

## The UK Column: Voting for the Tamil cause

PAGE 7



# Flooding, chaos ahead for camps



## NEWS

# SLA massacred civilians in bunkers - medical worker



**Eyewitnesses say the Sri Lankan military fired into civilian areas in the last weeks of the war**

TamilNet

THE advancing Sri Lanka Army massacred civilians by paving their bunkers with tanks, by throwing explosives inside the bunkers and by shooting the injured, says a medical worker who came out of Mullivaykkal during the last days of the war, became incarcerated in a camp and now escaped the island.

"Around a hundred thousand captured civilians herded to Mullaitheevu were kept in rows within barbed wires, most of the time without water or food under the hot sun, and were bullied and ill treated with arrogance," he writes in a lengthy note that reached TamilNet.

The note in Tamil was provided by the Norwegian Tamils Health Organisation (NTHO), urging TamilNet not to reveal the identity of the health worker for reasons of his security.

The medical worker was injured in a fire-bomb attack of the SLA on May 12th.

On alleged earlier firing on civilians, who in desperation tried to get into SLA controlled area, and on violence in recruitment during the last days that especially affected the families of LTTE heroes and fighters, the medical worker attributed responsibility to some elements long infiltrated into the LTTE, to work on behalf of Colombo. LTTE senior ranks were shaken by such treachery, he writes.

Further personal observations culled out from his notes follow:

Colombo particularly targeted hospitals and makeshift hospitals. When people moved away from Kilinochchi, its hospital started functioning in the school building at Udaiyarkaddu. More than two thousand shells were fired on this building by the SLA.

Kilinochchi to Tharmapuram, Vaddakkachchi, Visuvamadu, Udaiyarkaddu, Puthukkudiyiruppu - until reaching Mullivaaykkaal, at an average 50 civilians were killed every day in Sri Lankan attacks. 8000 were already killed before herded into Mullivaaykkaal.

Medical work decimated and workers were shaken at the death of patients, nurses and workers.

When there were more than 300,000 people, Colombo sent food for only 30,000.

Important medicines such as anaesthetic drugs were not sent.

Life-saving surgery without anaesthesia was a cursing ordeal for the patients as well as doctors.

Mothers and children standing in queue to receive infant milk food were targeted in the SL shell attacks.

Without seeing no one could visualize the sorrow of the child that lost the mother and the mother who lost the child.

SLA shell attacks, guided by spy craft were targeted on queues for gruel also. Despite casualties the queue would form again.

While even gruel was scarce to people, lands they cultivated were harvested by the SLA.

At one stage, the LTTE leadership ordered food meant for combatants to be shared with civilians. The fighters fought only with gruel food and to the last LTTE served gruel to people.

Around 1000 waterholes were dug and several hundreds of toilets were made for civilians at the initiative of the LTTE. Water often mixed with sand was collected in shell-halves and was filtered by cloth.

There were no epidemics.

Pregnant mothers and infants bearing shell fragments came to makeshift hospitals.

These hospitals functioned 24 hours and wailing was always heard around them.

Many dead bodies couldn't be buried in certain situations of SL attacks and hungry dogs dragged them.

Every time moving patients to ICRC vessel there will be targeted shelling from the SLA. A few hundreds taken for ICRC treatment died. How that happened was not known and whom to ask.

Even in emaciated conditions people donated blood for treatment and some of them later died of their own injuries.

More than a thousand people were killed on the day when the SLA entered into Maaththa'lan and Pokka'nai (20th April).

On May 15th and 16th the SLA entered and rampaged the pocket of land crowded with nearly a hundred thousand people.

I had to pass through at least around 300 bodies when I came out. Some were alive but couldn't walk. I helped a few who could walk. Some held my feet when I tried to go away. What could I do?

There is a long list of people who were eliminated and disap-

peared after capture by the SLA. The army-controlled area was a place where murders took place in front of one's eyes.

In Mullaitheevu, a hundred thousand people made to stand in rows would all of a sudden be ordered to squat by the SL army. The soldiers would make sadistic laugh at seeing the melee of people falling on each other in the exercise.

Long poles were used to beat the people and to threaten them.

Old and young stood under hot sun for a long time, immensely suffering from thirst.

Mullaitheevu to Vavuniyaa was scenery of disaster.

There were 20 to 25 people in a tent in the internment camp at

Cheddiku'lam. Food was sometimes thrown from a vehicle.

Everyday in the internment camp around 30 people died.

It was a place of epidemics.

Thousands suffered of Chicken Pox, hundreds had brain fever, many elders died and some committed suicide.

The bribe to SL army for a person to come out was several hundred thousands of rupees.

In the last days of the war over 18,000 killed, more than 5,000 lost limbs, more than 7,000 seriously injured and several thousands suffered minor injuries. Several thousands suffer mental illnesses. More than a hundred medical workers- doctors, nurses and volunteers perished.

Knowledge and exercise of precaution reduced casualty. No one died of any epidemic under LTTE control.

Several thousands of Sinhala youth of the SLA, from poor families, regrettably laid down their life in the war.

The sadistic lust of Mahinda Rajapaksa is very astonishing - inflicting pain on ordinary civilians in every possible way, and then projecting that as forms of his soothing operation to the outside world.

The world may forget, but Tamils will never forget the true face of the civilisation of 21st century, the world has shown to them, writes the medical worker in his notes.

## Le Monde calls for Sri Lanka to 'stop'

TamilNet

"AFTER winning the war, the Sri Lankan regime is in the process of losing the peace. Following the historic, but bloody and distasteful victory, against the armed struggle of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa could be magnanimous and reach out to the Tamil minority and open the way for national reconciliation. But Rajapakse has chosen another path, the path of domination...Under the tents of the refugee camps tomorrow's Tigers may already be rising to mount a future rebellion," warned France's popular daily, Le Monde in an editorial last Thursday.

Excerpts from the translated editorial follows:

More than three months after the end of the war, some 280 000 Tamil refugees are kept as prisoners behind of barbed wire, unhealthy and overcrowded camps.

Official reasons for the delay are that the Government is screening the civilians to identify combatants and to protect the village refuges from the mines planted by the LTTE.

These excuses are fanciful. The truth is, the Sri Lankan government seeks to control this population [Tamil refugees] and to silence the refugees who were witnesses to the horror of the last weeks of the conflict.

International assistance to camps will be forthcoming only if the Sri Lankan regime shows urgency in weeding out the suspects and release. For proof, Sri Lanka did not hesitate to remove and torture two local staff of the United Nations.

NGOs and UN must confront an existential question: did they help a population in distress or are they complicit in a large-scale incarceration? This question has become increasingly complex as the rainy season approaches, which could sow chaos inside the camps. Already in the month of August, rain has washed away the

tents of thousands of refugees, and hundreds of families are inconvenienced and agitating inside the camps.

Instead of making peace, President Rajapaksa and his brother Gotabhaya, Secretary of Defense, are exhibiting vengeance: they have declared the war against the civil society.

In recent weeks, a renowned Tamil journalist was sentenced to twenty years in prison; a human rights activist has received death threats; a video seemingly showing Sri Lankan soldiers executing naked men convinced the UN to consider investigation.

The Sri Lankan Government is in a position of strength. It has developed dependent friendships with the least recommendable regimes on the planet and has had to deal with minor retaliatory measures on the part of the Western powers.

The LTTE and its local supporters are destroyed. But, under the tents of the refugee camps, tomorrow's Tigers may already be rising to mount a future rebellion.

## NEWS

# Continuing misery of Sri Lanka's camps

ALMOST 4 months since the end of the war, little progress has been made at the camps that hold nearly 300,000 Tamil civilians which have been described as "shocking and disturbing", recent press reports said.

New mobile phone footage of conditions in the Manik Farm camp in Vavuniya shows ill people lying on mud floors with intravenous drips in their arms and no hospital beds in sight.

The footage was apparently recorded two weeks ago and provided to Channel 4 news by a group called War without Witness.

"Patients on intravenous drips lying on mud floors, a man so weak he is unable to brush the flies from his face," Channel 4 said in its broadcast, adding, "[t]he concern now is that when the monsoon rain season begins, the camp will be flooded."

One third of all children under 5 in the camps have malnutrition and 8% of those have it in its acute form, the report said.

"It is a horrendous place to be for anyone" James Elder, the UNICEF spokesman, told Channel 4. He has since been told to leave Sri Lanka by the government, which has accused him of spreading propaganda in support of the Tigers.

Aid workers made fresh plea for the government to take action due to the already poor conditions in the camps and mounting fear of worsening conditions in the coming monsoon season.

Recent floods from last month have already destroyed two thousand settlements and have further worsened sanitation conditions, submerging toilets and contaminating water.

The impending monsoon season, due in October, will be highly destructive to the weak infrastructure of the camps, aid workers say.

"A potential crisis could brew there if the rains come through and those camps are still as congested as they are [now]," a Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) official who visited one of the IDP camps recently told the BBC.

"Nothing has changed over the last three months for the people that are living in the camps. They are overcrowded with poor sanitary conditions and inadequate health care," CAFOD's head of international program said.

"The people have basic food and supplies but many remain traumatised and due to restricted movement are still separated from their families causing even more

distress."

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.

Although the government originally promised to resettle 80% of the detainees by the end of the year, there is concern that seems to have been delayed indefinitely now.

United Nations spokesman in Colombo, Gordon Weiss, says they are not seeing enough progress in return of the displaced Tamils to their homes.

"We want to be clear that we expect people will be allowed to return home very soon and much faster than is taking place at the moment," he said.

"We want to understand how people are being screened, because there are a lot of people inside these camps who clearly present no appreciable security risk to the government, lots of women with young families, lots of young children, separated and orphaned children, people who are ill."

U.N. spokesman Weiss says it is not possible to indefinitely fund the camps, which are being run with assistance from the UN and other international donors.

"There needs to be a degree of clarity about how this money is being spent, what it is being spent for, in other words there needs to be a conclusion because the involvement of the United Nations in these camps is on the understanding that the people will not be there for a long time," he said.

Other agencies echo this concern. "At the moment this process [of returning the displaced] is painfully slow. The Sri Lanka government must make good its



Tamil civilians interred in Sri Lanka's camps continue to suffer from lack of sanitation and overcrowding even as water dumps onto unstable areas with flimsy shelters, with more rain expected soon

commitment by making a start and allowing the most vulnerable groups to return home" said the CAFOD official.

The camps fail to meet international standards on basic access to food, water and shelter. Overcrowding and lack of freedom to movement heightens any risk of disease and violence within the camps.

Outbreaks of diseases such as Hepatitis A, chicken pox and skin ailments are prevalent and concern that cholera may develop, an earlier report by Al Jazeera said.

Aid agencies sounded the alarm to the UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator even before the war was over, that "current conditions in Menik farm are not only a violation of IDP's fundamental rights to freedom of movement, education and livelihoods, they are also failing to adequately fulfil rights on basic access to food, shelter and water," Al Jazeera said.

Most of the shelters hold twice the number of people recommended under international standards.

Over 220,000 people are held in overcrowded and poor sanitary conditions in the six-zones of the Manik Farm camp, while minimum international standards - outlined by the Sphere Project - would allow for a maximum of 140,000 people in the cramped space, the report said.

Further, with nearly four hundred babies born every month in the Manik Farm camp, the people there are in need of considerable assistance and care, which they are not getting.

Sarvodaya leader Dr A. T. Ariyaratne presented the statistics when he was making a commemorative address in honour of Mother Theresa of Calcutta, at the SEDEC centre in Colombo.

Mr. Ariyaratne said that Sarvodaya movement was able to put together and supply some 800 cots for the infants in a short period of time, although the initial requirement was 400 cots at the request of the health authorities at the Menik Farm.

"If Mother Theresa were alive today, she would have rushed to the IDP camps in Vavuniya to help the inmates there," he said.

## BBC: UN patience wears thin

### TamilNet

THE United Nations says it cannot continue to indefinitely fund the sprawling, overcrowded and militarized camp in which Sri Lanka has interned hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians.

Speaking to the BBC, the UN's Sri Lanka chief, Neil Buhne, said people should be allowed to leave the barbed wire-ringed Manik Farm camp.

Mr Buhne also criticised Sri Lanka's denial of access for the International Red Cross to 10,000 Tamils whom the government calls LTTE suspects.

Meanwhile the UN says it is extremely concerned for two staff members arrested by Sri Lankan authorities in June, being amid reports they were mistreated during the early days of their detention. Since the war ended in May, the Sri Lankan authorities have refused to let anyone leave this vast camp apart from some young children, elderly people and priests. Some priests have reportedly refused to leave whilst the remaining people are not free to go.

UN agencies help fund and run the camps but there are signs the UN is running out of patience, the BBC reported Friday.

"The best solution is obviously that as many people leave as soon as possible," the UN's Sri Lanka chief, Neil Buhne, told the BBC. "And that the site can become - for the people who have no place else to go - that it becomes an open site."

International rights groups have said holding the civilians is an illegal form of collective punishment and urged the government to allow them to leave to live with relatives, friends or host families in the area.

The Sri Lankan government says it cannot release the civilians until it finishes screening them

for potential LTTE fighters, and until land mines are cleared from their villages in the north.

But rights workers told the Associated Press the screening process has dragged on longer than expected.

Also Friday, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said it is being denied access to the rehabilitation centers where surrendered LTTE cadres and those the government accuses of being LTTE supporters are held.

The spokeswoman for the ICRC in Colombo, Sarasi Wijeratne confirmed the barring of access to the Daily Mirror Friday, though other aid workers say this actually began several weeks ago. UN's Sri Lanka chief Neil Buhne criticism of the ICRC's being barred comes amid persistent reports of abductions, torture and summary executions in the prison camps and Vavuniya residents' accounts of bodies being buried in cluster graves in the region.

Earlier this week the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, criticised the Sri Lankan government's decision to expel the UN children's agency spokesman in the country.

UNICEF spokesman James Elder regularly spoke to the media on the plight of children caught up in the conflict, but Sri Lanka spokesperson told BBC "James Elder's visa has been cancelled over his propaganda in support of the Tigers."

Mr Ban's office said in a statement: "The secretary-general strongly regrets the decision of the Sri Lankan government to expel Mr Elder."

"The UN chief 'expresses his full confidence in the work of the United Nations in Sri Lanka, which includes making public statements when necessary in an effort to save lives and prevent grave humanitarian problems'."



## NEWS

# Common ground on human rights with 'tested friend' China

SRI LANKAN President Mahinda Rajapakse told a visiting Chinese communist party delegation that the two countries are tested friends and China will always have Sri Lanka's unwavering support on the One-China policy.

Rajapakse made the remarks on Friday, September 4, at a meeting with the visiting delegation of the Communist Party of China (CPC), led by a member of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau and Party chief of China's Tianjin municipality Zhang Gaoli. The delegation was in Sri Lanka on a two-day good will visit at the invitation of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) headed by Rajapakse.

Rajapakse expressed his country's gratitude to China for assistance provided towards the economic and social development of the island and declared the friendly relationship between the two countries has stood long test and the two countries are tested friends.

Gaoli congratulated the massive achievement made by the Sri Lankan government on national reconciliation and the development of the country and thanked the Sri Lankan government for its firm support for the Chinese government's stance on the issues

related to Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang and human rights.

China's diplomatic support helped Sri Lanka block a Human Rights Council resolution at the United Nations in May this year deploring the gross human rights abuses committed by the Sri Lanka security forces against Tamils.

Gaoli also reaffirmed the Chinese government's support for Rajapakse's efforts to defend Sri Lanka's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Meanwhile, a former Australian diplomat warned that western inaction over Sri Lanka's intransigence in adhering to international humanitarian norms and shift towards China could be detrimental to Indian and western interests.

Speaking at an event held at The University of Sydney last week, to launch of the Sri Lankan Human Rights project, a joint initiative between the Centre for Peace And Conflict Studies (CPACS) and the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism (ACIJ) with the support of Amnesty International, Bruce Haigh warned that Sri Lanka may become "a vassal state of China.. not averse to carrying out acts of terror and in the future that may be directed towards India in ways to be determined by the Chinese".



Sri Lanka is revelling in its 'tested' friendship with China, promising to always support its new pal

## Sri Lanka floats LTTE revival stories, continues to keep Tamils incarcerated

SRI LANKA'S defence secretary has warned the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are being revived at local and international levels and would attempt to challenge the government again.

Gotabhaya Rajapakse, who is also the brother of President Mahinda Rajapakse, cautioned that the LTTE would make a fresh attempt to resume arms smuggling and train cadres overseas and bring them in boats, reported the Island newspaper.

The LTTE would also try to open sea routes for their leaders to move in and out as they did some time ago, the paper further reported Rajapakse as saying during an address to navy cadre at Trincomalee base on Friday, August 28.

Negligence and shortcomings on Sri Lankan navy's part would be catastrophic, the paper quoted him as adding.

"Urging the navy to be vigilant of the impending challenge, he said that the LTTE should not be allowed to raise its head again," the paper reported.

"He said the battle-field victory achieved at a very heavy price should not be allowed to be reversed. But that would entirely depend on the continuation of existing security arrangements, he said, reminding the navy that it would have a significant role to play in meeting the looming threat," the newspaper reported.

Rajapakse was further quoted as saying that the navy would have to thwart LTTE plans by setting up bases along the coast and maintaining constant surveil-

lance.

In recent weeks numbers of Sri Lankan ministers and officials have come out with warnings of a LTTE revival, whilst the military continues to claim regular discoveries of arms caches in Vanni and arrests of LTTE leaders in the camps in Colombo.

Political analysts say the Sri Lankan government, which announced that the LTTE has been crushed and, even few weeks ago, declared that the organisation will never be able to raise its head again, is floating these stories to allow it to keep Tamils incarcerated in camps citing security concerns.

One of the reasons given by the Sri Lankan government for refusing to release the nearly 300,000 civilians interred in camps in Vavuniya is that they are still 'weeding out former Tigers'.

As Sri Lanka increasingly comes under pressure from the international community to free the Tamils held in barbed wired camps, the frequency of LTTE leaders' arrests and arms cache finds have also risen.

In the space of a week Sri Lankan police have claimed the arrest of two 'prominent' LTTE leaders and a major weapons haul.

In one of the latest incidents, acting on civilian information, a LTTE leader, who led a 40-cadre group at Wellamulliwaikkal area in the final battle, was arrested from a tourist hotel in Mount Lavinia on Tuesday, September 9, according to Sri Lankan police.

In a separate incident, a LTTE intelligence wing leader named Arulmozhi was arrested by Sri Lankan security forces inside the Manik Farm camp, Sri Lankan police claimed.

On the arms cache front, Sri Lankan police claimed that a large stock of arms and ammunition was unearthed from Vellaimullivaikkal on Wednesday September 10, based on information provided by LTTE cadres.

Military Spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara said Task Force VIII launched a substantial search operation in Puthukudiyiruppu and Sugandipuram areas and recovered a haul of arms.

"Police uncovered 18 T56 assault rifles, three dismantled T56 rifles, 8,000 T56 ammunition, three T56 magazines, four 0.22 weapons, a T81 rifle, three snipers, two 97 type weapons, a female suicide kit, a claymore mine weighing 15kg, six claymore stands, seven hand grenades produced by the LTTE, a part of a 12.7mm barrel, an MPMG body group, 5,000 of 5.56mm ammunition, 4,600 MPMG ammunition, 425 12.7mm ammunition, 140 17.5mm ammunition, 32 9mm pistol ammunition and a 40mm grenade launcher bullet. Troops uncovered 200 GPMG ammunition, an FNC weapon, 134 FNC ammunition, two FNC magazines, 83 AP mines, an MPMG body part, 34 of 29.5 MT gas cylinder, 150 of 12.5 MT gas cylinder and five of 2.5 MT gas cylinder," reported the government run Daily News newspaper.

## Pakistan destroyer on goodwill visit

A PAKISTANI navy ship arrived in Sri Lanka on a goodwill visit aimed at strengthening existing ties and the level of cooperation between the two countries, according to navy sources in Sri Lanka. PNS 'Zulfikar', Pakistan's destroyer class ship arrived in Colombo harbour on Saturday, September 5 and was ceremonially welcomed by the Sri Lanka Navy in the presence of Pakistan Defence Adviser Colonel Syed Khurram Hassnain Alam. "This will provide an opportunity for close interaction between both friendly navies", a spokesperson for Pakistan high commission in Sri Lanka said.

"Such relationships have picked up momentum in the last few years owing to growing interdependence at state level in facing emerging challenges and to enhance security and defence of vital national interests though such visits to regional countries are a regular feature" he added.

PNS "Zulfikar" is 123 meters long, 13.2 meters wide and 30.7 meters in height with a displacement of 3143.9 tonnes and a crew of 14 officers and 188 sailors, the SLN told media in Colombo. The Ship's Commanding Officer Captain Zahid Ilyas called on Sri Lankan Navy Commander Vice Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe.



## NEWS

# Sri Lanka's video denial judged false

WEEKS after the airing of footage showing the purported execution of naked, blindfolded civilians by troops in Sri Lankan Army uniform, the Colombo government is still trying to challenge the authenticity of the video. However, experts have challenged all attempts by the government, arguing that the footage could not have been falsified.

Sri Lanka's technological refutation of the authenticity of the video is based on a processed video-file taken from the broadcaster's website, rather than the original mobile phone footage, experts said.

An analysis commissioned by US-based pressure group Tamils Against Genocide (TAG) of the original video distributed by Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS) and Sri Lanka's subsequent technological refutation says Colombo's experts looked "at a second generation transcoded video to derive erroneous conclusions," reported TamilNet.

Earlier this month, Sri Lanka's Media Centre for National Security held a press conference attempting to discredit the video, on a technical basis. Among their claims was that the video footage had been edited in a "clumsy fashion", that one of the purportedly dead men could be seen moving after he was shot and that the entire footage was faked.

These conclusions do not challenge the authenticity of the shocking minute long video of Sri Lankan soldiers executing naked and bound prisoners, the TAG experts said in their preliminary note.

"Sri Lanka has been putting forward spurious claims in an attempt to distract the international community from the wider issue - the mass killings of Tamil civilians by artillery bombardment as well as summary executions," a TAG spokesperson told TamilNet.

"Personally, I think Steven Spielberg would have a hard time staging this grim scene," Channel 4's Foreign Affairs correspondent, Jonathon Miller, wrote on his blog.

The group who originally released the video also condemned Sri Lanka's analysis.

This was "a piece of video evidence, where anyone can clearly see some unarmed men were being killed in cold blood by some armed men who appeared to be wearing the uniforms which are very much identical to that of the Sri Lankan army," Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS) said in a statement.

"[W]hat is fake is not the video clip, but the so called 'technical analysis'," they 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," a spokesman for JDS told reporters.

JDS is made up of journalists from Sri Lanka, from both the Sinhalese and Tamil communities, who, having fled persecution on the island, are mainly based in Europe.

Despite the Sri Lankan Government's claims that the video is fake, it still refuses to launch an independent investigation onto the events.

This is despite having reassured the United Nations that such an investigation would be set up soon.

"We have received a guarantee from the government that it will be create an independent body to investigate such incidents. So far they have not kept [their] word. If nothing happens, we have to do something... the government has only 'weeks or months, not years, to initiate such an investigation," the UN's Sir John Holmes said in an interview with Norway's Aftenposten newspaper.

However, the Sri Lankan government has now started to deny the need for an independent inquiry.

Sri Lanka doesn't "have to have so-called independent inquiries into any Tom, Dick and Harry allegation," Professor Rajiva Wijesinha from the Sri Lankan Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights said, appearing on Channel 4 news to refute the video.

"This isn't a Tom, Dick or Harry allegation. This is an allegation that the United States ambassador to the UN says gives her grave concern," the interviewer responded, but his comment was dismissed by the Sri Lankan ministry official.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's office also released a statement expressing concern about the video.

"We have viewed with utmost concern the reports and information received from various sources of serious human rights violations including those related to war crimes," the statement said.

Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Susan Rice, the US Ambassador to the UN and dozens of other organisations from around the world have expressed similar concerns and called for an independent inquiry.

"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," indi-



cate 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.

"These reports are very disturbing, they are of grave concern," U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice told reporters.

"We'd like more information as we formulate our own national response," she added.

The on-going analysis of the original video and Sri Lanka's technological refutation was commissioned by TAG as part of the group's wider compilation of war-crimes evidence, sources there told TamilNet.

JDS has confirmed that the original recording they distributed was recorded as a .gp3 file, and all media, including Channel-4, derived their web-broadcast versions from this, TAG said.

Sri Lanka's technology-based refutation turn on effects that stem from the H263 (.gp3) to H264 (.avi played in Flash-9, 10) conversion process, the US experts hired by TAG say in their initial note.

"The improved algorithmic features of H264, especially the de-blocking filter at the decoder, can improve the quality of the transcoded version," the experts said.

The audio/video synchronization difference pointed to by Colombo is a known possibility of the conversion process, experts said, according to TAG.

TAG said the analysis has been commissioned as part of building a dossier of war crimes in Sri Lanka to bring about prosecutions in future.

Examination of the meta-data of the JDS version of .gp3 reveals a recording format of H263, and a recording time of 18th July 2009 UTC 9:06 a.m. (Sri Lanka Time



**Sri Lanka's use of technology to 'prove' the video shown on Channel 4 news were false have been discredited by experts with access to the actual footage, who say it cannot have been staged**

UTC+ 5:30 = 2:36 p.m.), according to TAG.

"While JDS said that the video was likely shot in January, the video file indicates a more ominous date of 18 July, two months after the war ended with more than 300,000 Tamils held in internment camps. Implications of this are horrible to contemplate," TAG said.

"This video captures merely one instance of the summary executions and 'disappearances' which Sri Lanka has practised for decades," TAG said.

"A cursory analysis of the extensive records of the SLMM shows that since 2005 Tamils have been routinely arrested or abducted, executed and their tortured bodies dumped by roads and public places across the government-controlled parts of the island," TAG said, referring to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) which operated under the aegis of the Norwegian brokered ceasefire agreement.

"It is the digital age that has made it possible for evidence of war crimes to seep past Sri Lanka's information blackout," TAG said, adding that it understands that 'trophy' videos of execution and torture recorded by soldiers are being traded as mementos.

JDS received the video from a Sri Lanka Army officer, said UK's Channel 4 news, which first aired the footage. The British broadcaster broke the story and showed the video on their flagship news program on August 25.

As international alarm and outrage mounted, on September 3 the Sri Lankan government directed the Chairman of the state run Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation and Independent Television Network to hand over all video tapes in relation to Vanni war front immediately to the Media Minister and to ensure and verify whether any video tapes used or unused are missing or stolen while in their custody.



## EDITORIAL AND OPINION

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## Aiding Repression

## Sanctions compel people to change their government's conduct.

Sanctions are a diplomatic tool for the international community to peaceably compel recalcitrant governments into conforming with accepted international norms. This is the basis on which a variety of sanctions have in the past been successfully applied to regimes in Libya, Zimbabwe and Apartheid South Africa amongst many others. The logic of sanctions is simple: economic isolation of a state compels its discomfited people to pressure their leadership to change its behaviour and adhere to sought after international principles.

Thus, it is especially on ultra-nationalist leaderships that rely on popular support, like President Mahinda Rajapakse's government in Sri Lanka or former President Slobodan Milosevic's in Serbia, that sanctions can be most effective. Moreover, irrespective of questions of efficacy, as exemplified by the cases of Serbia and Saddam's Iraq, sanctions are the only means, short of the use of armed force, to compel states to adhere to internationally accepted codes of conduct.

Amid Sri Lanka's unabashed defiance of international human rights and governance norms, the European Union, press reports this month suggest, is considering withdrawing the GSP+ subsidy for firms that import from there. This, according to Sri Lanka's supporters, should not happen as it will "hurt" 250,000 'Sri Lankans'. But that, surely, is the logic of sanctions. It is only when the majority Sinhalese who support President Rajapakse's ultra-nationalist regime are compelled by economic hardship into bringing internal pressure to bear on it that international demands over human rights and political reconciliation, for example, will even draw lip service from it.

There are two related factors inherent to economics in Sri Lanka. Firstly, the vast majority of people involved in the export-manufacture sector make up the Sinhala vote bank on which President Rajapakse's political fortunes, short of him imposing a militarized dictatorship, depend. Secondly, manufacturing is non-existent in the Tamil-speaking Northeast, which has been ravaged repeatedly by the thirty years of war. In other words, under these conditions, further foreign investment or subsidies in the southern (Sinhala-dominated) economy will not only further secure the Rajapakse regime and entrench the rampant chauvinism that has swept the country in the past three

years it will fuel the ethnic polarization.

Since 1977, foreign subsidies and investment have benefit the Sinhala only while structurally excluding the Tamils. This is as true of the major infrastructure projects supported by donors, as the majority of their 'poverty-alleviation' efforts. As forthcoming research from the University of London reveals, this is no outlandish claim, but self-evident from where - and how - donors have undertaken their efforts for thirty years.

That most wealth is concentrated in Sri Lanka's Western province does not mean the rest of the Sinhala south and Tamil-speaking Northeast have been equally 'excluded'. On the one hand, there is the militarized repression under which Tamils have lived since liberalization began in 1977, the devastating firepower unleashed against Tamil towns and villages during the war and the proclivity of donors to simply ignore the Northeast whilst waiting for the government to win the war. On the other hand, there is the Sinhala dominance of the state, the flow of massive infrastructure development in Sinhala areas (for example Hambantota port), the political patron-client networks and the military remittances that have ensured the Sinhalese has been far better protected against economic hardship than the Tamils for the past few decades.

This year, Sri Lanka has massacred tens of thousands of Tamils; 20,000 in the last weeks of the war against the Liberation Tigers. It continues, despite near daily international protest, to incarcerate hundreds of thousands of people, precisely because they are Tamils, while blocking international humanitarian and media access. For years, President Rajapakse's regime has murdered, 'disappeared', and tortured with complete impunity. Indeed, it has thumbed its nose at the international community, daring it to do its worst.

Conversely, international inaction has allowed the regime to project itself internally as successfully standing up to the international community. Popular support, thus bolstered, has in turn fuelled chauvinism and repression. The international community can thus support the Sinhala state and hope for lasting peace or it can act to constrain Sinhala chauvinism and bring about one. Meanwhile, as more than one international observer has realized, Sri Lanka is in inexorable transition - between one war and another.

## Appeals for accountability over missing, detainees

THE Civil Monitoring Mission in an appeal made after convening a conference on the "Disappeared and the Detained" appealed to the Sri Lanka Government to account of all detainees in prison.

*Full text of the press statement follows:*

We have gathered here today to collectively mourn and express our grief at the disappearance and detentions of our loved ones. We consider that no one, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, social status deserves to be "disappeared" and held in prisons and detentions centers for longer periods without proper judicial process.

Today the war has come to an end. The government had made the relevant announcement. We thought after the dark past a positive beginning would dawn upon us. We thought our dear ones who had gone missing will come home. We thought our dear ones who are held in prisons and detention centers would be given a decent consideration.

But nothing had changed. The end of war has not brought any end to our agonies and miseries. We feel more vulnerable today than in the past. National reconciliation and national unity have been reduced to mere rhetoric statements. Instead of bringing change towards constructive hope, the ending of war has brought new miseries to our people. We are today witnessing over two hundred and fifty thousand of our people languishing in military guarded camps. Their freedoms of movements are curbed with barbed wire fences where even the elected parliamentarians of this country are forbidden. We today express our solidarity with them and share their continued grief.

We are angry that the government has chosen to ignore the issues of Disappearances and Detentions of our loved ones as something that is not worthy of local and international attention. We are angry at the adamant refusal of the government to adequately investigate the complaints of disappearances with the constructive support of the United Nations. We are angry to note the discriminative principles practiced by the government to grant amnesty to selected few segments of the society. We are angry to note the politically motivated standards practiced by the government to grant judicial bail through the attorney general's

department to selected few while our dear ones suffer in prisons and detentions centers for longer periods, some are even up to 16 years. We are angry that detainees are not subjected to judicial procedures within reasonable time frames due to the inactions of the police and attorney general's departments and also that they are not considered for the inclusion in rehabilitation programs. We are angry to note the irresponsibility and complete lack of transparency and accountability on the side of the government. We angrily refer all these as the state terrorism of the government of Sri Lanka.

As family members of the victims of Enforced Disappearances and Detainees

○ We want to find our loved ones

○ We want to know what happened to them

We call on the government to:

○ Provide account for all extra judicial killings and abductions since January 2006

○ Provide complete details of all detainees kept in all Prisons and state sponsored Detentions centers

○ Dismantle all illegal Para military detention centers and allow all those detained to go home

○ Grant amnesty or Judicial bail to Prisoners and Detainees linked to political violence

○ Incorporate convicted prisoners linked to political violence in the rehabilitation programs

○ Provide democratic space with legal assurance to human rights organizations to monitor and evaluate the violations and represent the victims

On behalf of the family members of the victims who are present here and also of those who have not present here due to logistical reasons, We as Convener and Chairman of the Civil Monitoring Commission (CMC) of Sri Lanka bring this Appeal to the notices of the President His Excellency Mahinda Rajapakse's government, Sri Lanka Parliament's Leader of Opposition Hon. Ranil Wickramasinghe, all the Political Leaders and all sections of International Community including United Nations.

Mano Ganesan MP - Convener - Civil Monitoring Commission - Sri Lanka  
Siritunga Jayasooriya - Chairman - Civil Monitoring Commission - Sri Lanka



## OPINION

# The UK Column



## Everything to work for

As Britain gears up for the general elections next year, British Tamils' efforts to keep Sri Lanka on the political agenda gain a new urgency. The immediate priority is of course saving almost 300,000 Tamils interned by Sri Lanka in squalid barbed wire fenced camps. The camps remain an urgent issue but Tamil activists must also work towards a longer term strategy of challenging the mistaken assumptions that have driven Britain's Sri Lanka policy.

Britain, along with most western states, has thus far supported Sri Lanka's military solution to the Tamil problem because of a misunderstanding of political dynamics on the island. Since the late 1970's when the government of President J. R. Jeyawardene took a decisive turn to the west, Sri Lanka has been regarded as a flawed but redeemable liberal democracy.

In this context many western policy makers simply blamed the LTTE and Tamil nationalism more generally as the 'cause' of the ethnic conflict. However, western policy frameworks can also see Sri Lanka had structurally oppressed the Tamils from independence and excluded them from meaningful democratic self government.

But the political exclusion of the Tamils were seen merely another symptom of the many 'flaws' in Sri Lanka's democratic system. The system is seen as notoriously corrupt; electoral violence is common, ministers and parliamentarians regularly steal from the public purse to build personalised patronage and buy support amongst the electorate, there are close and growing links between politicians and the underworld and all governments have stifled opponents.

So for most western policy makers, Sri Lanka's ethnic problems were merely ones of 'poor governance' and 'bad' economic policy. It was not Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism that was excluding and oppressing the Tamils, they argued, it was simply corrupt structures of governance and an overly politicised state. There was general confidence that once the governance issues were fixed the Tamil problem would simply dissolve.

Because of this firm belief in Sri Lanka's inherent capacity to be 'reformed', western

states have backed Sri Lanka's military campaigns despite its appalling record of brutality against the Tamils. Western policy makers firmly expected that once the LTTE was crushed Sri Lanka's Sinhalese leaders would be true to their liberal and pluralist inclinations and move towards a programme of political and economic reform that would inevitably also include a meaningful solution to the Tamil problem.

For the first time since the late 1970's this analysis of Sri Lanka's conflict is under severe strain.

The spite and venom with which Sri Lanka slaughtered tens of thousands of Tamil civilians during its military offensives shocked most international observers. Meanwhile Sri Lanka has treated international humanitarian agencies and western demands for restraint with scorn and derision.

The Sri Lankan president, Mahinda Rajapakse, has also made it clear that there will be no political solution to the Tamil question; Sri Lanka will remain a resolutely Sinhala Buddhist land and Tamils will be coerced into accepting their place within the Sinhala-first hierarchy.

The possibilities of transforming Sri Lanka into a vibrant multinational and plural state are fast diminishing with the growing ethnic animosity.

The Sri Lankan political establishment has also told western states in no uncertain terms that Colombo will be re-orientating its geo political relationships. Sri Lanka will now only be friends with states that are not in the least bit concerned by issues such as the rule of law, good governance or democratic accountability.

Under these conditions Sri Lanka's occasional parroting of the liberal democratic ethos sounds ever more like taunting mockery than the previous decades of meaningless but more or less playful charade.

Tamil activists must take this opportunity to engage and challenge the assumptions that have driven Britain's Sri Lanka policy. We must make clear why Sri Lanka's crisis is not just a problem of bad governance or poor economic policy. President Mahinda Rajapakse is in fact executing policies that are in keeping with the

Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism that is deeply embedded within the Sinhala polity and state institutions.

Sri Lanka expects that by subjecting the Tamils to conditions of abject humiliation it will cleanse them of their national identity. Like Stalinist Russia, it is attempting political 're-education' through mental trauma and physical torture.

The Sri Lankan government's categorical refusal to engage the Tamil question is also perfectly in keeping with this. Sinhala leaders have only ever paid lip service to liberal or pluralist ideals as a means of winning western support for the war against the LTTE. Now that the LTTE has apparently been crushed all talk of a political solution has been dropped - by all major Sinhala parties.

In this climate British Tamil lobbyists must work to convince British policy makers that Sri Lanka multifaceted crises cannot be addressed through international humanitarian and human rights frameworks alone. Rather Britain must work to tackle the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism that is driving the crisis head on. And something stronger than words is needed.

Whilst challenging the assumption that Sri Lanka's present crisis is simply 'poor governance', Tamil activists must also work to change misunderstanding of Tamil demands. The demand for Tamil Eelam and the LTTE were not the causes of the ethnic conflict but the inevitable consequences of Sri Lanka's systematic oppression over decades of Tamils' political, cultural and economic rights.

Tamil demands did not provoke the ethnic conflict. Rather Tamils made these demands when Sinhala Buddhist policies of ethnic cleansing and economic strangulation threatened the existence of the distinct Tamil identity.

Our demand that Tamils are allowed to live in peace and security in their areas of historical habitation and be allowed to pursue their economic and social development is perfectly in keeping with Western liberal political ideals. Tamils demand an independent state not because we oppose liberal forms of governance but because Sri Lanka is entirely unwilling to include the Tamils on an equitable basis within a liberal framework.



Tamil lobbyists must also work to demand that Britain takes a firm stand on the recognition of the Tamil national identity and homeland. This means recognising we have the right to choose our future. In the absence of such international recognition, Tamil rights will continue to be vulnerable to the Sinhala majority's ethnic domination of the state.

The Sinhala state will continue policies of ethnic cleansing, economic strangulation, military repression and political exclusion. The British state can no longer support these policies as the path towards an inclusive, liberal democratic state.

We must demand that international development aid, trade concessions, political support and other support must be made conditional on real and substantive progress on the Tamil question. Unless the Sinhala polity is made to accept that its oppression of the Tamils is incompatible with international standards, Sri Lanka will continue to spiral towards unending war.

British Tamils are in a unique position to influence

international perspectives on Sri Lanka. The Tamil Diaspora is growing in confidence and maturity and the second generation in particular is gaining a familiarity with the language and objectives of Western policy making.

Sustained and continued engagement by the British Tamil community can, along with the ground situation in Sri Lanka, work to question British assumptions. As British citizens we also must lobby our government on issues that are in firmly in keeping with British interests and priorities whilst being important to us.

Britain is one of the five members of the Security Council and a leading state in the European Union. As such the UK continues to have a rightfully important role to play in the international politics of Sri Lanka's conflict.

If British Tamils make their case firmly, clearly and consistently, the UK and the rest of the international community will soon start to see Sri Lanka's problem for what it is: racist state oppression. The time could not be more critical - or more opportune.



DIASPORA

# Boycott Sri Lanka campaign expands in US

TamilNet

NORTH American Tamils expanded their boycott campaign over Sri Lanka goods to over a dozen cities across the US and Canada, targeting GAP and Victoria's Secret stores on Saturday, September 12, youth organizers of the event said. Leveraging the "No to Sri Lanka" website run by Canadian youth activists to spread the campaign message, the organizers held protests in San Francisco, Chicago, North Carolina, Boston, Atlanta, New York city and in several Canadian cities.

The protesters stood inside malls, outside shopping centers, and some in the median of busy streets, urging ethical shoppers to resist buying garments made in Sri Lanka. "We wanted to convey a unified message that by conducting business with Sri Lanka's apparel manufacturing industry, GAP and Victoria Secret are indirectly funding a brutal regime that is accused of possible war crimes, and which is holding nearly 300,000 Tamils in military supervised camps with little or no freedom of movement," spokesperson for the protests said.

Dozens of protesters, including women and children held placards and distributed leaflets in several places in the campaign cities, and drew the attention of large crowds of people.

The busy intersection at Market St. and Powell St. outside the GAP store was targeted by protesters in San Francisco. Protesters met with the store management and explained why protesters object to GAP's business with Sri Lanka. Another group of protesters met outside Victoria's Secret store on Powell St. in San Francisco while similar protests were held in major cities across north America. Volunteers distributed more than 3000 campaign fliers while walking from Macy's to Victoria Street and to GAP around 4 blocks also on Michigan Street in Chicago.

Nearly 20 protesters were present at the Atlantic Station shopping district near the Victoria Secret and GAP Stores in Atlanta, and held placard from 3-5 PM at the busy intersection and the entrance to the shopping district.

Volunteers left fliers in the windshields of the vehicles parked in the public parking garage and distributed fliers to interested shoppers. Many US state statutes prohibit using Mall premises for protests. "With the successes so far, and additional knowledge gained in understanding procedural matters related to picketing, we hope to further expand the protests to other cities, and to continue campaign in a sustained basis, until an acceptable solution is found for the 300,000 internees," organizers said.

GAP has its headquarters in San Francisco and sells apparels under the brands GAP, Banana Republic and Old Navy among others.



LIFE IN VAVUNIYA



As Tamil civilians jostle to access the plain food served in the internment camps in Vavuniya, others are too sick to even be in the camps, like this child pictured in Vavuniya hospital. However, she is on of the 'fortunate' ones as she has access to a hospital bed and drips - some patients now lie on dirt floors, too weak to wave away the flies



## NEWS

# UK refuses visa to top Sri Lankan officials

TO the ire of Sri Lankan government, the British High Commission in Colombo has refused to issue visas to two top officials, according to media sources.

Outgoing Foreign Secretary and Sri Lanka's new permanent representative to the United Nations, Palitha Kohona and former Deputy Tourism Minister and ruling party parliamentarian Arjuna Ranatunge had submitted their passports to the British High Commission for visa to London but to their surprise the passports were returned without any valid reason for turning down their visa applications, according to Daily Mirror.

Foreign Ministry's Chief of Protocol, through whom Dr. Kohona's passport was forwarded to the British High Commission, later sought an explanation for returning the passport but a High Commission official had reportedly told the Foreign Office that the Foreign Secretary should be personally present at the High Commission to obtain the visa.

Foreign Ministry, however, had insisted that Dr. Kohona had no reason to be personally present at the High Commission to obtain the visa as he was the Foreign Secretary of the Country.

Foreign Ministry had later

again sought a visa to London for the Foreign Secretary, but the second attempt too was rejected by the High Commission saying there was not enough time to process the visa.

Foreign Ministry officials, who insisted that the application was given with 24 hours notice, had made several attempts to contact the British High Commissioner and his Deputy to seek their intervention but they could not be contacted over the telephone, the government sources said.

The government is of the view that the British High Commission had violated diplomatic protocols by rejecting a visa for the Foreign Secretary and parliamentarian Arjuna Ranatunge and felt this had further strained relations between Britain and Sri Lanka.

Government sources said Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama was expected to summon the British High Commissioner Dr. Peter Hayes to seek an explanation over the visa rejection, particularly to the Foreign Secretary.

The British High Commission in Sri Lanka responding through a press statement said whilst it expedite visa applications for senior political and official figures from Sri Lanka and other countries they do this in accor-



Palitha Kohona, Sri Lanka's new ambassador to the United Nations, has been refused a British visa

dance with UK immigration rules and this means, for example, that they cannot issue free visas for personal visits.

Acting High Commissioner Mark Gooding was quoted as saying: "The suggestion that there is any political bias in our visa application process is completely unfounded. We never comment on individual visa applications, but many of the details of the various cases reported are incorrect."

"In all cases of VIP visits, the High Commission works closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to try to ensure a smooth service, and we look forward to continuing this co-operation," the British Commission said.

Earlier Attorney General Mohan Peiris was also inconvenienced by the British High Commission which asked him to appear in person for an interview to grant a visa.

## Canada's silence unacceptable says opposition

THE Canadian government is ignoring its international obligations by failing to engage the United Nations and friendly nations on ways to help the people of Sri Lanka, according to Canada's Liberal Party Foreign Affairs Critic Bob Rae.

"There are still hundreds of thousands in camps, which have been made even more unliveable after heavy rain," said Rae.

The Canadian Tamils believe the Conservative government in Canada led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper could do more to protest Canada's opposition to the mistreatment of Tamils by the Sri Lankan state directly and work with other international actors in multilateral forums like the United Nations to bring pressure on the island state to adhere to humanitarian laws.

"Our foreign policy has to be based on a principled engagement with our partners and friends in attempting to deal with a government like Sri Lanka, which is ignoring humanitarian law and the rights of its citizens. The Harper government has dropped

the ball in this regard."

Referring to the recent sentencing of Sri Lankan journalist J.S. Tissanayagam, Rae said the conviction of Tissanayagam is particularly disturbing as he has received the maximum penalty of twenty years in prison under the Prevention of Terrorism Act simply for being a journalist with an editorial view.

"The arrest of well known journalists, the threats against members of the NGO community, the repression of dissent - these are all signs of a government sinking into authoritarianism," Rae added.

"Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are crucial tenets of democracy around the world, principles which Canada holds dear, and Mr. Tissanayagam's conviction demonstrates a perversion of those democratic principles in Sri Lanka today."

"The Harper government's silence on these matters is simply unacceptable. We can do better as a world leader. I urge the Conservatives to take action," he said.

## Sri Lanka recalls Japan envoy after PM finger printed at airport

SRI LANKA has recalled its envoy to Japan after Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake was finger printed, made to wait for approximately half an hour and processed through normal passenger channel instead of the VIP lounge at Narita airport in Japan. Wickramanayake, had visited Japan at the invitation of the head monk of a well-known Buddhist temple in Kobe to the chief guest at a religious ceremony.

According to a source at the Prime Minister's office, the officials who went to receive Wickramanayake had apparently slipped-up by waiting outside instead of going into receive the Premier, as he entered the airport terminal after landing. As a result Wickramanayake and the entourage had been cleared only through the normal passenger channel and not

through the VIP lounge.

Japan had begun fingerprinting foreigners about a year ago as a security measure, but VIPs are exempted if embassy officials coordinate with the immigration to ensure quick clearance.

Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama has recalled Jayantha Palipane, Sri Lanka's ambassador to Japan over the incident and directed the Sri Lankan Embassy in Japan to conduct a probe, according to Foreign Ministry sources. The decision to recall Palipane was not based merely on the incident involving the Sri Lankan premier but on some past incidents as well, the sources said.

Whilst Colombo has tried to portray that the Sri Lankan embassy in Japan was at least partially responsible for the ordeal of the Prime Minister, reports citing diplomatic circles in Colombo

claim that the visa issued to Wickramanayake by Japan was a temporary visa normally issued to ordinary visitors.

Some media reports in Colombo claim the recall of Palipane is Colombo's the latest 'panicked restructuring' of its foreign service. Recalling of the ambassador may look as a response to an incident at the Narita airport involving the prime minister of Sri Lanka, but it is only a pretext, according to the sources.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa used career diplomats and academics to paint a deceptive picture of his government before and during the war. But now the government, either not trusting its own diplomats or considering them a spent force, is replacing them with military and political appointments in the style of some totalitarian regimes, they said.

## Venerable Thera refused Canadian visa

THE Canadian embassy in Colombo has refused visa to a Buddhist monk due to the applicant's passport displaying the titles Venerable and Thera, according to media reports. Ven Haype Somananda Thera, the chief incumbent of Sri Maha Vihara,

Pamankada who had been invited by a Buddhist monk in Canada to attend a religious function there was asked by the Canadian embassy officials to remove the titles Venerable and Thera from his passport if he wanted a visa to enter Canada.



## NEWS

# US bemoans Sri Lanka inaction

THE United States this week criticised the Sri Lankan government's continued internment of hundreds of thousands of Tamils and Colombo's not taking steps towards a political reconciliation.

"President Rajapaksa did meet on Monday with representatives of the Tamil National Alliance, but in general there have been few other concrete steps to re-unite the country and begin to heal the wounds of a long war in such a way that all Sri Lankans feel they enjoy equal rights and opportunities," US Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake said on Wednesday, September 9.

Below are extracts relating to Sri Lanka of an address by Mr. Blake at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

"I would also like to touch on recent events in Sri Lanka, which I'm sure many of you have been following closely. The United States welcomed the cessation of fighting in Sri Lanka in May of this year and the apparent conclusion to the country's long-running conflict. Since then, the United States has encouraged Sri Lanka to heal the wounds of conflict by ensuring that the estimated 300,000 people displaced by the civil war are treated according to international standards and allowed to return to their homes as quickly as possible, and by working toward justice and reconciliation in order to build a democratic, prosperous, tolerant and united Sri Lanka.

"With respect to the internally displaced persons still in the camps, the Government of Sri

Lanka has made some progress easing camp congestion, and expanding access by humanitarian organizations, but we are concerned that those remaining in the camps still do not have freedom of movement. We have encouraged the Government of Sri Lanka to follow through on its pledge to return a majority of IDPs by the end of the year. Already this year, the U.S. has provided \$56 million in humanitarian assistance, mostly food aid. Other significant programs are aimed at helping the Sri Lankans accelerate the return and facilitate the resettlement of IDPs, such as \$6.6 million to international NGOs for demining, and DOD-funded, USAID-administered projects for vulnerable communities and reintegration of former combatants.

"The Government of Sri Lanka has made only very modest progress on political reconciliation with Tamils and Muslims. ... in general there have been few other concrete steps to reunite the country and begin to heal the wounds of a long war in such a way that all Sri Lankans feel they enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

"We have stressed to the Government of Sri Lanka that to achieve a lasting peace, it must promote justice and political reconciliation for all parties, including by ensuring accountability for past violations of human rights. We are also concerned about threats to press freedom in Sri Lanka, including the recent conviction of Tamil journalist J.S. Tissainayagam on terrorism charges. A successful, united post-war Sri Lanka is not possible without freedom of expression."



The American government is allegedly preparing a report into war crimes committed during the last days of the war, even as it criticises the Sri Lankan government for failing to find a political solution

## US 'preparing war crimes report'

THE United States State Department is preparing a report on war crimes committed by Sri Lanka to be presented to the US Congress next week, local media in Colombo reported quoting US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues Stephen Rapp.

"There are situations that have already been handed to us. There is a report from the Department of State on the war in Sri Lanka due in Congress on September 21. Additionally the office, together with the Secretary for Global Affairs and the Secretary of State, has the responsibility to collect information on ongoing atrocities and it is then the responsibility of the President to determine what steps might be taken towards justice. Like the canary in the coalmine, we give the signal that something very serious is occurring," Rapp was quoted as in a response to a question posed by the Time magazine.

The news of the report comes as the U.S. attended its first formal meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Council as a member on Monday, September 14. The U.S. was elected in June to the 47-nation council, which was criticized by the Bush administration for primarily denouncing Israel while ignoring abuses elsewhere. Washington left its observer seat on the council vacant during the last six months of President George W. Bush's second term.

The US says it will try to promote dialogue at a body it once avoided and heavily criticized. "We will strive for discussions that are thoughtful, focused and open to all viewpoints and perspectives," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Esther Brimmer told the council.

The decision in May to seek a seat on the Geneva-based body after three years of staying on the sidelines was a major shift in U.S. policy in line with President Barack Obama's stated aim to closer cooperate with the United Nations.

Although the council is virtually powerless compared to the U.N. Security Council, its decisions carry considerable symbolic weight, particularly in the developing world, to which the Obama administration wants to reach out. Brimmer, who acknowledged that the U.S.' human rights record is "imperfect," called on council members to try to "end this session with a more strengthened and robust human rights mechanism than we had before."

# Starvation, rape, killings, torture in Sri Lanka camps, Australia parliament told

## TamilNet

NOTING that "hundreds of thousands of innocent Tamils displaced by the military offensive are living in camps in appalling conditions. Moreover, foreign media channels have reported horrifying evidence of the worst violations of human rights, including starvation, rape, killings and torture. International agencies are calling for full access to these camps in order to provide life-saving treatment and medical supplies and to allow free and independent media

access," parliamentarian, John Murphy, appealed at the Australian House of Representatives on Thursday, September 13, "to all governments of the world who have respect for human rights, the rule of law and free speech to join together and call on the government of Sri Lanka to right the wrongs forthwith."

*More excerpts from Murphy's address follow:*

"To date, the Sri Lankan government has arrogantly refused free media and humanitarian access to these camps. Why is the Sri Lankan government hiding

from the truth? Surely providing unimpeded media and humanitarian access to these camps would provide a perfect opportunity for the Sri Lankan government to demonstrate that it is doing all it can to alleviate the suffering of the Tamil people. Clearly, the Sri Lankan government does not want the truth revealed.

"I am horrified to learn that a Sri Lankan journalist, Mr J S Tissainayagam, was detained for five months without charge in 2008 and has since been convicted and sentenced by the Colombo High Court to 20 years of rigor-

ous imprisonment...What an appalling assault on free speech by the Sri Lankan government. Australia, as a country that asserts the rights to freedom of speech and freedom of expression, including views on all matters of public policy, the behaviour of the Sri Lankan government is in direct conflict with our values as well as those of other democratic nations and, as such, must be loudly and publicly condemned.

"In a further assault on freedom of speech, an Australian United Nations official, Mr James Elder, was recently ordered by the

Sri Lankan government to leave the country because of comments he made about the military offensive and its impact on innocent civilians. Mr James Elder is a spokesman for the United Nations Children's Fund in Colombo and has made several statements on foreign television news channels and print media concerning the horrendous humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka....It is obvious that there exists no freedom of the press in Sri Lanka. The actions of the government of Sri Lanka must be condemned and must be condemned loudly."



## NEWS

# Indian arrests, visa refusal to suppress Eelam support

SEVENTEEN lawyers and approximately 50 students were arrested for protesting against Congress party's support for the Sri Lankan state and its failure to protect Tamil civilians in the neighbouring island. The arrests came as All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary Rahul Gandhi, toured major cities in Tamil Nadu to rejuvenate the party at the grass-roots level in the state. On Wednesday September 10, approximately 50 law students were arrested in Madurai for demonstrating against Gandhi's visit to Tamil Nadu.

The students flayed Congress for being "indifferent" to the 'sufferings' of Sri Lankan Tamils and demanded the ban on LTTE to be lifted and India to recognise separate Tamil Eelam, police said.

On Thursday September 10, the day Gandhi was scheduled to arrive in Coimbatore, 17 lawyers were arrested by the police for staging a black flag demonstration over the visit Gandhi to Tamil Nadu, accusing Congress of failing to protect the lives and property of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The lawyers, carrying black flags, shouted slogans such as 'Rahul Go Back' and 'Do not enter Tamil Nadu,' near the District Court Complex.

At a press meeting held at Chennai, Gandhi was cornered by the media on the Congress government's lack of response to the plight of Tamils lodged in camps in Sri Lanka, according to local media reports. Answering a flurry of questions that bordered on accusing the Congress of inaction despite large scale civilian deaths in the island nation, Rahul vehemently denied the charge and said he and his family had always stood for Tamils' rights and maintained that India would not tolerate any violation of their rights, according to reports.

Frustrated at the unrelenting media, at one point, Gandhi was quoted as asking "What answer do you want?" and adding "I want to make something very clear. My family has always had utmost admiration and respect for Tamil people. My grandmother and my father were involved in this. We've deep sentiments for Tamil people".

"The government and the Prime Minister would not tolerate anything other than this."

"The central government is applying as much pressure as possible on the Sri Lankan government. Congress wants the rights

of the Tamils guaranteed. There is absolutely no question about it. We will do everything to protect them," he was quoted as saying.

Gandhi did not make any specific comments on the internment of 300,000 internally displaced Tamils in camps.

However, responding to Gandhi's comments Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) leader V Gopalswamy (Vaiko) said that Gandhi was ignorant of the plight of Tamils and his assurance has come too late for Tamil refugees.

"Rahul Gandhi stated that the Indian Government would not let down the Tamils. Already the Indian government has enabled them (Government of Sri Lanka) to disseminate (divide and isolate) the Tamils. So, Rahul Gandhi, I pity him for his ignorance," Vaiko said.

Meanwhile, the Indian embassy in New York denied a visa to US-based humanitarian worker and a critic of the Sri Lanka government, Dr Ellyn Shander to travel to New Delhi to address the Delhi Tamil Sangam on 20th September, the Deccan Chronicle reported.

"Her [Shander's] Indian host M.Natarajan, Chennai-based political activist and husband of Sasi-kala, close friend of AIADMK leader Jayalalithaa Jeyaram, has accused both the Central and state governments of curbing free speech in the country," the paper said. Natarajan organised a series of meetings in Chennai, Bangalore, Coimbatore, Madurai and Delhi till Sept. 20 with Shander as main speaker, the paper added.

Natarajan said that the Chennai police had denied permission to conduct an indoor meeting with Shander as the guest on September 16. "We have moved the Madras high court against denial of permission," the paper said quoting Natarajan.

Shander told TamilNet that she will protest against the visa cancellation. "My only hope and desire is to see the Tamils of Sri Lanka liberated from the hell of the concentration camps. They are being brutalized, killed, raped and deprived of even basic human rights, by their own government, all because they were born Tamil in Sri Lanka," Shander told TamilNet, adding, "The Indian government has the ability to be a shining example of humanitarianism and save the Tamils of Sri Lanka. India will then go down, on the right side of history."



Indian's nuclear missile programme landed it in trouble with the international nuclear community, and now India says it is willing to share this knowledge, which is contrary to non-proliferation agreements

## India to share nuclear technology with Sri Lanka

INDIA is willing to share its nuclear technology with Sri Lanka for power generation using Thorium as the main source of energy according to Sri Lanka's Science and Technology Minister Tissa Vitharana.

The news of India's willingness to share nuclear technology comes as both countries are in the process of finalising a joint venture to build coal power plant at Sampur in Trincomalee.

Professor Vitharana told the Daily Mirror newspaper on Friday, September 4, India is prepared to support Sri Lanka with setting up a nuclear power plant and that he had requested IAEA support for the project.

Professor Vitharana also told the paper he had invited Indian nuclear scientists to conduct a feasibility study on the use of Thorium deposits - said to be found in abundance along Sri Lanka's southern coastal belt - as a source of nuclear energy for power generation.

"I had fruitful discussions with the Indian delegation in Geneva when I attended the IAEA's annual sessions recently. They are prepared to assist us in utilizing Thorium as a source of energy for a future nuclear power plant and to share the necessary technology as India has successfully developed the use of Thorium for nuclear power generation," Prof. Vitharana told the Daily Mirror.

He said the feasibility study would include such matters as cost effectiveness, safety in use of nuclear material and safety in waste disposal and added that he had spoken to the IAEA request-

ing its support for the project.

He said India had successfully developed a pilot plant using Thorium instead of Uranium and were now on the verge of commissioning a major nuclear power project with Thorium as the source of energy.

"While we could get the benefit of the new technology developed by India to utilize Thorium as a source of energy, we also need to conduct a proper survey to determine the full extent of Thorium reserves in Sri Lanka. This will be a part of the feasibility study before a final decision is taken to determine whether we turn to nuclear energy to supply power to the national electricity grid," Prof. Vitharana said.

He said with the world in the throes of a fuel crisis because of increasing demand and diminishing fuel resources, Sri Lanka too would confront major problems in obtaining sources of energy and added that with the defeat of the LTTE, the need for economic development and the reduction of poverty have become major problems for the government.

"This cannot be achieved without adequate and affordable energy and power supply. At present, most of the income derived from the export of tea and rubber is spent to import petroleum products," Prof. Vitharana said.

He said this situation would get much worse in future and it was essential for Sri Lanka to explore the possibility of utilizing locally available fuel resources.

The Alternative Energy Division of the Science and Technology Ministry together with the

Sustainable Energy Division of the Power and Energy Ministry have been promoting alternative sources of locally available energy resources for power generation -- mini-hydro power plants, wind, solar and bio-gas.

But these sources cannot completely replace fossil fuel. The 'Inter Ministerial Committee for Generation of Bio-Fuel' set up by the Science and Technology Ministry explores the possibility of increasing the use of bio-fuel like Ethanol and Bio-Diesel (Jatropha) for vehicles.

"It is essential to have a major source of energy for the electricity grid in the future. More and more countries are now turning to nuclear energy as a suitable additional source for supplying the electricity grid considering it will take at least 10 years after the decision is taken to develop nuclear energy before it can be generated," Prof. Vitharana said.

Meanwhile an Indian delegation arrived in Sri Lanka to finalise the paperwork for a proposed coal power project at Sampur. According to Sri Lankan government sources the paperwork is expected to be completed by October this year.

The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) of India has invested US\$500 million in the power project to be launched as a joint venture with the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) with both parties to be equal partners.

Whilst India is funding the Sampur power plant in the eastern province, China is funding a similar project at Norochcholai in Northwestern province.



## NEWS

# Sinhala development model, but western funds

SRI LANKAN President Mahinda Rajapakse has dismissed western models for development that give precedence to industrial growth and outlined a strong agriculture based development model influenced by traditional Sinhala Buddhist doctrine.

"We must have a Sri Lankan model," he told Forbes magazine in an interview on Friday, August 28. "I prefer it to be agriculturally based. If you can be self-sufficient in food, then the industries will come," Rajapakse said.

Sinhala Buddhist socio economic doctrine favours small farms run by peasant households, most of whom will resort to traditional technologies of cultivation.

An idealised and harmonious society centered on the tank, the temple, and the paddy (rice) fields is the most desired form of a Sinhala Buddhist national existence, according to a leading scholar. Rajapakse's vision of a strong agriculture based development has its roots in this doctrine, the Buddhist scholar said.

The implementation of this model in the past decades entailed the transplantation of large number of Sinhalese peasants to 'border areas' of the northeast, leading to colonisation of Tamil traditional homelands, he added.

In addition to dismissing socio economic development through

industrialisation, Rajapakse, in his interview with Forbes, also rejected the need for a conventional political solution to resolve the decades long ethnic conflict.

The President suggested that improved economic conditions would be sufficient to address Tamil grievances.

"Without development, there won't be peace; we must develop the economy," Rajapakse said.

Reconciliation with Tamil communities in the island's north and east, he added, meant providing basic needs to them such as electricity, water, shelter, education.

"They (the Tamils) want to start their paddy fields, go back to their farms," he said.

Belittling the grievances of a Nation that has lost tens of thousands of people in a brutal war and is being incarcerated en-masse, by suggesting their grievances are just economic is not the way for reconciliation, said a Tamil political commentator, responding to Rajapakse's comments.

Meanwhile, whilst countries across the globe turn towards increased communication, improved transportation and open access to build their economy, Sri Lanka is following its President's vision in the opposite direction.

For example, the country will "not open up closed roads" despi-



**Mahinda Rajapakse's vision for Sri Lanka involves traditional cultivation, not modernisation**

te defeating the Tamil Tigers because this could "cause the economy to collapse" claimed the country's Prime Minister.

"Do you remember what happened to the Soviet Union under Gorbachev? He opened the roads immediately and what happened? The entire country collapsed. We can't afford to do that," Ratnasiri Wickramanayake told a business forum in Colombo, according to Lanka Business Online.

Reflecting government policy, even the major A9 highway linking Jaffna to the south, which was opened to much fanfare nearly six months ago, has seen little traffic as vehicles are denied permission to travel along it.

Sri Lanka is not only rejecting Western development and modernisation models, but also its investment, reports noted.

Sri Lanka ranked 111 out of 179 on economic freedom according to the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom.

The Index slammed the country for its roadblocks to foreign

investment, its financial system and its opaque property laws. With scores of ministers and 10 to 15 per cent of the workforce employed by the government, Sri Lanka was one of the world's most administered countries, the Index said.

Transparency International placed it between India and Pakistan as one of Asia's most corrupt economies.

The World Bank measured the ease of doing business around the globe and ranked Sri Lanka 102nd out of 181 countries, knocking it for its tax regime, legal system and permit processing.

However, despite shunning western models of development and modernisation, Sri Lanka still seems to crave Western money, noted a Tamil commentator, referring to increased tourism developments.

Whilst making it difficult for western investors to invest in the island, Sri Lankan government wants to increase revenue it receives from tourism, as this is

seen as an industry that would be compatible with Sri Lanka's development model, requiring no industrialisation or open access.

Sri Lanka has embarked upon building a 175 million dollar luxury tourist resort in the offshore tracts of the Dutch Bay in Katpiddi, according to reports.

The narrow stretch of land between the Dutch Bay and the Indian Ocean will have 60 chalets and 20 villas in the first phase, costing 1000-1500 dollars per night and will have 80 villas in the second phase to be sold to Arabs, Europeans and Sri Lankans as holiday or retirement homes.

The Katpiddi region of the North Western Province was part of the Tamil homeland and even now is a territory of Tamil speaking people.

Neil de Silva, chairman of the project refused to say how much the investors paid for the land to the local people. The resort, expected to be ready in 2011 will be managed by International luxury hotel chain Six Senses.

## 'Likely to lose' GSP+

THE European Union is unlikely to renew GSP+ concessions to Sri Lanka, a leaked report suggested.

A confidential 130-page report obtained by The Economist concludes that Sri Lanka has "failed to honour important human-rights commitments, and is ineligible for GSP Plus." The report, by EU investigators, said that there was "complete or virtually complete impunity in Sri Lanka" and referred to the IDP internment camps as a "novel form of unacknowledged detention". It includes allegations that government backed paramilitary groups were involved in "child abductions, torture and killings of civilians".

The Economist commented that "rarely has a government soiled its reputation as dramatically as Sri Lanka's".

The EU ambassador to Sri

Lanka, Bernard Savage declined to comment on any of the findings of the report. "The full text of that has been made available to the Sri Lankan authorities. Once we have gathered all the reactions, particularly those of the Sri Lankan government, the report will be finalised within a short time," he told the new magazine.

Sri Lanka's Trade Ministry released a statement admitting it was "very unlikely" that they would keep hold of the GSP Plus concessions. S Rannugge, secretary in Sri Lanka's Export Development and International Trade Ministry, confirmed that the review highlighted human rights abuses and torture allegedly carried out by the Government.

Colombo has been under scrutiny from Western nations, following the final phase of the 25 year civil war.

The manner in which the war was fought, with reports of thousands of civilian deaths, left Sri Lanka facing heavy criticism for its tactics.

Sri Lanka's admission into the GSP+ program has been under review since October 2008, after increasing pressure on the EU to investigate human rights abuses.

Since then, investigators have been refused entry into the country and categorically rejected by the Sri Lankan Government.

GSP+ allows Sri Lanka to export over 7,200 items to the EU duty free, it being the only country in South Asia to have this privilege. Companies such as Marks & Spencer's have benefitted from this the most, allowing them to import low cost garments into their European stores tax free.

*Continued on p15*

## Sri Lanka hits back

SRI LANKAN officials have responded angrily to reports that the European Union may withdraw the GSP+ concessions that Sri Lanka is currently entitled to.

"Western countries should remember that economic power has shifted from the west to the east," said Palita Kohona, Sri Lanka's new ambassador to the UN. "New markets open up in the east. Our friends China, India, Japan, Korea, Iran ... a whole range of countries [can help]," he was quoted as saying.

The comments followed increasing speculation that the GSP+ program, worth around £1 billion in trade concessions, would be cancelled for Sri Lanka.

"Sri Lanka has enough friends around the world. You have to realise that financial resources and power is no longer concentrated in one part of the world" continued Kohona. "We can han-

dle the loss" said the diplomat, who was recently refused a visa by the British High Commission.

Dayan Jayatilaka, who was until last month, Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, disagreed with Kohona's comments.

"The cold hard fact is that we need GSP+ far more than the EU needs to give it to us", wrote Jayatilaka in a newspaper column. "It is not our right or entitlement; it is what it is: a concession... conditional upon certain things because we sought eligibility upon certain claims and obtained the concession in the first place upon those claims and promises."

"Frankly, if you are asking someone else for their money or preferential access to their markets, you cannot really demand it

*Continued on p15*



## NEWS

# UN officials expelled by Sri Lanka

CHIEF of Communications for UNICEF in Sri Lanka, James Elder's visa to continue to remain in Sri Lanka was refused earlier this month by Sri Lanka's Department of Immigration without giving any reasons.

News of Elder's eviction was followed by news of another senior UN diplomat expelled from Sri Lanka in July for providing details to the international community of mass killings of civilians during the final battles against the Tamil Tigers, also emerged.

It is widely believed that Elder is being expelled for recent remarks about the plight of refugees living in government-controlled camps in the north of the country.

Elder called for aid groups to have unfettered access to the camps, to bring in medical aid and supplies.

"It's important to remember these people have arrived in camps in the worst possible state," he said.

"They are hungry and sick, and many still have untended wounds from the war." And added he'd seen "babies with shrapnel wounds, gunshot injuries and blast wounds" during Sri Lanka's final push against the LTTE.

Elder was also quoted in the media saying the about 270,000 displaced people were suffering hardship due to heavy flooding in the camps after heavy rain in some areas of Vavuniya district in recent weeks.

However, Palitha Kohona, permanent secretary at the Sri Lankan ministry of foreign affairs, told the BBC Elder had issued statements "which were not exactly based on facts, which were not researched, which were essentially reflective of the LTTE [Tamil Tigers] perspective."

"He was doing propaganda, in our view, in support of the LTTE," Kohona was quoted by BBC as saying.

Kohona's comments have raised fears about the safety of Elder and his family in a country where ethnic tensions remain high just months after the end of a long-running civil war, reported the Age newspaper.

According to the newspaper, Elder has received intimidating phone messages after it was announced that his visa would be cancelled on September 21.

Even if the Sri Lankan Government reverses its decision to expel Elder, Kohona's comments appear to make his position in Sri Lanka untenable, the Age added.

Elder, who holds an Australian passport, had been working for

UNICEF in Sri Lanka since July 2008 and had a residency visa valid until 2010.

Reacting to the news of Elders' eviction, U.N. spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters: "The secretary-general strongly regrets the decision of the Sri Lankan government to expel Mr. James Elder, spokesman for UNICEF in Sri Lanka"

"The United Nations is working impartially to assist the people of Sri Lanka, and the Government should be supporting and co-operating with its efforts," Haq said adding UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon would raise the issue with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse "at the earliest opportunity."

The UNICEF reacting to Sri Lanka's actions, in a statement said it was extremely 'concerned and disappointed' with the Sri Lankan government's decision.

"Through Mr Elder, Unicef has consistently spoken out against the suffering of children on both sides of the intense hostilities earlier this year and called for their protection. Unicef unequivocally rejects any allegation of bias," Unicef chief executive Ann Veneman said in a statement released in New York.

"Unicef has always upheld the principle of impartial advocacy and communication on behalf of children as a fundamental part of its global mandate," she said.

"Unicef will continue to uphold its mandate in Sri Lanka, and elsewhere, to advocate and speak out on behalf of vulnerable children and women," the statement added.

Meanwhile, the Guardian newspaper in Britain Saturday, September 12, reported Peter Mackay, another Australian citizen, was given two weeks to leave the country in July for providing detailed rebuttals of Sri Lankan government's "wartime propaganda."

The diplomat was seen as a legal timebomb by the Sri Lankan government as he could personally take the stand and testify that the army shelled non-combatants - action considered to be a war crime under international law, the paper said.

"Mackay, a field operative who worked for Unops - the technical arm of the UN - was a less familiar face to the media. But he played a key role in keeping the outside world informed about the number of civilians killed in the final months of the war - deaths that Sri Lanka was keen to play down," The Guardian reported.

Mackay collected high-resolution satellite images showing



UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has recently criticised Sri Lanka for throwing out a number of UN officials, but his organisation is still unable to agree on what (or whether) action ought to be taken

that the number of people trapped on beaches where the Tigers made their last stand was far higher than that claimed by the government.

The data showed that not only were more people in danger than the government admitted, but that the food and medicine sent to the "no fire zone" were inadequate.

Mackay was also in touch with local staff and put together briefings, using eyewitness reports of the war, which led the UN to warn of a "bloodbath" in the final weeks of fighting.

Mackay's experience and knowledge of LTTE-held territory made him the ideal UN candidate to record how the war was being fought, the paper said.

"He was stranded behind Tamil Tiger lines on a mission to rescue 100 local staff and their families and was repeatedly bombed for 10 days in January, despite desperate calls to army commanders by his superiors imploring them to stop firing," the paper reported.

His presence, however, attracted the attention of Sri Lanka's military. In a letter sent in late July, the authorities gave him two weeks to pack up, saying that his "adverse activities had come to the notice of the intelligence services".

A senior UN source confirmed that Mackay had been asked to leave, adding that "the issue was taken up through diplomatic channels with the government, but their decision remained unchanged".

The visas of at least 10 foreign workers of non-governmental organisations have been cancelled or not extended over allegations of bias in favour of the Tamil Tigers. Meanwhile, the UN says it is continuing to pressure Sri Lanka over allegations of human rights violations.

## New UN envoy amidst concern over detentions

A SENIOR political official of the United Nations arrived in Sri Lanka to amidst international concern over human rights violations committed by Sri Lanka during its war against the Tamil Tigers and the continued detention of tens of thousands of Tamils in barbed wired camps.

"We are very concerned about the pace of progress," Pascoe said Monday, September 16 at the United Nations as he prepared to travel to Sri Lanka at the request of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the U.N. News Service said.

"The secretary-general was there (in Sri Lanka) and a series of commitments was made ... including on the movement of people out of camps and including an eventual political process and some kind of accountability mechanism."

Pascoe said he will raise the issue of resettling displaced Tamils in Sri Lankan camps on his visit to the island nation.

About 300,000 Tamils, displaced from their homes during the Sri Lankan military's campaign against the Tamil Tigers, have been housed in camps with poor facilities since May when the military declared victory over the Tamil Tigers.

"We are very concerned about the pace of progress," Pascoe said. "We're particularly concerned about the [refugees]."

The United Nations, its agencies and other international groups have been critical of the Sri Lankan government's slow progress in resettling the displaced people who are reportedly facing a humanitarian crisis in the camps. Only a few thousand of them have returned to their homes.

Sri Lanka says its plan to return refugees to their homes by December depends on the clearing of mines from former conflict zones and establishing security in the north. Rains last month flooded tents and caused temporary sewage systems to overflow in the camps, prompting calls from the U.S. and the UN for the swift release of the estimated 300,000 displaced people before the monsoon season begins in the next couple of months.

The UN can ask Sri Lanka to speed up the process, "but we have to complete de-mining first in these areas," U.L.M. Haldeen, secretary in the Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services said, responding to UN calls.

Pascoe said he also planned to discuss the continued detention of two U.N. staff members and the Sri Lanka's decision to expel U.N. children's agency spokesman James Elder. Pascoe plans to spend several days in Sri Lanka, visiting refugee camps and meeting Rajapakse.



## FEATURE

# Witness to Thileepan's fast

Adele Balasingham

AS we entered the premises of the Nallur Kandasamy temple we were confronted by a sea of people seated on the white sands under the blazing sun.

Thileepan, the young Tiger leader of Jaffna, took the podium on the 14th September 1987 at the Nallur Kandasamy temple to commence his fast- unto-death as a protest against India's failure to fulfill her pledges, and to mobilise the frustrated sentiments of the Tamils into a national mass upsurge.

Thileepan's non-violent struggle was unique and extraordinary for its commitment. Although an armed guerrilla fighter, he chose the spiritual mode of 'ahimsa' as enunciated by the great Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi to impress upon India the plight and predicament of the people of Tamil Eelam.

The levels to which the Tamil people or more specifically, the LTTE cadres, are prepared to go for their freedom mirrors not only a deep passion for their liberation, but indicates the phenomenal degree of oppression they have been subjected to. It is only those who experience intolerable oppression of such a magnitude, of being threatened with extinction, that are capable of supreme forms of self sacrifice as we have seen from Thileepan's episode.

Thileepan, who had travelled to Delhi as part of LTTE leader Vellupillai Pirabakaran's delegation before the signing of the Accord, was informed of the content of the dialogue that had taken place between the Indian Prime Minister and the LTTE leader.

With the knowledge that there was an unwritten agreement between Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. Pirabakaran and that it had not been implemented, he felt that his people and the struggle had been betrayed and decided on a fast- unto-death demanding the fulfillment of the pledges.

When news of Thileepan's fast- unto-death and the deteriorating political situation between the LTTE and the Indian Peace Keeping Force reached us, we decided to leave India for Jaffna.

My joy at reaching the shores of Tamil Eelam after so many years was contained by the gloom that hung in the air. Thileepan was a few days into his fast till death and the population of the Peninsula was seriously concerned and wholeheartedly behind the non-violent campaign of a single individual seeking justice from the world's largest democracy. Subsequently, our first priority

after our arrival in the Peninsula was to visit Thileepan encamped at the historic Nallur Kandasamy temple, the cultural and spiritual centre of the Jaffna Tamils.

Thileepan's decision to single-handedly take on the credibility of the Indian state was not incongruous with his history of resistance to state oppression as a cadre in the LTTE. He had faced battle on several occasions in defence of Jaffna during Kittu's time and suffered serious abdominal wounds in the process. He was well known for his astute understanding of the politics and mindset of his people and emerged as a radical political leader.

The senior LTTE women cadres often speak of his staunch advocacy of inducting women into the national struggle and is remembered as one of the founding fathers in the promotion of women's issues. With such a history it comes as no surprise that he endeared himself not only to the cadres but the people of Jaffna also.

My husband, LTTE theoretician Anton Balasingham, met Thileepan during the pre-Accord talks when he shared a hotel room with him in Delhi and quickly grew very fond of this affable fellow. It was an extremely painful and emotional experience for Bala to meet him again in Jaffna, in totally adverse conditions, with Thileepan's life slowly ebbing away.

As we entered the premises of the Nallur Kandasamy temple we were confronted by a sea of people seated on the white sands under the blazing sun. The air was thick with collective emotion and solemnity. This fading young man on the platform obviously embodied the political sentiments and aspirations of his people.



But it was more than that also. Thileepan's fast had touched the spirit of the Tamil nation and mobilised the popular masses in unprecedented solidarity. One could sense how this extraordinary sacrifice of a fragile young man had suddenly assumed a formidable force as the collective strength of his people. Thileepan's fast was a supreme act of transcendence of individuality for a collective cause. Literally, it was an act of self-crucifixion, a noble act by which this brave young man condemned himself to death so that others could live in freedom and dignity.

With deep humility, Bala and I mounted the platform to speak to the reposed Thileepan. Already several days without food or water and with a dry cracked mouth, Thileepan could only whisper. Bala leaned closer to the weakened Thileepan and exchanged words with him. Naturally enough, Thileepan enquired about the political developments. We left soon afterwards, never to see him alive again.

As Thileepan's fast moved on in days, he was no longer able to address the public from the podium and spent much of his time lying quietly as his condition steadily deteriorated. As Thileepan

grew visibly weaker in front of his people's eyes, their anger and resentment towards India and the IPKF grew stronger. The sight of this popular young man being allowed to die in such an agonising manner generated disbelief at the depth of callousness of the Indian government and the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

All that was required to save Thileepan's waning life was for the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Dixit, to humble himself and meet and reassure Thileepan that the Indian government would fulfill its pledges to the Tamils. In fact Delhi ignored Thileepan's fast in the early stages as an isolated idiosyncrasy of an individual, but later became seriously concerned when the episode gathered momentum and turned into a national uprising with anti-Indian sentiments. Delhi's concerns compelled Mr. Dixit to pay a visit to Jaffna to 'study the situation'.

On the 22nd September, the eighth day of Thileepan's fast, Mr. Dixit arrived at the Pallaly airport where Mr. Pirapaharan and Bala met him. Bala told me later that Mr. Dixit was rude and resentful and condemned Thileepan's fasting campaign as a provocative act by the LTTE aimed at instigating

the Tamil masses against the Indian government.

Mr. Pirapaharan showed remarkable patience and pleaded with the Indian diplomat to pay a visit to Nallur and talk to the dying young man to give up his fast by assuring him that India would fulfill its pledges. Displaying his typical arrogance and intransigence, Mr. Dixit rejected the LTTE leader's plea, arguing that it was not within the mandate of his visit.

Had Mr. Dixit correctly read the situation and genuinely cared for the sentiments of the Tamil people at this very crucial time, it is highly probable that the entire episode of India's direct intervention in the ethnic conflict would have taken a different turn.

But Thileepan's willingness to sacrifice his life in such a way touched the spirit of the people and his unnecessary tragic death on 26th September planted deeply the seeds of disenchantment with the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

*Adele Balasingham is a sociologist, political activist and writer who has lived and worked in India and Sri Lanka with the LTTE for more than twenty years. This article is compiled, with kind permission, from extracts of 'The Will to Freedom.'*

## Likely yo lose GSP+... Sri Lanka hits back...

Continued from p13

If the GSP+ program is withdrawn, it is likely that these companies will move their factories elsewhere.

Sri Lanka's textile industry netted a record \$3.47 billion from EU markets last year, making it the country's top source of foreign exchange, followed by remittances of \$3 billion and tea exports of \$1.2 billion.

Before the GSP+ program was in place, the USA was the biggest buyer of Sri Lankan goods. Now the European Union is the largest export market for Sri Lanka accounting for 36% of all

exports.

The review follows a number of countries, including Britain and the USA, publicly abstaining from voting for Sri Lanka to receive a \$2.6 billion loan from the IMF in July.

Randeep Ramesh, India correspondent for the Guardian, labelled this "an unprecedented move", whilst also commenting, that, "if the EU does withdraw the trade concession it will mark a turning point in relations."

A final decision is to be made in October, but even Sri Lanka is not confident that they will continue to enjoy this benefit. The final decision is non-appealable.

Continued from p13

and get stropky when it is not forthcoming," Jayatilaka rounded off his column in The Sunday Times in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, The Sunday Times reported that President Mahinda Rajapakse was angered by another Sri Lankan ministry's comments that "GSP+ is very unlikely."

Sri Lanka's Trade Ministry released a statement admitting it was "very unlikely" that they would keep hold of the GSP+ concessions, following a damning 130-page report by the European Union.

The Sri Lankan President has now intervened in the matter.

At a meeting at Temple Trees, Rajapakse appointed a team of four ministers to make a strong plea for the concessions not be withdrawn. The team comprises Export Development and International Trade Minister G.L. Peiris, Disaster Management and Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe, Justice Minister Milinda Moragoda and Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama.

"All four must work as a team and give me results," the President told ministers.

A final decision is due in October.





Queuing for food: sun or rain, young or old, civilians in the internment camps have to line up for every inadequate meal