the Chinese government had also granted financial support to Sri Lanka to develop roads, railways, harbours and other facilities and thanked the Chinese government

and the Chinese people in helping Sri Lanka to carry out the many development projects.

The first phase of the plant would meet 25 per cent of the country's power requirement, Rajapakse said.

A statue of Lord Buddha to be brought from China will be installed at the plant, a report further said.

The ceremony was attended by a group of Chinese monks from the Shaolin Temple including its Chief incumbent Ven Shi Yongxin.

Minister of Power and Energy W D J Seneviratne said plans are underway to begin the construction of the second coal-fired power plant with a generation capacity of 1,000 MW in Trincomalee with the assistance of the Indian government this year.

China is also assisting in construction of the multi-million dollar Hambantota new Port Complex in South-eastern coast of Sri Lanka, the Performing Arts Centre in Colombo, among other areas.