

Sri Lanka crisis reveals India not ready for global role

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Tamils unite in defiance



More than one hundred thousand Tamils gathered in the centre of London on January 31 to protest the ongoing genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka and to mandate Tamil Eelam as the only viable solution. They were part of a growing international wave of Tamils expressing concern about the civilians being killed in the NorthEast. *More inside*

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NEWS

Tamils protest Vanni killings, mandate Tamil Eelam

Globally Tamils rally against the war in unprecedented numbers

HUNDREDS of thousands of Diaspora Tamils gathered in their countries of residence to protest at the killing of civilians in the Vanni and at the continuing war in which civilian hospitals and safe zones are being targeted.

In Britain, the largest ever gathering - over 100,000 people - marched through the centre of London on January 31 carrying placards calling for an end to the war and expressing their support for an independent Tamil Eelam (see separate story).

In a show of solidarity with the Northeast Tamils caught up in the war in Sri Lanka, about 45,000 Canadian Tamils people took part in the protest throughout the day on January 30, forming a human chain. There were about 30,000 people on Front St. alone, Toronto Star reported (see separate story).

In Australia, events are occurring across Sydney and Melbourne. In Sydney, a mass hunger strike has been underway for days to highlight the unfolding humanitarian crises taking place in the North East. Organised by members of the Tamil community, the fast transformed a Hindu temple into a temporary epicentre of angst and despair against the Sri Lankan Government's military campaign.

"The people in the North East continue to live in fear of aerial bombing and mortar attacks on an hourly basis and still the world continues to ignore their pleas for help" said Janakan Sivaram, an active member of the Tamil youth community, who have been instrumental in the growing voices of discontent towards the lack of global condemnation towards an unfolding genocide.

"We have protested and lobbied relentlessly to bring to light the fate of the tamil people, now it has come to the stage where we are willing to go the extreme measures to make our voices heard by the Australian government and its people".

Norwegian Tamils, spurred by the brutal attacks by the Sri Lanka armed forces killing and maiming many innocent Tamils in Vanni, gathered unannounced in front of the Norwegian Parliament on January 31, voicing that each hour delay in stopping the

war will increase the number of people killed in Vanni.

The Norwegian Tamils called on the Norwegian government to urge the Sri Lanka government to stop the war on the Tamils in Vanni in its capacity and right as the key actor in bringing peace in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Berlin Tamils engaged in a similar spontaneous demonstration in front of the Indian High Commission in Berlin January 30, demanding the Indian Government to immediately stop its assistance to Sri Lanka in killing the Tamils in Vanni.

The Berlin Tamils continued their protest demonstration shouting slogans bearing the photo of Muthukumar who laid his life in self-immolation in support of the Eelam Tamils in Chennai, for nearly 3 hours in front of the Indian High Commission in Berlin.

India too saw a number of activists take to protests and rallies, the largest of which was the funeral of Muthukumar, the Tamil Nadu journalist who self-immolated in protest at the war and at India's silence on the matter (see separate story).

More than a 1000 Tamil activists belonging to various political organizations and social movements laid siege to the Tanjore Air Force base on January 31, violating prohibitive orders.

The activists, led by Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam President Kolathur T.S.Mani and Tamil Desiya Pothuvudamai Katchi (Tamil National Communist Party) General Secretary P. Maniarsan, were protesting against the air-force base at Thanjavur being used by the Indian Army to supply lethal and non-lethal weaponry to Sri Lanka in its genocidal war on the Tamils.

Speaking to the media, Maniarsan charged that India's weapon supply to Colombo was routed through the Thanjavur air-force base, from where it would reach the Palali air-force base in Sri Lanka. This led to a violent confrontation between the police and the activists, media reports said. More than 1000 activists, including Kolathur Mani and Maniarsan, were arrested and 244 were remanded. Those imprisoned include women and children.



Many banners were home-made, expressing sentiments personal to the individual, but together the protesters sent a united message of anger about the lack of action from the international community

British Tamils stage largest ever march protesting genocide

TamilNet

MORE than one hundred thousand British Tamils marched through central London on January 31, condemning Sri Lanka's war against their people and calling for an independent Tamil Eelam.

The unprecedented response on one of the coldest days this

anger and outrage over the genocide committed on Tamils by Colombo and its international abettors, significant focus of the march was the demand for the recognition of Eezham Tamil sovereignty in the island of Sri Lanka.

It was actually a mandate, the organizers said.

Protesters carried large flags of red and yellow - the Tamil nat-

which they handed out en route.

Some focused on recent massacres by the Sri Lankan military, others outlined the '60 years of Oppression' faced by the Tamils of Sri Lanka, many others highlighted 'Genocide'.

Many of the marchers had made up their own banners and posters; some highlighted the slaughter of Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka Army and Air Force attacks especially in the past month in Vanni, others slammed various members of the international community, especially India and Japan. There were also calls on the British government and the UN to act.

One community organization passed out cards bearing a petition to the British government demanding the de-proscription of the LTTE, drawing enthusiastic response.

The protesters chanted slogans, including "We want - Tamil Eelam!", "Our leader - Pirapaharan!", "Stop killing - Tamil People" and "Rajapakse - go to hell!"

"We're here in solidarity and unity with our suffering people in Vanni," said an official with the British Tamil Forum, a prominent Diaspora organisation and a key association organizing of the event.

"There is widespread and deep seated anger [amongst expatriate Tamils] at Sri Lanka's cowardly attacks on civilians and also at the international community which is supporting this," he said.

"We are also here to reiterate once again our support for the Tamil demand for national self-determination and political independence," he said. "The brutality of the Sri Lankan state is plain to see now, as well as the ruthless-

The text of a petition to British Premier Gordon Brown signed by many marchers:

"I express my solidarity with the people of Tamil Eelam in their struggle against Sri Lankan state oppression and I support their efforts to liberate their homeland in the North and East of the island of Sri Lanka and to restore their sovereignty over it. I believe, as they do, that only the establishment of the secure and independent state of Tamil Eelam can ensure the well-being of the Tamil people and their right to self rule."

"As I am unable to express my feelings and support to the brave men and women who are fighting an armed struggle for a just and legitimate cause, with a full democratic mandate of the Tamil people, for the entire Tamil community in Sri Lanka, I as a law abiding citizen of this country, demand HM's Government de-proscribes the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam immediately."

year turned out to be the largest ever gathering of the British Tamil community.

It seems almost half of the Eelam Tamil community in Britain joined the march Saturday.

While the turnout reflected the

ional colours - and banners condemning the genocide of Tamils by the Sri Lankan state and expressing their support for an independent Tamil Eelam. Many expatriate organizations and associations had printed leaflets

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NEWS

10,000 French Tamils demonstrate in Paris

MORE than 10,000 French Tamils participated in a demonstration protesting against the killing of several hundred civilians by the Sri Lanka military in the past week, and urging Pakistan to stop military and other assistance to the Sri Lanka Government to prosecute war against Tamils.

The protest was in the historic Etuval area of France in front of the Pakistani Embassy on January 28 and followed a spontaneously organized protest in the La Chapelle area the previous day.

Demonstrators carried an effigy of Sri Lanka's President, Mahinda Rajapakse, and shouted slogans condemning the artillery attacks and aerial bombardment by Sri Lanka military that killed, in one day, more than 300 of civilians. The civilians had sought refuge in Udayaarkaddu safety zone demarcated by the Government where the military targeted their attacks.

Representatives of the French Tamil community handed over a memorandum to the Pakistan Embassy official, appealing to Pakistan Government to stop aiding Colombo in the perpetration of war against Tamils.

Participants in the protest said this is the first time in France, such large numbers had assem-

bled, and that there is marked increase in the involvement of expatriate Tamils in activities related to Tamil struggle.

The previous day, several hundred French Tamils had gathered in front of the French Parliament to demonstrate in protest against the genocide of Tamils in Vanni, but they were sent back by the French police, even though they had obtained official permission. The protestors, however, went ahead and started the demonstration in La Chapelle area where the crowd swelled to around 4000 persons.

The protestors demanded that the French media should report the large demonstration and expose Sri Lanka's actions. They complained that the French media is exercising self-censorship in reporting the carnage of Tamils in Vanni. The demonstration continued until after media persons visited the site to cover the event.

The Tamil traders in La Chapelle closed their business establishments offering full support to the demonstration.

These were part of a series of smaller protests, including another in La Chapelle on 23 January. More than 4000 Tamils, braving the cold weather, held hands forming a human chain.



Unprecedented numbers of Tamils also took to the streets in Paris (top) and Toronto, Canada (above)

Canadian human chain protests genocide

OVER 50,000 Tamils took to the streets of Toronto, Canada, on January 30 to protest against the "genocide of innocents in Sri Lanka's conflict zone."

Carrying banners, placards and shouting slogans in icy conditions, the protesters formed a human chain in downtown Toronto from 12 noon to 6 pm to highlight the plight of Tamils at the hands of Sri Lankan forces.

Extended over many kilometres, the human chain jammed the city centre and threw traffic into chaos. They called upon the world community to prevail upon Sri Lanka to stop the "genocide of innocent Tamils" in the name of fighting terrorism.

Sharannya Mohan looked back and forth on Front St. As far as she could see, Tamils stood shoulder to shoulder denouncing what they call genocide in Sri Lanka, reported The Star newspaper. "We can't all be terrorists," the 21-year-old York University

student said with a twisted smile.

"It's not only Tamils that should care about this," 17-year-old Phavalan Rahendram was quoted by CBC News as saying. "This is the killing of human beings. This is a genocide."

Representing the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) and various other bodies, the protesters distributed leaflets which read: "We want peace, help us," "Join us to stop the genocide," and "Then Rwanda, now Sri Lanka."

CTC spokesperson David Poopala Pillai said: "Sri Lanka was fooling the international community by talking about a political solution. They are on the path to wiping off Tamils."

He said Sri Lanka was lying to the world by saying that the retreating LTTE was targeting innocent civilians.

Thayan Raghavan Paranchothy, spokesperson for the organisers, said they had received chilling video accounts from the "con-

flict zone to show the barbaric treatment of Tamils" by Sri Lankan forces. "Sri Lanka is carrying out a systematic genocide of innocent Tamils who are seeking shelter under trees. They are being lured into so-called safe zones which are then being bombed by Sri Lankan forces," he said.

The human chain converged on the historic Union Station before dispersing with an appeal to the world to stop "the genocide" by Sri Lanka.

The word had gone out, via Facebook, MySpace, university and high school student associations, on several Tamil radio stations, on tamilcanadian.com and websites for some of the 30 Tamil newspapers in Toronto, that only a massive turnout would get the message to Canadians about what was happening on the tiny island off the southern tip of India.

"The people have no access to food or shelter. Hospitals and orphanages are bombed. There is no

medicine," said Supanki Kalanadan, 22, a University of Toronto graduate in teaching. "The government won't let media in to see what they're doing. No one has been able to contact their friends or relatives to find out what's going on."

Kalanadan and Mohan left Sri Lanka as children. But the annihilation of their culture is as real to them as it is to their parents.

"This is not going to end until the government has killed every single Tamil," said Kalanadan.

Dr. Pushpa Kanagaratnam, who will be part of a panel on south Asians at the Ontario Psychological Association convention next month, has spent many of her years in Toronto working with her fellow Tamils.

"The war is destroying an ethnic identity," she said told The Star. "Tamils have a collective sense of suffering. No one hasn't been touched by the war. We've known this all of our lives."

Thangarajah grew up in Sri Lanka, pleaded for her father's life as soldiers held a gun to his face. "The people are no longer normal."

Young people led the drive to organize the demonstration, said Mohan, because "we were educated in Canada. We have been very lucky to live here. We want to use our freedom here to say that Tamil rights need to be respected, too."

"We're out here to tell Canada to take a stance with us," said University of Toronto student Shya Theba.

"The last I heard from any of my family members was one month ago when they called for two minutes. They were telling us they didn't have any money to buy food, and if we send money there's no way it will reach them," the Toronto Sun quoted her as saying.

"They're pretty much stranded."

NEWS

Sri Lankan warns civilians, fires 5000 shells targeting safety zone

THE Sri Lankan government issued a stark warning to Tamil civilians living in Vanni, raising fears that the Sri Lankan military is planning to step up artillery and aerial bombardment leading to even more civilian casualties.

A government statement said the fight against the Liberation tigers of Tamil Eelam was at "the decisive stage" and that it could not guarantee the security of tens of thousands of non-combatants living outside a designated "safety zone" in LTTE-held territory.

"The government calls on all civilians to enter the demarcated 'safety zone' as soon as possible," the statement said.

"The government cannot be responsible for the safety and security of civilians still living among LTTE terrorists," it added.

Even though the Sri Lankan government unilaterally proposed the safety zone, its military has repeatedly targeted the area in the past week killing and wounding scores of civilians including children. On Monday February 2, alone the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) fired more than 5,000 artillery shells and Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL) rockets throughout the whole day from all directions into the safety zone.

At least one hundred civilians could have been killed or maimed in the indiscriminate barrage. The casualties are uncountable as the whole population is forced to reside inside the bunkers throughout the whole day.

Furthermore, whilst the Sri Lankan government wants civilians to move into the safety zone, it has prevented international relief agencies operating within the zone.

On Tuesday, January 27 SLA instructed UN and World Food Programme officials to keep away from 'safety zone,' which has



Hundreds of Tamils are being targetted by the Sri Lankan military in areas the Sri Lankan government declared as 'safe-zones'

been subjected to continuous artillery barrage, denying civilians any meaningful space of refuge, said the latest reports from the offices of the Regional Director of Health Services for Kilinochchi and Mullaitheevu.

"Completely given up by the

International Community, the civilians are left to face the fate at the hands of their genocidal killers. Indications are that they would rather choose to die starving rather than getting caught by Colombo's army of predators," said a medical staff at Udaiyaar-

kaddu hospital. "These are people who have maternal attachment to their land and freedom."

"If the abettors of Colombo's war, India and especially the Co-chairs, do not change their attitude, these people would face hunger and death. The situation is

worse than what the world has witnessed in Congo and other countries in the Africa," he said.

"They think people would walk into the hands of the SLA as they were forced to do in Sampoor and Vaakarai, but they fail to grasp the reality."

Rare images emerge of Tamils trapped in war

Ravi Nessman
Associated Press

A MOTHER and father lay on the floor, their two young children cradled between them. Floral pillows and other bedding were strewn about: They were apparently sleeping when an artillery shell hit their makeshift shelter in northern Sri Lanka, instantly killing them all.

This photo, taken Jan. 23, along with other pictures and video footage taken last week were given to The Associated Press by independent observers. They offer a rare glimpse of the growing toll the civil war has

taken on the estimated 250,000 civilians trapped in the all-but-sealed conflict zone.

The images show that despite repeated government denials, civilians are being killed and maimed in the fighting.

Some of the victims were attacked inside a government-declared "safe zone" in LTTE-held territory and the wounded were brought to the nearby Puthukudiyiruppu hospital, which itself has come under attack. The hospital, overflowing with wounded civilians, was shelled Monday for the

fourth time in two days, killing two patients, said Kandasamy Tharmakulasingham, a government health official. A total of 11 people have been killed since the first attack on the hospital Sunday afternoon, he said.

One of the last working medical institutions in the region, the hospital lies outside the "safe zone" the government established Jan. 21 inside LTTE territory as a refuge for civilians. The government pledged not to attack the safe area during its offensive against the LTTE, but it has come under repeated artillery attack, according to local health officials and human rights groups.

Government troops have brought the Tamil Tigers to the

brink of defeat in recent months, forcing them out of much of the de facto state they once controlled in the north, capturing their administrative capital and shattering their dream of establishing a separate homeland for the Tamils. The offensive has also raised growing concerns about the fate of civilians in the war zone.

Journalists and most aid groups have been barred from the area of the fighting, but independent observers shot video footage and photographs over the past week and provided them to The Associated Press. The observers provided the images on condition they not be identified because they feared government reprisal.

The photograph of the slain

family was taken in the early morning of January 23 in the village of Udayarkattu inside the "safe zone," according to the observer who took the picture. It showed the bloodied bodies of a woman, two young children and a man lying among brightly colored floral pillows, a green mat, striped sheets and other bedding. A bicycle, stacked blankets and other household items could be seen in the background. An artillery shell struck between two makeshift shelters where people displaced by the fighting were staying and the family of four was killed instantly, the observer said. A second photo showed the body

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NEWS

Hospitals are legitimate target - Gothabaya

AS Sri Lankan Army repeatedly targeted the last two functioning hospitals in LTTE controlled territory in Vanni killing and maiming scores of civilians, the country's Defence Secretary declared that hospitals are legitimate targets in the ongoing conflict.

"No hospital should operate outside the Safety Zone...everything beyond the safety is a legitimate target," Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary, Gothabaya Rajapakse told the Sky News,

In recent days Sri Lanka Army (SLA) has fired artillery shells targeting the last two functioning hospitals inside LTTE controlled territory in Vanni.

A nurse who was attending a patient at Udaiyaarkaddu make-shift hospital (Kilinochchi hospital) was killed when 3 shells hit the hospital. 10 civilians, including ICRC/SLRC staff stationed in the vicinity of Puthukkudiyiruppu, were wounded. This was the fourth attack on the hospital in the last few days.

SLA shelled Puthukkudiyiruppu hospital on Sunday February 1, killing nine civilians, including patients and their family members in the ward. More than 15 civilians were injured.

The indiscriminate attack on the hospital has caused panic and tension among the hundreds of wounded civilians at the hospital. The shelling has come despite repeated calls from the medical authorities not to fire shells on the civilian medical facility and within a few hours of a public statement from the ICRC, which said

it was shocked by the shelling on hospital twice in recent days.

"Three artillery barrages struck a hospital in Sri Lanka's chaotic war zone, slamming into its pediatrics ward and its women's wing and killing nine patients," an Associated Press report said quoting ICRC.

Earlier, the Sri Lankan military commander of Vanni SF-HQ had instructed the Government Agent of Mullaiththeevu district to shift the hospital to safety zone, giving an ultimatum to the officials. However, as the attacks continued, the ICRC and UN officials had to seek refuge at the hospital in Puthukkudiyiruppu.

A United Nations humanitarian spokesman in Sri Lanka today voiced concern over the shelling of a hospital in the zone of fighting between the Government and LTTE forces, emphasizing the ever-increasing threat to the lives of some 250,000 civilians trapped by the conflict.

Gordon Weiss of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said that the hospital was shelled numerous times over the past day, resulting in the killing of 11 people altogether, including one nurse. Mr. Weiss said that it is uncertain where the shellfire came from but that his office had notified both the Government and the separatist LTTE about the damage, but the strikes have not halted.

Analysts point out that Gothabaya's comments to Sky News are virtually an admission of the culpability of the SLA.



Even hospitals in the 'safe zone' have been targetted by the Sri Lankan military, which is a war crime

Poor response to Rajapakse's safe passage offer

THE 48-hour deadline served by President Mahinda Rajapaksa to the LTTE on Thursday, January 29, to allow the displaced to move to safer areas expired on Friday with very few civilians taking up the offer.

The LTTE labelled the offer a "deception" and called for an "internationally mooted ceasefire" to provide meaningful relief to civilians caught in the war. However, Sri Lanka swiftly rejected any possibility of a ceasefire.

In the 48-hours, only 26 civilians crossed through Oamanthai into Sri Lankan government controlled area, according to Vavuniya District Secretariat sources.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan mili-

tary sources put the number of civilians who crossed Oamanthai at 65.

Rajapakse said he was offering safe passage to the civilians so they could leave the LTTE held territory. Earlier Rajapakse accused the LTTE of refusing to let the civilians leave.

"I urge the [LTTE], within the next 48 hours to allow free movement of civilians to ensure their safety and security. For all those civilians, I assure a safe passage to a secure environment," he said.

However, LTTE political wing leader B Nadesan denied the LTTE was blocking civilians.

Nadesan speaking to the BBC said the people did not wish to end up in the hands of "their

killers".

Nadesan told BBC's Chris Morris in Colombo that 28 people had been killed by shellfire during Rajapakse's offer of 48 hour safe passage period.

Tamil observers pointed out that the safe passage offers came with no practical measures in place to facilitate the movement of people through heavily militarised areas and forward defence localities. The government did not request the help of ICRC or any other aid agency to monitor or support the movement of people.

MDMK leader Vaiko commenting on the 48-hour ceasefire announced by Rajapakse said it was only aimed at "fooling" the world.

In a statement released in Chennai, Vaiko said 'unless there is an unconditional ceasefire, the present announcement can only be seen as an excuse to intensify army offensive and aimed at fooling the world,' Vaiko said.

India cannot claim credit to the latest announcement of truce from Colombo, as "it never pressed for a ceasefire," with the Sri Lankan leadership, he said.

New Delhi, however, saw the offer differently and welcomed Sri Lanka's announcement that its army would allow a safe passage to Tamil civilians trapped in northern parts of the island nation and hoped they would be able to move to safety from the area of conflict between military and

LTTE.

"India welcomes this important announcement and hopes that with implementation of these steps, the condition of civilians caught in those conflict areas will improve," Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon told reporters in New Delhi.

Menon noted that safety of civilians trapped in northern areas was one of the issues discussed by External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee with Rajapakse during his visit to Colombo recently.

"We are happy to see the steps being taken by Sri Lanka and we hope that all civilians will be able to move to safety," the Foreign Secretary said.

EDITORIAL

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False Gods

The Co-Chairs have left the Tamil people's fate in their hands.

In recent weeks the Sri Lankan military has begun massacring Tamil civilians in Vanni. Hundreds of people, including many children, have been killed or maimed in widespread and intense artillery and rocket bombardments. Hospitals, refugee camps and settlements have been targeted and hit hard. Having maintained a complete silence for months amid the killings, abductions, mass displacements and so on, the self-styled Co-Chairs of the 'peace process' (the US, EU, Japan and Norway) spoke up this week. If the Tamils had expected these custodians of international law, liberal norms, global justice, etc to condemn Sri Lanka's slaughter, they were quite mistaken. The underwriters of the 2002-2006 'peace' intervention instead told the LTTE to surrender its weapons and fall at President Mahinda Rajapakse's feet - so that the Tamils may be spared further suffering. This then is the simple choice the international community has left the Tamils: 'die on your feet or live on your knees'.

The Co-Chairs' statement is required reading for all Tamils. It is worth remembering these are the same international actors who swaggered up in 2001 to make liberal peace in Sri Lanka. To this end, they armed the Sri Lankan state (engaged in some 'security sector reform' along the way), revived the economy (in the Sinhala South), withheld aid from the Tamil northeast, and did their best to corner and weaken the LTTE. Because to them it is the LTTE, not six decades of Sinhala state chauvinism that is the problem. It is therefore worth remembering that the suffering heaped on the Tamil people in the past few years was prepared, funded, facilitated and encouraged by the international custodians of the 'peace process'.

On the one hand, the Co-Chairs statement this week - note that it was co-signed by the peace facilitator, Norway also - can be rightly seen as callous disregard for the suffering of the Tamil people. But it was ever thus, as those Tamils who refused to place their faith in international commitment to a just peace kept pointing out - even in the halcyon days (anyone remember the fuss about federalism?). It should be recalled that it was only aid to the Tamil areas that these donors made conditional on 'progress on the peace process', that international monitors point-blank refused to accept the military's continued occupation of tens of thousands of Tamil homes, schools and so on as

breaches of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement, and how they dismissed out of hand entire the agitation for self-determination staged by the Tamil people.

On the other hand, the Co-Chairs statement can also be seen as the final collapse of the international liberal project in Sri Lanka. Faced with the unmasked vehemence of Sinhala nationalism, they have no challenge, only accommodation, to offer. In other words, for all their rhetoric about human rights, democracy, pluralism, and such, when faced with the implacable hostility to all this by the Sinhala people (remember Rajapakse is universally popular amongst them), the international custodians of global liberalism are now merely seeking ways to get along, to 'make peace', with Sinhala chauvinism. No talk of now of 'conflict transformation' or 'peace-building' - unless, of course, it is teaching the Tamils to speak Sinhala or funding the Sinhala colonization of Tamil and Muslim lands (it's still called "development")

The point is this. These international actors never had the stomach to take on the Sinhala state's chauvinism. Instead they long pretended it doesn't exist, even as the signs were all around. Now, when it's in their faces, they simply bow to its ferocity - and ask the Tamils to do the same. Once the LTTE surrenders to Dutugemunu, the Co-Chairs will apparently "ensure an inclusive dialogue to agree on a political settlement so that lasting peace and reconciliation can be achieved." Well, we know how that'll go.

The Co-Chairs have thus reduced the possibility of Tamils securing their rights - and their survival as a people - to the outcome of the battlefield. Having done all they can to stack the odds in favour of the Lion, they are leaving our future up to the Tiger. As we have argued before, it was Sinhala chauvinism that brought war to the island: armed struggle emerged as Tamil resistance. In that sense, the ferocity of the conflict is a test of two people's wills: the Sinhalese strive to crush the Tamils (and other minorities) and the Tamils, on the other hand, refuse to go quietly into the night. Therefore the crucial lesson for the Tamils is this: if we successfully stand firm against Sinhala hegemony, the international community will simply accept the outcome of the struggle: they have now lost all hope in a harmonious Sri Lanka - just as we did a long time ago.

Co-Chairs: LTTE surrender will save Vanni civilians

THE Tokyo Co-Chairs (Norway, Japan, US and EU) Tuesday called on the Tamil Tigers to lay down their arms surrender to the Sri Lankan government if the civilians of Vanni are to be spared further death and suffering. The Co-Chairs said they would (thereafter) ensure an "inclusive dialogue" that will lead to lasting peace.

The full text of the Co-Chairs' statement follows:

The Tokyo Co-Chairs (Norway, Japan, US and EU) jointly express their great concern about the plight of thousands of internally displaced persons trapped by fighting in northern Sri Lanka. The Co-Chairs call on the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka not to fire out of or into the no-fire zone established by the Government or in the vicinity of the PTK hospital (or any other medical structure), where more than 500 patients are receiving care and many hundreds more have sought refuge. They also call on both sides to allow food and medical assistance to reach those trapped by fighting, cooperate with the ICRC to facilitate the evacuation of urgent medical cases, and ensure the safety of aid and medical workers. The LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka must respect international humanitarian law.

International efforts to persuade the LTTE to allow the civilians freedom of movement have failed. There remains probably only a short period of time before

the LTTE loses control of all areas in the North. The LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka should recognize that further loss of life - of civilians and combatants - will serve no cause.

To avoid further civilian casualties and human suffering, the Co-Chairs:

- call on the LTTE to discuss with the Government of Sri Lanka the modalities for ending hostilities, including the laying down of arms, renunciation of violence, acceptance of the Government of Sri Lanka's offer of amnesty; and participating as a political party in a process to achieve a just and lasting political solution; and

- call on the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to declare a temporary no-fire period to allow for evacuation of sick and wounded, and provision of aid to civilians.

The Co-Chairs will work with the Government of Sri Lanka, India, the United Nations and others to ensure:

- the internally displaced people from the north are transferred to temporary camps where UN agencies, the ICRC, and humanitarian organizations will have full access and the IDPs will be treated according to international standards and resettled in their original homes as soon as possible; and

- an inclusive dialogue to agree on a political settlement so that lasting peace and reconciliation can be achieved.

Obama message to Rajapakse hails "shared values"

US President Barack Obama sent his "warmest greetings and wishes" to Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse this week on the occasion of Sri Lanka's Independence Day. The US President hailed the two countries' "shared beliefs in democracy, liberty, pluralism, and respect for human rights" and suggested "our governments together can work to foster peace, prosperity, and stability throughout Sri Lanka."

The full text of President Obama's letter follows:

Dear Mr. President:

As the people of Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan origin around the world celebrate National Day on February 4, I send my warmest

greetings and wishes to you on behalf of the people of the United States.

The United States values its enduring friendship with the people of Sri Lanka. I hope that the coming year will see advancement of our shared beliefs in democracy, liberty, pluralism, and respect for human rights. Our governments together can work to foster peace, prosperity, and stability throughout Sri Lanka.

As the people of Sri Lanka celebrate National Day, they should know that they have a friend and partner in the United States.

Sincerely,
Barack Obama

OPINION

Sri Lanka crisis reveals India not ready for global security role

TamilNet

THE United Nations' Security Council, though initially formed to keep the peace between the post WW2 Great Powers, is today the hub of global peace and security in wider terms. The UNSC's permanent members are the world's most powerful states - those capable of decisive leadership and robust action on international peace and security issues. India, along with other rising great powers, has declared its ambitions for a permanent seat in a reformed UNSC. However, the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka is revealing the limits of Delhi's ability to both be decisive and to act on matters at the core of the UNSC's agenda.

The UNSC is the decision making body par excellence. The General Assembly can make collective resolutions, but these are not binding: only the Security Council can make declarations binding on UN member states.

The initial purpose of the UNSC was to prevent the recurrence of war between the world's most powerful states. The five permanent members, now all nuclear-armed, are those recognized in the aftermath of WW2 as 'Great Powers': the USA, Britain, France, Russia (taking over the seat of the Soviet Union) and China.

Ten other seats are available on rotating 2-year terms for the world's other states, as a way of sharing both responsibility and power over 'global' matters.

Each Great Power has a veto on any collective UNSC decision. In other words, even if completely outnumbered by other Great Powers (and/or other states), no action inimical to the interests of a P5 member can be undertaken.

The UNSC is ultimately responsible for keeping the peace around the world, especially when states attack each other - for example when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

However, the 'rise' of other states in the past half-century has led to calls for reform of the UNSC, on the basis countries like Germany, Japan, India (also

nuclear armed), and Brazil must have a say in global security issues. It is these states (near) great power status that justifies the call for expansion of the UNSC and their seat on it.

However, global security today is not just about inter-Great Power conflict. It is also about the security of humanity. Matters like humanitarian crises, genocide, the HIV/AIDS global pandemic, and so on are at the centre of UNSC concerns, even if these are, as in many multi-lateral forum, mired in self-interests of individual Great Powers and other states.

Sri Lanka's long running conflict is a quintessential example of international security concerns.

Though dubbed an 'internal' conflict, there has been long and heavy involvement - through inflows of development aid, military assistance, attempts at political re-engineering, and so on - of many powerful states including US, UK, China, Japan and of course Pakistan and India.

The exploding humanitarian crisis in northern Sri Lanka is not new. It is the culmination of Sri Lanka's industrialized violence against the Tamil population (predominantly) of the Northeast.

Indeed, the Northeast Tamils have always - since at least the 1980s - been subject by the Sri Lankan state to starvation by embargo, mass killing by aerial and artillery bombardment, mass forced displacement (often ahead of Sinhala colonization of their villages) and son.

The Sri Lankan state's industrialized killing and destructive power led the Tamil Diaspora to mushroom rapidly and by the time of the Norwegian peace process began in 2002, to the internal displacement of 800,000 people, predominantly Tamils.

It was said that many such large-scale humanitarian crises and suffering were ignored by the global security establishment before 1990 because of the Cold War stand off between the West and the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet



Union was therefore supposed to free up the UNSC to deal with such 'internal' matters.

Indeed, throughout the nineties, humanitarian issues within states increasingly came to be seen - via more emphasis on International Humanitarian Law, for example - as matters for international action.

After the impotent inaction during the massacres in Bosnia (Srebrenica, for example), Rwanda, and so on, the logic of "humanitarian intervention" - international military action to protect civilians from "their" own governments became more common. The logic was crystallized in 2001 in the "Responsibility to Protect".

In other words, if states did not protect their population - and often states are responsible for brutalizing peoples - the international community would intervene forcefully - if not always by force - to protect peoples.

However, by narrowing global security after 2001 to 'terrorism', the Bush administration in the US paved the way for the relegation of humanitarian security concerns - mass forced displacement, mass killings, genocide, and so on - to the distant background.

Yet the eruptions within simmering crises like Sudan and Sri Lanka have increasingly forced humanitarian issues to back to the foreground.

At the same time, in a world where Great Powers are held to have their particular "spheres of

influence", South Asia is seen as India's preserve.

In other words, when there are crisis here, it is Delhi that is expected to provide leadership and lead international action. This is especially so given India is an aspirant permanent member of the UNSC.

However, the present humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka - which has been completely transparent to international scrutiny for several years, is proving the limits of India's ability to move decisively on 'transnational' security issues.

Even as Sri Lanka's societal cohesiveness has disintegrated and the state has transformed into what some academics label an "ethnocracy", India has proven unable to cope.

By clinging to the easy US-led paradigm which reduced regional or global security merely to 'fighting terrorism' Delhi's inability to influence events in India's "backyard" has been concealed.

However, as the 'Global' 'War on Terror' disintegrates and ceases to be the cornerstone for global security, Delhi's inability to uphold International Humanitarian Law in the region, impose peace and security and, above all, ensure the protection of populations, minorities and peoples is being exposed.

This week, amid expressions of alarm and concern by several members of the international community, India's hesitant and timid response is hardly what

might be expected of an aspirant custodian of global security.

Domestic considerations are hardly a consideration, if anything the impassioned appeals from Tamil Nadu, the Indian state with the greatest authority within the Indian federation to speak on Sri Lanka's Tamil question, has for several months been demanding decisive action by Delhi.

Delhi's inability to prevail on Sri Lanka's Sinhala government has long been recognized by the region. It was demonstrated even in 2007 the Rajapakse administration humiliated the Singh administration by pointedly tearing up the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces enacted in 1987 by the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord.

That Sri Lanka could confidently tear up an international treaty with neighbouring India was underlined by the Indian response. Whilst the conflict in the island has escalated and the humanitarian suffering has deepened inexorably, India has been able to do little more than alternate between entreaties for a solution and expression of concern.

The unfolding disaster in Sri Lanka says much about the Sinhala-Tamil divide, the fiction of the 'lasting peace' claimed and promised by the international community from 2002 to 2006.

But it also reveals the limits of Indian power and leadership vis-à-vis the main issues of international security in the 21st century.

TAMIL DIASPORA UNITES IN DEFIANCE



RALLY, LONDON, UK



LA CHAPPELLE, PARIS, FRANCE



DENMARK



RALLY, TORONTO, CANADA



CANDLE VIGIL, ITALY



NETHERLANDS



HUMAN CHAIN, MONTREAL, CANADA



STUDENT PROTEST, CANADA



MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



NEWZELAND



BERLIN, GERMANY



OSLO, NORWAY



ஆலயம் தொழுவது சாலயம் நன்று

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மீரதோசம் : சுந்தரேஸ்வரப் பெருமானுக்கு குத்திர கோமம் மாலை 5 மணி

தொடர்ந்து மீரதோசநாயகர் விதிபுலா

06-02-2008 Friday

பகல் : லட்சுமி கோமம்

மாலை : முலஸ்தான பூசை 6 மணி

மங்கல மகாலட்சுமி திருவிளக்குப்பூசை மாலை 7மணி

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NEWS

Muthukumar triggers off mood of defiance in Tamil Nadu

ABOUT a hundred thousand people, including college students from all over Tamil Nadu, cadres of various pro-Eelam political parties, women organizations, mediapersons and members of the public participated in the funeral procession on January 31 Tamil Nadu journalist Muthukumar, who burnt himself to death in front of the Shastri Bhavan, the Indian Central Government's Chennai Head office two days earlier.

Muthukumar, from Thoothukkudi, who wrote for Penne Nee feminist magazine, doused himself with petrol and set himself afire, condemning the futile visit by Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who failed to stop the war in Sri Lanka and save Eelam Tamils.

Before he died, he distributed a distributed a 4-page statement in Tamil (see separate translation) that addressed the people of Tamil Nadu directly and set out the reasons for his actions.

The Liberation Tigers saluted the sacrifice of the 26-year-old.

"The LTTE salutes the sacrifice of Muthukumar, who carried the emotional message of the 70 million Tamil Nadu people against the genocidal war by the Sinhala chauvinism in Tamil Eelam," said the condolence message from LTTE Political Head B. Nadesan.

The uprising of Tamil Nadu people has shaken the conscience of the global humanity, Mr. Nadesan said and added that the Heroic Tamil Son Muthukumar would have a permanent place in the global Tamil history.

The intensification of student uprising as an aftermath of his sacrifice has made the state government to close colleges indefinitely, reports a journalist from Tamil Nadu.

Muthukumar's mortal remains were placed on a decorated and modified hearse at 3:00 p.m.

Law college students turned pall-bearers and carried Muthukumar's coffin to the hearse.

The vehicle carried the photographs of Muthukumar along with that of LTTE leader Pirapaharan.

Apart from public unrest, tension and street violence, the deeper manifestation of the changes wrought in the Tamil Nadu psyche by the actions of Muthukumar were in the open public defi-

ance of the Government of India ban against the LTTE, which the people demonstrated carrying LTTE flags, placards and images of Pirapaharan in the funeral procession.

It took eight hours for the three-kilometer long procession to traverse a mere distance of six kilometres from Muthukumar's sister Tamilarasi's home in Kolathur to the Moolakoththalam cremation ground.

All shops in the district had downed their shutters as a mark of solidarity.

Members of the public welcomed the procession and saluted Muthukumar's sacrifice by lighting torches.

College students from all over Tamil Nadu, and members of the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam (PDK), Revolutionary Youth Front (RYF), Revolutionary Students Front (RSF), and other Tamil organizations took part in the procession.

Prominent Tamil nationalist leaders Vaiko (General Secretary, MDMK), Thirumavalavan (President, VCK) and Nedumaran (President, Tamil Nationalist Movement) and leading film personalities like Bharatiraja, Cheran, Seeman, Maniratnam, Selvamani and Mansoor Ali Khan took part in the procession.

Also present were the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State General Secretary Tamilsai Sounderajan, Traders Union President T Vellaiyan and Tamil National Alliance MP Srikantha.

Tension prevailed when hoardings of Sonia Gandhi, Jayalitha and Karunanidhi were torn; and wall-writings displaying their names were damaged by the youth taking part in the rally.

Heavy police and paramilitary presence could do nothing to dampen the courageous spirit of the students.

Slogans raised in the meeting were in support of a separate Tamil homeland Eelam, and in praise of National Leader Pirapakaran and the Tamil Tigers.

For the first time in recent years, such a public display of the Eelam flag and Pirapakaran's photograph has taken place in Tamil Nadu, a journalist taking



Thousands attended the funeral of Muthukumar, which also saw pictures of the LTTE leader and LTTE flags flying, in defiance of the Indian proscription on the organisation

part in the event observed.

Even before the funeral procession entered the cremation ground, news reached the students that the Tamil Nadu Government had ordered indefinite closure of all colleges and hostels.

This led to students vigorously voicing their protests and venting their anger by raising anti-government slogans and threatening dire consequences if the ruling class failed to respect their sentiments.

As a result of their frustration, law college students spontaneously protested by sitting in the mid-

dle of the procession and blocking the roads.

They vowed to prevent the funeral from taking place until the government paid heed to their demands.

This stalled the procession by two hours.

Only after they were cajoled and convinced by several leaders, they agreed to allow the procession to move.

The funeral procession carrying Muthukumar's body entered the Moolakoththalam cremation ground at 10.30 p.m. The last rites were performed subsequently.

At 11:10 p.m. his funeral pyre

was lit by his father Kumaresan.

Condolence speeches were made at the Moolakoththalam cremation ground itself.

Political leaders Vaiko and Thirumavalavan eulogised Muthukumar and saluted his bravery in their fiery speeches.

Veteran CPI leader Nallakannu, Traders Union President T Vellaiyan and director Cheran also spoke on this occasion.

The last of the speeches ended at exactly 12.07 a.m. on Sunday.

About five thousand people stayed in the burial ground till the end of this tense and teary ceremony.

NEWS

Last statement of Muthukumar

Journalist Muthukumar distributed a 4-page statement in Tamil before he self-immolated in Tamil Nadu. This is an edited version of the English translation provided by TamilNet.

Dear hardworking Tamil people

Vanakkam!

I am sorry at having to meet you at this juncture when you are hurrying to work. But there is no other option. My name is Muthukumar. I am a journalist and an assistant director. Right now, I am working in a Chennai-based newspaper. I am also one like you. I am just another average person who has been reading newspapers and websites of how fellow Tamils are daily being killed, and like you I am unable to eat, unable to sleep and unable to even think.

While his ancient land of Tamils lets anyone coming here, like the Seths, to flourish, our own blood, the Tamils in Eelam are dying. When we lend our voices to say the killings should be stopped, Indian imperialism maintains a stony silence and does not give out any reply. If India's war is really a justifiable one, they can wage it openly... Why should they do it stealthily?

The Indian ruling class is eager to annihilate a very large population by using the hollow excuse of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in order to satisfy the vengeful and selfish goals of a few individuals. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were not the only ones charged with the murder of Rajiv Gandhi. The Jain Commission Report held that the people of Tamil Nadu were also guilty of this murder. If so, are you also the murderers who killed Rajiv Gandhi?

They say the British killed people in Jallianwallahbagh, but what are they doing in Mullaiththeevu and Vanni? Look at the children being killed there. Aren't you reminded of your children? Look at the women being raped? Don't you have a sister in that age? When Rajiv Gandhi was killed why were frontline leaders of the Congress not with him? Why did Jayalalithaa, an alliance partner, not go to take part in such a massive rally that Rajiv took part in? Such questions are not being raised, and they are not being answered by them either. People, please think. Are they your leaders? What is the guarantee that these people--who indulge in politics through their money and muscle power--will not target us tomorrow? If they turn against tomorrow, who will be on our side?

Kalaigarnar [Karunanidhi]? Even at that point of time, he will make an announcement that the members of parliament will resign. Then, he will understand (!) the Central Government. Then, he will once again request for a right decision, and pass a resolution in the Legislative

Assembly--like actor Vadivel's comedy in the film Winner where he claims that no one has touched him until a particular month, a particular week, a particular time. People! A paper will not achieve anything! Now, the Election-time Tamil Kalaigarnar, who wants to be the leader of the worldwide Tamils and who desires to transfer all the money in Tamil Nadu to the coffers of his family, has hidden himself in the hospital afraid of bearing the brunt of people's anger. This paper tiger staged such major fights in order to get the required cabinet portfolios for

The Jain Commission Report held that the people of Tamil Nadu were also guilty of [the Rajiv Gandhi] murder.

If so, are you also the murderers who killed Rajiv Gandhi?

his ministers, but truthfully, what has he done for Tamil or for the Tamils? He has himself admitted once, "Will the honey-gatherer remain without licking the back of his hand?" If we look at his puppet-shows, it looks as if he has done a lot of licking...

In reality, the Indian military's role in Sri Lanka is not just against the Tamils. It is against all Indians. They tried the sexual techniques they learnt from Sinhalese soldiers with innocent Assamese women! They learnt the strategies of how to crush the Tamil Tigers from the Sinhalese and they applied it to crush the fighters in the north-eastern states! As if this were not enough, what do we learn from the fact that the Indian and Sri Lankan peacekeeping forces were deported from Haiti because of sexual misdemeanour? That the India-Sri Lanka alliance is not an ideological alliance, but a sexual one! So, because the alliance between the Indian and Sri Lankan armies is against the fundamental human rights of the Indian people, try to rally students and democratic organizations towards the cause on a national level.

Tamil Eelam is not the need of Tamil Eelam alone, it is the need of Tamil Nadu also. Because of the fishermen of Rameswaram. There are laws in the world to protect goats and cows. But, are the Tamils of Rameswaram and the Tamils of Eelam lower than cows and goats? The Indian media carries on a systematic

campaign that Tamil fishermen who cross [maritime] boundaries are attacked because of the suspicion that they might be Tamil Tigers. Don't they ever read newspapers? Often, Taiwanese fishermen are arrested at Chennai because they lost their way at sea. If it is possible for people from Taiwan, which is thousands of kilometers away to lose their way, can't they believe the fact that the Tamil fisherman from Rameswaram, which is just 12 miles away from Lanka strays away from his route?

Our government is killing our brothers in Eelam by using our name, our Indian identity. The Indian government wants us to be isolated in this struggle. We don't want that to happen. So, please tell the Central Government that you too support our brothers who are fighting.

People of Tamil Eelam, and Liberation Tigers....

All eyes are now in the direction of Mullaiththeevu. Tamil Nadu is also emotionally only on your side. It also wants to do something else. But what can we do? We don't have a true leader like you have... Please don't leave hope. Such a leader will emerge from Tamil Nadu only in such desperate times. Until then, strengthen the hands of the Tigers. Because the 1965 anti-Hindi agitation was placed in the hands of a few selfish people, the history of Tamil Nadu has been dragged to the stone ages. Please don't do that mistake.

Dear International Community, and our hope Obama...

We still have hope on you. But, there is no guarantee that a sovereign republic will not torture its people through ethnic discrimination. It is possible to cite instances from America's own history. After all, boxing hero Muhammed Ali said, "The little white in my community would have come only through rape..."

As long as you remain silent, India will never open its mouth. Perhaps India may break its silence after all the Tamils have been killed. Until then, are you going to keep looking at India's mouth? They say that the war in Vanni is against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. They say that the Tigers are using the people as a human shield. If that is true, why do they come into the safety zone declared by the Government and kill people? This one evidence is enough that irrespective of whether the Tamil people are dependent on the Tigers or on the Government, they are going to be killed for the sole reason that they are Tamils. Is this not genocide?

If India, Pakistan and China are supplying arms, Japan is giv-



Muthukumar set himself alight to highlight his concerns

ing economic aid, and moreover India is bullying Sri Lanka and thus killing Tamils, why don't you realize that you are also committing the same murder by your silence and your blindness? Nobody becomes a terrorist simply by taking up arms.

Jayalalitha says that the Tigers should lay down arms--as though the problem arose because the Tigers took up arms. In reality, the Tigers were formed because of the genocide of Tamils in Eelam, and they are not the reason for it. They are not the reason, just an outcome.

Are the Red Cross ambulances, French aid workers also Tigers? China's tanks, India's spy planes, Pakistan's artillery... not only these kill our people, but the silence of the International Community also kills them.

As long as Indian Government's involvement was not exposed, it kept saying that this problem was an internal affair and that India could not interfere. It also said that it was aiding Sri Lanka in order to prevent China, Pakistan and America from gaining supremacy in Sri Lanka. Yet, to kill Tamils, it joins hands with Pakistan that has killed scores of Indians and was responsible for the attack on the Indian Parliament, the serial-blasts in Mumbai and the recent strikes in Mumbai. If that is so, we suspect

that Pakistan's terrorism in India is a mutually agreed-upon concept created by both sides in order to exploit and squander their respective citizens.

Now, they are attacking the ambulance of the International Committee of Red Cross, are they also Tamil Tigers? They killed 17 aid workers from France, were they Tamil Tigers? China's tanks, India's spy planes, Pakistan's artillery... not only these kill our people, but the silence of the International Community also kills them. When will you realize this--after a people who greatly desire justice are totally wiped away from the face of the earth? If you are interested in adding us to the list of Aborigines, Maya and Inca peoples, each day one of us will come in front of you and kill ourselves, as it comes in one of our myths.... Please leave our sisters and our children alone. We are unable to bear this. We are fighting with the sole hope that one day we will watch them laugh whole-heartedly. Even if we accept for the sake of rhetoric that the LTTE should be punished, we must realize that both India and Sri Lanka lack the moral ground to hand out any punishment.

Justice derailed is worse than justice denied.

With eternal love,
Your brother against injustice,
Ku. Muthukuma
Kolathur, Chennai 99.

Dear Tamil people, in the struggle against injustice our brothers and children have taken up the weapon of the intellect. I have used the weapon of life. You use the weapon of photocopying.

Yes, make copies of this pamphlet and distribute it to your friends, relatives, and students and ensure that this support for this struggle becomes greater. Nanri.

NEWS

Tamil Nadu erupts over Eelam

TAMIL NADU prepared for a total shut down on February 4, Sri Lanka's Independence Day to protest against the killing Tamils in Sri Lanka. The general shutdown, called by the newly formed Eelam Tamils Protection Movement (ETPM) comes amidst widespread public anger at Delhi's continued support for Sri Lanka's war.

In the past week, 2 people have committed suicide by self-immolating themselves in protest of Delhi's continued support to Sri Lanka's state. A third person who jumped from a 100-metre high telecommunications tower protesting against Indian inaction against Sri Lanka's brutal war against Tamils.

Businesses associated with Sri Lanka, including Bank of Ceylon and Sri Lankan Airlines, were attacked and destroyed.

Across the state, students observed fasts and trade unionists, women's organisations and lawyers took to the streets against the continuing killing of Tamils in the neighbouring island.

On January 23 200,000 students from various schools and colleges took part in a state wide boycott in support of Eelam Tamils. Students of more than five colleges in the state are on indefinite hunger strike and in various parts of the state, students are indulging in road-blockades and are taking out processions to

show their solidarity with the Eelam Tamils.

As means of diffusing the student uprising, the government of Tamil Nadu on Saturday, January 31 announced an indefinite closure of all state-aided, state-run and private colleges in the state.

"This reminds us of the 1965 anti-Hindi agitations that rocked Tamil Nadu. At that point of time too, colleges were indefinitely closed that lasted well over three months," said a senior Tamil activist.

Demanding the International Community to impose sanctions on Sri Lanka and calling for the resignation of Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee for his approach to the Tamil issue, the Madras High Court Advocates Association Thursday, January 29 called for an indefinite boycott of courts.

The Tamil Nadu Advocates Association, the other major lawyers collective, has also asked its members to abstain from court proceedings for a week.

Madras High Court Advocates Association President Paul Kanagaraj has called for an association meeting Tuesday to chart out the future course of action.

Likewise, the Tamil Nadu Advocates Association President S Prabakaran has urged the Center to take steps to stop the genocide of Tamils.



Across Tamil Nadu thousands took to the streets in the pro-Eelam cause after the self-immolation of at least two young men who chose death as the means by which to highlight what they saw as Indian complicity in the killing of Tamils in Sri Lanka

As war nears end, India's power blunted in Sri Lanka

Krittivas Mukherjee
Reuters

AFTER decades of strong-arming tiny neighbour Sri Lanka, India finds itself jostling for influence as the civil war nears an end, its power blunted by the island nation's growing ties with Pakistan and China.

While domestic political sensitivities over the fate of Sri Lanka's Tamils forced India to ease its leverage, rivals China and Pakistan stepped into the breach, offering Colombo military assistance in its war against the Tamil Tigers.

China has sold Jian-7 fighters, anti-aircraft guns and JY-11 3D air surveillance radars to the resurgent Sri Lankan army as it seeks to finish one of Asia's longest-running wars by squeezing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam fighters in a shrinking patch of jungle in the north.

Pakistan also supplied the army small arms, multi-barrel rocket launchers and trained Sri Lankan air force in precision guided attacks against the LTTE, strategic analysts said.

"There have been several shipments of weapons from Pakistan. What has made a real difference to the outcome of the war is the Sri Lankan air force which has been rigorously trained by Pakistan in precision-guided attacks," retired Indian army major general Ashok Mehta said.

India, by contrast, has limited its military assistance to the Sri Lankan army to "defensive weapons".

India has been limited by its insistence on protection of Sri Lanka's Tamils, who are closely

linked to 60 million Tamils in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, across a narrow strait from Sri Lanka.

"The shine has somewhat gone off from the leverage India has over Sri Lanka, partly because India has allowed it to happen," said Pakiasothy Saravanamuttu of the Colombo-based Centre for Policy Alternative.

China's and Pakistan's help against Tamil Tigers may have been crucial, a former Sri Lankan official said.

"If not for China and Pakistan, we would not have been able to finish off the insurgency," K. Godage, a former deputy head of Sri Lanka's foreign office, told Reuters.

India trained and armed Tamil Tigers in the early 1980s and followed it up a disastrous 1987-1990 peacekeeping foray into Sri Lanka, which has cast a long shadow over the war and made Sri Lanka wary of its giant neighbour.

National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan asked Sri Lanka to stop seeking arms from China or Pakistan last year, saying India as the regional power would still meet its defence requirements.

Narayanan made an unscheduled visit to Colombo last year to ensure Sri Lanka did not become a cockpit of regional rivalry, as with Afghanistan where Islamabad fears the influence of India.

This week, Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee visited Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, and the two discussed safety measures for Tamils

trapped in fighting between the army and Tamil Tigers separatists, and post-war reconstruction.

The visit was also to cool tensions with Tamil Nadu politicians in India's ruling coalition who are sympathetic to the Tigers and demand India broker a ceasefire.

WIDER POWER STRUGGLE

The strategic battle in Sri Lanka is seen as part of a wider power struggle in South Asia, involving not only India and Pakistan but also China, which seeks to gain influence in the important economic region. China has made strides developing strategic assets, like the Gwadar port in Pakistan, the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota and assets in Yangon, part of a strategy to protect shipping lanes.

Sri Lanka sits next to shipping lanes that feed 80 percent of China's and 65 percent of India's oil needs.

"There is a convergence of strategic interest in Sri Lanka among regional powers," said security analyst C. Uday Bhaskar.

But ignoring India may be hard for Sri Lanka. As the war appears to draws to a close, the focus is turning to the state of Sri Lanka's \$32 billion economy.

Sri Lanka is suffering from costly short-term foreign debt. The war is expected to cost nearly \$2 billion this year.

Indian investments in Sri Lanka have grown. Bharti Airtel Ltd, India's top mobile operator, launched operations in Sri Lanka with a \$200 million investment this month. Sri Lanka is also dependent on India for much of its fuel.

"Strategic relationship is also governed by trade, and India has a lot of room to manoeuvre in Sri Lanka," Saravanamuttu said.

Karunanidhi falls in line with Delhi, abandons Tamils

BACKING Delhi's stand on Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu on Tuesday, February 3 urged the Sri Lankan government to 'extend its full cooperation' to 'work out a permanent solution which will ensure full devolution of powers and autonomy to Tamils living in northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka' while washing its hands off the ceasefire demand saying the state government had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of a foreign country. Spelling out DMK's stand on the issue, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi said he wanted a solution to the issue in "a democratic way", effectively distancing the party from Tamil freedom struggle.

It is for the first time that the DMK had openly backed autonomy and devolution of powers as a

solution to end the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka. The party had earlier rejected the 1987 Indo-Lanka accord which envisaged the concept of devolution of powers. The LTTE and the Tamils and also rejected it.

Commenting Karunanidhi's change of stance, Paataali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder-leader Dr. S. Ramadoss criticized the DMK for not including any ceasefire demand. "Does Karunanidhi not know that ceasefire is a prerequisite for peace-talks? Does this omission not reveal that the Rajapakse government and the Karunanidhi government are no different at the ideological level?" he said. Ramadoss said the DMK leader had "washed his hands off" the Eelam Tamils. He wondered why the DMK was putting the Eelam struggle back by half a century.

NEWS

IC in disarray over war and casualties

AS the number of Tamil civilian deaths mounted inside the government proposed safety zone due to artillery bombardment by Sri Lankan forces, the co-chairs and India reacted with varying responses showing disarray within the international community on Sri Lanka's ongoing civil war.

The Royal Norwegian government, which facilitated the latest peace process between Sri Lanka and Liberation Tigers, condemned the war whilst the European Union and the United Kingdom demanded a humanitarian ceasefire to supply food and medicine and create a safe passage for civilians.

The United States and Canada limited their reactions to merely expressing their concern but India and Japan remained unmoved by the plight of the Tamils caught in the war.

Norwegian Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, in a statement issued on Tuesday, January 27 said his government condemned the ongoing war in Sri Lanka, which has caused "unacceptable sufferings to the civilians," in the country.

Norwegian International Development Minister Erik Solheim called on the parties stressing that all the people in conflict area should be able to move freely and that the civilians who flee the war must be assured a dignified and respectful treatment under the supervision and monitoring of UN and international observers.

EU Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Louis Michel on January 29 called for a ceasefire between Sri Lankan forces and LTTE to allow food and medical supplies to be sent to the civilians living in LTTE controlled territory.

"This is an escalating humanitarian catastrophe. We are extremely worried about the terrible situation facing people trapped in the fighting," in the combat zone in the northeast of the island, Michel said in a statement.

"Everything must be done to prevent the suffering of the population and stop further bloodshed and I therefore urge that a window of cessation of hostilities be agreed by the parties to allow civilians to leave the combat zone," he urged.

Michel said the top priorities at the moment were the safe passage for food convoys organised by the World Food Programme, and full access for medical staff and life-saving medicines.

On the same day, the British Foreign Secretary David Miliband urged the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to agree on immediate 'Humanitarian Cease-fire'.

Miliband said in his statement

that "military advances by the Sri Lankan Government against the LTTE have come at a severe humanitarian cost."

Political observers, commenting on statements by the UK noted the adjective of the nuanced statement 'Humanitarian Cease-fire', and said that it may imply allowing Colombo government to continue its war while separating civilians from the LTTE.

However, Mahinda Samarasinghe, Sri Lanka's human rights minister, rejected calls for a ceasefire, vowing to continue the military offensive against the LTTE.

"There will be no ceasefire," Samarasinghe said. "We will continue with our military operations and we will continue to liberate areas which had not been liberated so far."

On Friday January 31, the United States expressed its concern over humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka and hoped the 25-year old civil war would soon come to an end, without urging the Sri Lankan government which is waging the bloody war to end it.

"We're very concerned about the situation on the ground in Sri Lanka," State Department spokesman, Robert Wood, told reporters. Wood said the US is working through UN organisations to try to provide whatever help it can. Terming it as a longstanding conflict, Wood said the US would like to see a better outcome of this civil war in Sri Lanka.

Canada also reflected similar sentiments, in a statement of its own, expressing its deep concern by the ongoing unrest in northeast of Sri Lanka.

"Recent developments underline the urgent need for progress toward a meaningful and durable political solution," Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon said.

The Canadian government, added that it continues "to deliver strong messages to all parties to the conflict about the importance of a return to the peace process and the need to promote and protect the values of freedom, human rights and the rule of law."

India which sent its Minister of External Affairs Pranab Mukherjee, did not release any statements demanding a ceasefire or condemning the killing of civilians.

Japan, which is the second largest aid provider to Sri Lanka, after Iran, was also not concerned with the civilian casualties.

Japan's special envoy Yasushi Akashi, was quoted by the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry as "expressing satisfaction at the efforts by the Sri Lanka Government to safeguard the civilian population in the north."



The Indian External Affairs Minister did not mention a ceasefire when he met the Sri Lankan President

ANC urges end of hostilities, labels war 'genocidal'

THE African National Congress (ANC) on Thursday, January 29 called on the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers to halt the war and immediately institute a ceasefire and allow humanitarian aid to be brought to civilians caught in the conflict who are in dire need of assistance.

"The continued conflict in Sri Lanka has been cited on the human rights watch international monitoring mechanisms as a conflict now reaching genocidal proportions," the statement said.

A day later, on Friday, January 30, the South African government reacted with a statement expressing deep concern for the safety and well-being of the 250,000 civilians, including humanitarian

aid workers, reportedly caught up in the conflict in the North-East region of Sri Lanka and calling for a permanent ceasefire.

South Africa also urged the parties to the conflict, as a priority, respect existing safe zones and protect civilians, and to allow the delivery of relief supplies, including medicine, food, water and temporary shelters.

"This liberation war between the Tamil Tigers for self determination and the Sri Lankan Government has been going on for well over 27 years and has resulted in the deaths of hundreds and thousands of civilians from both sides of the conflict and much destruction in the country," the ANC said.

"The continued conflict in Sri Lanka has been cited on the 'human rights watch' international monitoring mechanisms as a conflict now reaching genocidal proportions."

"The ANC urges all parties in the conflict, both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government to call a halt, immediately institute a ceasefire and allow humanitarian aid to be brought to civilians caught in the conflict who are in dire need of assistance," the statement said.

The ANC calls on all political players to immediately return to the negotiating table and resume a peaceful process of finding a lasting political solution to the conflict," it said.

Aid flows in as war rages

BRITAIN announced that aid to Sri Lanka would be doubled despite the south Asian island's government refusing to heed to international calls to halt the war it's waging in which hundreds of Tamils have been killed in the past ten days alone.

Japan's special envoy to Sri Lanka Yasushi Akashi during his visit to Sri Lanka in January also provided assurances that his country will continue to provide aid to Colombo's government despite its poor human rights record.

British aid to Sri Lanka stands at £5 million after the announcement and the UK is to send experts to assess where the extra cash can best be spent.

The extra £2.5 million of help

doubles the sum announced in October last year to support the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the International Organisation of Migration and the World Food Programme.

International Development Secretary Douglas Alexander added: "Not enough aid is getting through to those who desperately need it. I welcome the Sri Lankan President's assurance that civilians will have safe passage through the conflict zone to reach a secure environment."

"I urge all parties to make sure that this safe passage is implemented and that efforts are made to assist civilians to move away

from danger. Other donors must consider providing additional humanitarian support for the thousands of innocent civilians caught up in this conflict."

Addressing a press conference at the Colombo Hilton at the end of a brief tour, the Japanese Special Envoy signalled that his country was ready to financially back Sri Lanka's efforts to develop the Eastern Province, liberated by security forces in 2007.

Akashi said Japan was aware of the needs of the Eastern Province. Asserting that the East needed urgent assistance, Akashi emphasised that restoration of law and order and good governance would be a requisite for development aid.

NEWS

Germany reacts strongly to Gothabaya threat

THE German government made it clear it was unimpressed by Sri Lanka's threat to Germany's ambassador and other foreigners seen as supportive of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

"Possible misunderstandings should be resolved through dialogue, not through threats," a spokeswoman for the foreign ministry in Berlin said.

German foreign ministry's reaction follows a threat by Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary Gothabaya Rajapakse to 'chase away' foreign diplomats, western journalists and international aid agencies if they attempt to side with the LTTE.

In an interview with the Sunday Island newspaper, Gothabaya Rajapakse, who is also the younger brother of President Mahinda Rajapakse, accused the German and Swiss ambassadors of behaving irresponsibly.

"They will be chased away (if they try) to give a second wind to the LTTE terrorists at a time the

security forces, at heavy cost, are dealing them the final death blow," Rajapakse said.

Rajapakse also turned the heat on international media like CNN, al-Jazeera and "especially" the BBC, accusing them of trying to sensationalise civilian hardships by telecasting video clips from websites owning allegiance to LTTE.

He singled out Chris Morris of the BBC, saying that he was "known for partisan support to the LTTE".

The warning highlights the Sri Lankan Government's increasing intolerance of criticism from any quarter - domestic or international - over its military campaign to defeat the LTTE in the long drawn civil war.

German ambassador Jurgen Weerth was recently summoned by the foreign ministry over remarks he made at the funeral of a newspaper editor and outspoken government critic who was killed by unidentified gunmen.



While the Sri Lankan military parades its victories, it is quiet about the casualties it suffers

'Over a hundred soldiers killed, hundreds injured'

TIGER fighters staged a pre-emptive strike on Sri Lankan offensive units preparing for an assault on Puthukkudiyiruppu, killing over 150 SLA troopers and wounding more than 350.

The LTTE's offensive formations launched an attack on troops from the 59th division of Sri Lanka Army (SLA) massed south of Puthukkudiyiruppu for a major assault on the LTTE held town.

The attack took place in the early hours of Sunday, February 1 and continued through the day.

Three battle tanks, two troop carriers, a military bus and two tractors were fully destroyed in the fighting, according to S. Puleedevan from LTTE's Political office in Vanni.

"The defensive formations of the Liberation Tigers are courageously facing the Sri Lanka

Army, which has been engaged by Colombo in a genocidal war against Tamils," said Puleedevan on Sunday evening.

The offensive units of the SLA had massed near Puthukkudiyiruppu in full strength, with tanks and all preparedness in their hurry to capture Puthukkudiyiruppu in the next one or two days, but are now pushed back beyond their forward lines, he said.

LTTE names head of international relations

TamilNet

THE leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has named Selvarasa Pathmanathan, a high profile representative of the movement, as the Head of a newly established Department of International Relations, sources close to the LTTE said on Saturday, January 31.

Pathmanathan will be representing the movement in any future peace initiatives and will be the primary point of contact for engaging with the international

community, according to a letter sent to the various international actors by the LTTE's Department of International Relations.

Pathmanathan will be working abroad with required mandate from the LTTE leadership, according to the letter.

LTTE's Political Head B. Nadesan, when contacted by TamilNet, confirmed that Pathmanathan has already begun corresponding with international actors.

Balakumaran injured

SENIOR leader and special member of Liberation Tigers K.V. Balakumaran was seriously wounded by Sri Lankan military bombardment, according to media reports.

Balakumaran was injured at Udaiyarkattu in Mullaitheevu on Monday, January 26 and is receiving intensive treatment added the reports. However, neither the LTTE nor the Sri Lankan military is yet to comment on the report.

Balakumaran founded the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation

of Students in the eighties and in 1990 joined the LTTE with his followers. He has been focusing on political aspects of the Tamil struggle for the past two decades.

Balakumaran is the second seniormost leader of the LTTE to be wounded after the beginning of the current phase of fierce clashes between the government troops and the LTTE since August 2006. In November 2007, LTTE's former political wing leader S.P. Tamilselvan was killed in an air raid by Sri Lankan air force jets.

Hundreds of troopers killed in Kalmadu Tank attack

IN well planned operation, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fighters blasted off the Kalmadukulam tank bund using high powered explosives flooding a large section of A-35 between Paranthan and Visuwanadu and staged a water-borne attack on the Sri Lankan forces deployed in the area, inflicting heavy casualties, according to media reports.

At least 800 troops from the 57 division who were deployed in the general area of Ramanathapuram and Tharmapuram in preparation for an all out assault on Visuwanadu were killed in the

LTTE attack that took place in the early hours of Saturday January 24, according to media reports.

Sea Tigers deployed their attack crafts on flood water to enter military controlled territories of Ramanathapuram and Tharmapuram to launch attacks on Sri Lankan soldiers, according to reports. Whilst Sri Lankan defence ministry acknowledged the attack, the LTTE has not commented on it.

According to the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry website, "the flood waters reached over 4ft and ravaged across the slope land

Northwards" and the Sea Tigers "launched the attack following the destruction of the Kalamadukulam Tank bund, onboard 5 boats along the flood channel."

"Heavy artillery and mortar shells were also fired towards the area subsequently" added the website. Although the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry report portrayed the attack as a humanitarian catastrophe that affected civilians, Sri Lanka observers pointed out that no civilians lived in the flooded areas as people had moved further east towards LTTE controlled territory.

Sea Tigers sink two naval crafts

SEA Tigers attacked a convoy of Sri Lankan naval crafts patrolling the north-eastern seas sinking two Arrow boats, according to Liberation Tigers officials.

A flotilla of Sea Tigers intercepted a convoy of 15 Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) vessels including a

Super Dvora off Mulaitheevu coast around 10.00 am on Friday, January 30. In the fierce sea battle that followed, Sea Tiger attack crafts destroyed two arrow boats and returned to their bases without any losses, added the LTTE officials.

According to the initial reports there were many SLN casualties.

Arrow boats are fast assault crafts manufactured by the SLN and used by the Special Boat Squadron (SBS) and the Rapid Action Boat Squadron (RABS).

NEWS

British Tamils Football League 2008/2009
Table & Top Scores

Premier Division

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Mahajana	14	11	1	2	52	10	42	34
2	Santos	14	10	2	2	48	27	21	32
3	West-3	13	9	2	2	48	15	33	29
4	wembley	13	6	4	3	25	24	1	22
5	Watch me	13	6	2	5	28	27	1	20
6	kingston Boys	12	4	3	5	28	15	13	15
7	Surbiton	13	3	3	7	12	21	-9	12
8	Sunrise	14	3	3	8	33	46	-13	12
9	Olimpics	12	1	2	9	8	46	-38	5
10	Blues	13	1	2	10	16	62	-46	5

	Players	Team	Top Scores
1	Sean	Mahajana	16
2	Chrishanthan	Santos	14
3	Senthuran	Sunrise	13
4	Similan	Mahajana	10
5	Luxman	Santos	9
6	Ahilan	Surbiton	7
7	Roshan B	Santos	7
8	Prathip	watchme	7
9	Vinoth	Wembley	6
10	nisanthan	Mahajana	6
11	prasanna	west-3	6

Division One

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1	Srimurugan	11	9	-	2	30	11	19	27
2	E 17 F.C	11	8	1	2	40	20	20	25
3	MTSSC	11	5	1	5	30	37	-7	16
4	Harrow Boys	10	4	1	5	16	17	-1	13
5	11 Stars F.C	12	5	1	6	27	35	-8	13
6	Young rise	11	4	1	6	22	32	-10	13
7	Valvai Blues	11	3	1	7	18	28	-10	10

	Players	Team	Top Scores
1	Mohamed	MTSSC	20
2	Danu	E-17	10
3	Thanu	11 Stars F.C	12
4	Tee	E-17	8
5	Jenu	Srimurugan	6
6	Keeth	Harrow Boys	5
7	Sanjie	Srimurugan	5
8	Sela	Young Rise	4
9	Arujuna	MTSSC	4
10	Naz	Young Rise	4
11	Milson	Harrow Boys	4

British protest...Rare images of Tamils...

Continued from p2

ness of those states supporting it, he added.

"The recent past has underlined yet again why it is necessary for the Tamil people to have the security of our own state"

The protesters included every social category of the diverse Tamil community in Britain including large numbers of second and third generation youth as well as recently arrived people from the Tamil homeland, older professionals and teenagers, merchant bankers and market traders.

Young families fielded a swarm of push-chairs and strollers or carried young children.

Many elderly Tamils - including some on Zimmer frames - braved the near freezing winds to make the long walk from Millbank to Temple on the Embankment. Youth banged drums, chanted slogans through megaphones, handed out leaflet.

The ranks of hundreds of stewards further expanded as people responded to calls for volunteers to help marshal the marchers and assist the elderly.

London's extensive network of Tamil-owned and Tamil-run businesses closed their doors for the day in solidarity. Many businesses reportedly subsidized coaches from Tamil-dominated suburbs to the central London to enable families with small children and the elderly to be able to participate.

Tamil satellite television channels transmitted the event to Diaspora centres and the Vanni.

"More than 50,000 were at the demonstration," a spokesman for London's Metropolitan Police told AFP earlier on in the day.

Thousands more descended on the route from Millbank to Temple, joining the marchers as they passed.

The marchers began gathering at 1pm on Millbank, near the Tate gallery.

By 2pm the riverside road, which had been closed to traffic, was filled and roads leading back to Pimlico and Vauxhall stations were also full of Tamil protesters.

Continued from p4

of a woman wearing a red-and-white checked dress lying face down under debris in another shelter nearby.

The video footage, taken last week, showed Puthukkudiyiruppu hospital packed with dozens of severely wounded people, including many young children. Many of the wounded were lying on mats underneath beds because of overcrowding. The footage showed young boys and girls with amputated legs and arms, and an elderly woman missing her right leg writhing on a mat on the floor. A toddler, his head bandaged and left eye swollen closed, lay nearby, his gauze-covered hands useless as flies buzzed around his face.

"We were caught in shelling after I unloaded our goods. Both my sisters were killed," a teenage boy with no arms sobbed in despair in the footage. Nearby, a middle-aged man lay on a bed with one leg amputated above the knee and the other amputated below it. "I was sleeping with my family when the shells fell," he said, gesturing helplessly. "My wife and two children, aged 7 and 10, were blown to pieces and I screamed."

Another man, his right arm missing below the elbow and his left hand bandaged, recalled: "I got caught in a shell attack near my house. That's all I remember. When I woke up, my hand was cut off."

The footage showed young children, including a baby who appeared to be less than 1-year-old with both legs heavily bandaged.

Asked about the video and photographs, military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara asserted: "No civilians have been killed. ... There may be civilians injured, but not due to shelling. They may be injured because they have been employed on the construction of (LTTE) defenses. Civilians maybe have been injured due to crossfire."

Dr. Thurairajah Varatharajah, the top health official in the war zone, estimated last week that more than 300 civilians had been killed in the recent fighting, something the government has denied. Varatharajah has not updated his estimate.

The government has accused the Tamil Tigers of holding the civilians against their will as human shields, a charge the LTTE deny.

A government spokesman insisted the civilians move en masse to the "safe zone" immediately. "The government cannot be responsible for the safety and security of civilians still living among LTTE terrorists," said spokesman Lakshman Hulugalle.

He did not say how the civilians could move if they were being held against their will.

The United Nations said the government could not absolve itself of responsibility for the safety of the civilian population. "You can't cherry pick from the laws of war. The warring parties remain responsible for civilians at all times," U.N. spokesman Gordon Weiss said.

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