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20,000 Tamils massacred

FULL DETAILS INSIDE

UN complicit in Sri Lanka's killing of civilians at end of war



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NEWS

Toll of dead Tamils in Sri Lanka war 'unacceptably high' says UN

THE UN described the death toll in Sri Lanka as "unacceptably high", as an investigative report by The Times newspaper suggested 20,000 people had been killed in the final days of fighting between government soldiers and Tamil Tigers.

Citing a UN source, the Times reported that 20,000 people were killed in the final throes of the civil war, mostly by government shelling.

The number of casualties is three times the official figure. The UN so far has officially only acknowledged 7,000 civilians killed between January and April.

The Sri Lankan authorities have insisted that their forces stopped using heavy weapons on April 27 and observed the no-fire zone where 100,000 Tamil men, women and children were sheltering.

They have blamed all civilian casualties on Tamil Tigers concealed among the civilians.

Aerial photographs, official documents, witness accounts and expert testimony tell a different story, The Times reported.

"With the world's media and aid organisations kept well away from the fighting, the army launched a fierce barrage that began at the end of April and lasted about three weeks. The offensive ended Sri Lanka's 26-year civil war with the Tamil Tigers, but innocent civilians paid the price," the paper said.

Citing aerial photographs, documents, witness accounts and expert testimony collected by the newspaper, the editorial of the day said these "present clear evidence of an atrocity that comes close to matching Srebrenica, Darfur and other massacres of civilians."

Confidential UN documents acquired by The Times record nearly 7,000 civilian deaths in the 'no-fire' zone up to the end of April. UN sources said that the toll then surged, with an average of 1,000 civilians killed each day until May 19, the paper said.

That figure concurs with the estimate made to The Times by Father Amalraj, a Roman Catholic priest who fled the no-fire zone on May 16 and is now interned with 200,000 other survivors in Manik Farm refugee camp, the paper said. It would take the final



Recent estimates put the number of Tamil civilians killed since January 2009 at 20,000, well above the UN estimate of 7,000 till end April

toll above 20,000.

"Higher," a UN source told The Times. "Keep going."

"These figures are not even complete yet," the UN source told the paper. "It's going to end up way more."

Three independent defence analysts who examined photographs of Sri Lanka Army and LTTE firing positions taken over the no-fire zone confirmed that the range of the LTTE weaponry and the narrowness of the zone make it unlikely that LTTE munitions caused significant civilian casualties.

The Times reported acquisition of the evidence of the "hidden massacre" of Tamil civilians by Sri Lanka's Army in a set of articles on Friday, May 28.

Precise figures for casualties have been impossible to confirm as daily reports from doctors working at the scene were regularly disputed by the Sri Lankan government, other reports said.

The UN has come under pressure over its statements on Sri Lanka, particularly with regard to casualty figures, reported The Guardian newspaper. However, one UN official described the method used to calculate the toll - which appeared to involve multiplying the figure recorded by doctors by five - as dangerous extrapolation, it said.

The Sri Lankan government has rejected the Times report.

Responding to The Times report, Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Palitha Kohona called the 20,000 figure "absolutely unfounded, with no basis of fact" and accused the paper of bias.

"The Times have been carrying on a campaign and has been using us," Kohona told CNN.

"Sri Lanka succeeded in eliminating a deadly terrorist group and we also rescued 260,000 hostages, and now The Times wants to turn the clock back and make the allegations, which are unfounded."

unded."

Brigadier Udaya Nanayak-kara, a military spokesman, declined to say how many civilian deaths had been confirmed, but insisted that they had all been caused by the Liberation Tigers.

"This is an exaggerated story. Whoever has put up this report has been paid by the LTTE," he told The Times.

"There can't be any civilians killed by government forces in that area. How can the UN know about this? It had no people on the ground."

The UN, however, described its figures as "well-informed estimates", adding that it did not have "precise, verifiable numbers" because of a lack of access to the conflict zone and the camps holding refugees from the area.

"The UN has publicly and repeatedly said that the number of people killed in recent months has been unacceptably high and it has shared its estimates with the Go-

vernment as well as others concerned," said Elisabeth Byrs, of the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

"The point is the UN has not been shy about the scale of human suffering and civilian casualties," she said. "It has been ringing the alarm bells for a long time."

The new civilian death toll figure has prompted new calls for an inquiry, which could still be ordered by Ban Ki Moon, the UN Secretary-General, or by Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, The Times reported.

Managala Samaraweera, a former Foreign Minister who left the Government to become an opposition politician in 2005, told The Times that an inquiry was the only way for Sri Lanka to repair the damage to its international reputation.

"As Sri Lankans, we're extr-

continued on p19

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The Liberal Moment

These are both revealing and defining times for the Tamils and Sri Lanka.

This week the Sri Lankan state celebrated what it hails as the military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Several of the liberation movement's top commanders died in a last stand in Mullaitivu, determinedly resisting the onslaught by 50,000 Sinhala soldiers. The government claims LTTE leader Vellupillai Pirapaharan was also killed, but uncertainty continues amid contradictory messages from LTTE officials. Whilst it remains to be seen what the consequences of a conventional military defeat are for the LTTE, several analysts note the organisation's substantial untouched capacity for asymmetric warfare. As ever, this newspaper will refrain from military predictions and commentary, but will simply note that never before in the freedom struggle has the LTTE enjoyed its present near hegemonic standing amongst the Eelam Tamils. This stems directly from two interrelated aspects: the unbridled Sinhala chauvinism that culminated this year in the organised slaughter of over 20,000 Tamil civilians, and the cold-blooded support of international actors, including the United Nations, for Sri Lanka's violent project.

What is clear, therefore, is that Sri Lanka is at a crossroads. So, crucially, is the global liberal project. For decades, the international community, especially the Western liberal democracies, have simply refused to confront the Sinhala chauvinism at the heart of the island's crisis. Instead, through the frameworks of 'liberal peace' - 'democracy and free markets' - and, especially, the 'War on Terror', it has blamed the LTTE solely for the morass. Without the LTTE, it was unshakably believed, compromise, reconciliation and peace were inevitable in Sri Lanka. According to the liberal orthodoxy by which the Sinhala state was allowed - indeed, encouraged and assisted - to violently suppress the Tamil liberation struggle, the absence of the armed group would make possible the advance of democracy, development (free markets), political pluralism, and so on. All good things, it was declared, would come together.

Now, according to Colombo, the LTTE is no more. However, what is taking place is something very different to liberal peace. The Sinhalese, it seems, have little interest in liberalism or in peace with the Tamils. Rather, convinced the Tamils are now defenseless and powerless, the chauvinism that has long been embedded in the Sri Lankan state is rampant, infusing the Sinhala polity (including the UNP, the darling of the liberal peace) and the triumphant Sinhala populace. And it

is not only the Tamils, but Tamil speakers more generally, who are being reminded that they are interlopers in Sinhala-land. President Mahinda Rajapakse is talking about a 'solution' based on 'Buddhist philosophy'. It doesn't take much imagination to understand what the Sinhalese and their 'king' are thinking of.

Meanwhile, the Tamils of Vanni are being subject to the deprivations last reported in the Balkans of the nineties and memorably inflicted on 'lesser' peoples during WW2. In the north, east and the south, Tamil are being harassed and mocked by Sinhala troopers and civilians. For the Tamils, none of this is unexpected. It is an inevitable consequence - indeed, it is merely the ultimate intensification of the exclusionary processes that began at independence and led to the overwhelming mandate in 1976 for an independent Tamil Eelam.

Just as importantly, the Sinhala state is now snarling viciously at the liberal West. Rather than gratitude for the extensive support extended by global liberalism for its murderous project of crushing and disciplining the Tamils, the state is heaping vitriol on the very forces that did the most towards stifling the Tamil political struggle. However, this was also an inevitable consequence. The problem, as we have oft-pointed out earlier, is that the Sinhala vision for the island long pursued by the state is fundamentally and utterly incompatible with liberal values. The Sinhala hegemonic ambition is not the preserve of a lunatic fringe. It cannot be dismissed as the platform of the JVP, JHU et al. Rather, it is mainstream. It has formed the bedrock of policies enacted by both mainstream Sinhala parties, UNP and SLFP, since the fifties. This is not a 'Tamil claim', but extensively documented by several eminent scholars, including those from the Western liberal core.

Some international actors have recoiled in horror. The United States has been the most forthright in the defence of the liberal vision for which so many Tamils have been killed. Britain, France and other Western states have followed Washington's lead. It remains to be seen what the custodians of global liberalism will and won't do. Given the long history of Western support for the Sinhala-dominated state, Tamils are right to be skeptical about these states' commitment to liberal peace. However, if Colombo is to be believed, the LTTE is no more and there is no reason all those good things shouldn't now flow. In other words, the international community has the opportunity to ensure our 'grievances' are

addressed.

The foremost of these is not a political question, but a quintessentially liberal one: the incarceration and brutalization by the Sinhala state of 300,000 Tamil civilians. The excuse is, as ever, the LTTE. But we don't see how sobbing toddlers separated from their parents or the elderly dying amid the wretched conditions or tens of thousands of families struggling with disease and starvation require 'screening'. The Sri Lankan state clearly seeks to humiliate and traumatize the Tamils. It is on this process that the efficacy of future militancy rests. Thus, what the international community does in the near future will have a direct bearing the conflict.

Secondly, what is clear is that Sri Lanka has deliberately and systematically exterminated over 20,000 Tamils in just four months. The extensive investigations by The Times of London and Le Monde in France have produced a compelling dossier of evidence, for those who still stand by the Sinhala state, which also points to UN officials' complicity in covering up - and thus enabling the continuation of - the massacres. The UK and others have explicitly called for war crimes investigations. So too has the UN Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay. Tamils who have been in contact with senior UN officials say that the charge of genocide is being debated. The question, however, is what is going to be done. For those (liberals) who think, now that the LTTE is no more, "ethnic reconciliation" and peace will inevitably follow, we point to the Sinhala triumphalism, the escalating state-backed humiliation and, especially, brutalization of the Tamils in the island, and the now concrete polarisation amongst the island's peoples.

The Tamil people have quite understandably been shaken by the events of the recent past. However amid the despair, the Diaspora has begun to reorganize and regroup. New initiatives and projects are being conceived of and organized to take forward the liberation struggle. Most turn, quite rightly, on greater engagement with the powerful custodians of global liberalism. Our priority, therefore, is to structure ourselves so as to bring our collective intellectual, financial and political resources to bear towards the liberation of our people and beloved homeland. On this, there is a remarkable convergence in sentiment, reflecting renewed unity in purpose. These are, as they say, the worst of times and the best of times. And in the background, of course, Tamil militancy will renew and watch closely the outcome of our efforts.

NEWS

Displaced Tamils' desperate search for loved ones

DESPERATION is rife among the 280,000 Tamil civilians imprisoned in internment camps in northern Sri Lanka with countless civilians unable to locate or contact relatives missing or separated during the bloody chaos that ensued during the final weeks of the Sri Lankan military onslaught.

Many clutched a razor wire fence, desperately searching the crowds on the other side for a familiar face as they tried to discover whether their loved ones were still alive and at liberty, or in another of the camps, a British newspaper reporter describing the plight of the civilians in one of the camps wrote.

Some are still hoping to find relatives amid the rows of tents that provide a temporary home.

But others say relatives were separated out by the military, suspected of being Tamil Tigers.

One refugee said that thousands of fleeing civilians were separated from their families when they reached the army check-point, where they were pushed onto buses and taken to different hospitals and camps.

Navamani, 43, from Vattuvagal in Mullaitivu district, said she had lost her three children, aged 16, 18 and 21, in the chaos.

The task of tracking down lost relatives is complicated by the fact that inmates are not allowed to leave the camp because of the risk, the Government says, that LTTE fighters inside may escape.

The tactics of herding civilians into internment camps indefinitely has been widely criticised.

Sri Lanka has offered up contradictory explanations.

Officials and military officers at the camps variously claimed that the civilians were there for their own safety, for the safety of the rest of the population and because most "have been involved in some sort of activity for the LTTE".

Some officials said that screening of the civilians was taking place inside the camps.

However, other officials admitted that no such screening was taking place, raising questions over the purpose of the continued detentions. "No formal screening at the camps, no," Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara, the military spok-esman, said.

International journalists who managed to speak to some of the

Tamils held in the Menik Farm internment camp reported of heartbreaking stories of mothers searching for their children, elders unable to contact relatives and children, including infants lost without parents.

Bhuvanewari, whose son and two daughters are missing, held photographs through the wire.

"Nine members of my family are missing, please help me find them," she asked Britain's The Telegraph reporter.

"They've been missing since the mass exodus on April 20th. When the army entered the safe zone and cut the area in two, we were separated. We don't know if they've been killed by the army or what."

Thangarajah, 59, a carpenter, told telegraph that his family had moved 14 times since January as the Tigers retreated into the "no-fire zone" on the north-east coast.

"My son and daughter-in-law, my brother-in-law, my cousin, all died in shelling attacks. We built bunkers and kept moving from one place to another. Shells were falling everywhere. Four people died in my family while I was there. We just left their bodies in the bunker and filled them in," he added.

33-year-old Yogisuran's, three children - Thuyamthini, Kuwanthini and Thusiyanthini - have not seen their mother for weeks, ever since a shell exploded next to the bunker where they had taken cover, ripping a hole in her stomach, reported the Guardian newspaper.

Medics rushed 29-year-old Sandi to a makeshift hospital, where doctors operated to save her life. All that Sandi's family know is that she was later evacuated on a ship by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

They have not seen her since, and trapped with tens of thousands of others in the Menik Farm camp they are powerless to do anything about it.

Another camp refugee, Threekanden, 27, is similarly distraught at the disappearance of a loved one. He produces a picture of himself and his wife, Pokonai, on their wedding day. They were split up last month, he said, when the army advanced on the last Tamil Tiger redoubt in northern



Tamil civilians held in Sri Lanka's internment camps have been subjected to seen separated families, disappearances and even killings as they 'live' under military confinement surrounded by barbed wire

Up to 30,000 'disabled' by Sri Lankan shells

Dean Nelson
The Telegraph

UP TO 30,000 Tamil civilians have been left severely disabled by Sri Lankan army shelling in the so-called 'no-fire zone', it has been revealed.

Aid workers said one in ten of the 280,000 civilian refugees who fled the Sri Lankan army's final onslaught against the Tamil Tiger rebels had either lost limbs or been so badly injured they urgently needed prosthetic limbs or wheelchairs to regain their mobility.

The scale of civilian casualties who have been maimed in the war was disclosed by the award-winning French charity Handicap International, which works with the victims of war throughout the world.

The charity, which has a small factory producing artificial limbs in Batticaloa in Sri Lanka's eastern province, has opened an emergency unit at one of the centres for people who fled the fighting, and is working with other suppliers to meet what it described a "huge demand".

Aid workers said nearly all of the people had been the victims of relentless Sri Lankan shelling of the civilian safe zone, where the last of the Tamil Tiger leadership made its last stand before it was

wiped out last week.

The disclosure of thousands of severely maimed and disabled civilian victims contradicts the claims of Sri Lanka's president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who has said his army rescued 280,000 "hostages" without any civilian casualties.

The injured are being held in hospitals throughout the country and camps in the north which are off-limits to journalists and open only to a small number of specialist aid workers.

Handicap International's Sri Lanka director Satish Misra said the number of maimed could be "about 25,000 to 30,000 people".

He said he had established an emergency centre at Vavuniya last year in anticipation of the demand, and that a team of specialist physiotherapists and occupational therapists were now working with the victims.

Their work has been hampered by a government ban on refugees leaving the camp which means the wounded cannot be taken to his factory in Batticaloa, on the eastern coast, where new artificial limbs are fitted and the patients are trained in their use.

"We can't start fitting the prosthetic yet because it's difficult while the people are not allowed out of the camps. The limbs must be fitting and people must be trained how to use them," he said.

One aid worker who has visited the refugee camps told the

Daily Telegraph he had been shocked by the number of displaced civilians who had lost limbs in the recent fighting.

"We know of one person who lost his leg and his wife lost both her legs. They have an eight month old baby. They left the baby in the bunker to get food and were shelled when they came out. They are in Vavuniya camp," he said.

The conditions there and at other restricted camps in the north were the worst he had seen in a 20 year career of helping refugees in war zones around the world, he said.

Old people had died because they had lost their families and could not fend for themselves in the camps, while many children were alone without relatives to care for them. Many children were emaciated, he said, and skin diseases were widespread.

"There are 6,000 people in Polmoddai Camp. They're destitute, arrive in just the clothes they're wearing and put in tents which are excruciatingly hot. The camp is in the jungle, and there have been five people bitten by snakes. The camps at Vavuniya have open sewers, and have become a marshy mass of excrement.

"There are seriously injured people sent to camp in these unhygienic crowded conditions," he said.

(Edited for space)

continued on p19

NEWS

UN concealed carnage to keep Sri Lanka goodwill - French paper

THE United Nations deliberately hid the number of Tamil civilians being killed during the Sri Lankan government offensive against the LTTE, according to a report in the French daily Le Monde.

The report, translated by FRANCE 24, quotes several UN sources alleging that high-ranking UN officials, including Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, chose to keep silent about the high civilian death toll so as to avoid offending the Sri Lankan government and maintain UN operations in the country. A low figure was even leaked by the UN in mid-May, when it was known that the real toll was approaching 20,000 dead.

Speaking to FRANCE 24 from Sri Lanka, Philippe Bolopion, who wrote the piece in Le Monde, said he did not believe the downplayed figures were due to institutional incompetence.

"I would say their moral compass might have gone wrong," said Bolopion, referring to senior UN officials. "The most important thing for them was to stay in the country."

According to Le Monde, a group of experts was put together by the UN to compile casualty figures for Sri Lanka, but only a partial total was leaked to the press, which put the estimated death toll at 7,700, days before the Sri Lankan government declared victory in their offensive against the LTTE. This figure was then widely used by the international press right up until the end of the conflict despite the daily rises in civilian death tolls. But UN staff working on the ground informed Vijay Nambiar, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's chief of staff, that the final figures "would without doubt exceed 20,000 dead," the report said.

"We knew carnage was brewing," the paper quoted an unnamed UN official as saying. "We rang the alarm bells for some months but no-one ever took the

Sri Lankan government to task publicly."

"Everyone is scared of having their agency removed from the country," another anonymous source told the paper.

According to Le Monde, Nambiar even told UN representatives in Sri Lanka that the UN should "keep a low profile" and play a "sustaining role" that was "compatible with the government". In recent weeks, Nambiar's role as the UN's special envoy in Colombo has come into question, FRANCE 24 said. His brother, Satish, a former Indian general, has been a paid consultant to the Sri Lankan army since 2002.

Shortly after the Sri Lankan army's official victory declaration, the local head of the UN High Commission for Refugees, Amin Awad, told the Arabic TV station Al Jazeera there were virtually no civilians left in the conflict zone, the article notes.

But the very next day, some 20,000 refugees came out of the conflict zone, having suffered a sustained bombardment. "It gave the government a blank cheque to carpet bomb the whole area," a UN worker told the Le Monde.

The UN has defended its reticence to give specific casualty figures as the conflict was raging.

"We absolutely reject the allegation that the UN deliberately downplayed civilian casualties," UN spokeswoman Elisabeth Byrs told FRANCE 24. "The UN has publicly and repeatedly said that the number of people killed in recent months has been unacceptably high. What we have are well-informed estimates and not precise verifiable numbers."

But speaking to FRANCE 24, Bolopion said his sources informed him that the UN was not releasing the findings of its staffers on the ground "even though they were much more solid than those the UN has used in other conflict zones".



As Sri Lanka's shelling of civilian areas claimed an increasing number of lives, the UN kept quiet so as to avoid offending the government and possibly being ordered out of the island state.

UN Officials complicit in aiding, abetting Sri Lanka's war crimes

POINTING to a report in the French paper Le Monde, which quoted Vijay Nambiar, chief of Staff of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, as telling UN representatives in Sri Lanka that the UN should "keep a low profile" and play a "sustaining role" that was "compatible with the government," Francis Boyle, professor of International Law at the University of Illinois College of Law said Saturday that both the United Nations Organization itself and its highest level officials are guilty of aiding and abetting Nazi-type crimes against the Tamils by the Government of Sri Lanka, in violation of international law.

"Unless this Momentum is reversed and all these U.N. Officials fired, the United Nations Organization shall follow the League of Nations into the 'ashcan' of History," Boyle said.

Nambiar's statement made while the GOSL inflicted genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing upon the Tamils in violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention, the Four Geneva Conventions of

1949 and their Two Additional Protocols of 1977, as well as the principles of Customary International Criminal Law set forth in the Nuremberg Charter (1945), the Nuremberg Judgment (1946) and the United Nation's own codification of the Nuremberg Principles (1950) for the trial and prosecution of the Nazis--all of which are now incorporated into the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court, Boyle said.

"In other words, both the United Nations Organization itself and its highest level officials are guilty of aiding and abetting Nazi-type crimes against the Tamils by the GOSL."

"The United Nations Organization and its Highest Level Officials did the exact same thing to the Bosnians at Srebrenica in July of 1995--Days that have lived in Infamy and Shame for the United Nations ever since then."

"By comparison, today the GOSL's genocidal massacre of the Tamils in Vanni could be about four times Serbia's genocidal massacre of the Bosnians at Srebrenica."

Further, The Times of UK

revealed Saturday, that the top aide to the United Nations Secretary-General Nambiar was told more than a week earlier that at least 20,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the Sri Lankan Government's final offensive against the Tamil Tigers.

"History is repeating itself with a vengeance for the United Nations. Unless this Momentum is reversed and all these U.N. Officials fired, the United Nations Organization shall follow the League of Nations into the 'ashcan' of History!" Boyle said.

Adding further complicity to Vijay Nambiar's role as a special UN envoy to Sri Lanka is the involvement of his brother Satish Nambiar, a former Indian general as a consultant to the Sri Lankan government.

Satish Nambiar "was quoted on the Sri Lankan military's web page praising the Army's and its commander's conduct of the war in the north, despite all the civilians killed. It is, the [unnamed Security Council] diplomat said bitterly, all a family affair," a report of 11th May in the Inner City Press, said.

UN Humanitarian Chief on defensive over Sri Lanka

UN Humanitarian chief, John Holmes, rejected accusation by a British newspaper that UN had colluded with Sri Lanka in hiding the war crimes the government committed during the final phase of its war against the LTTE.

An editorial in The Times saying "the U.N. has no right to collude in suppressing the appalling evidence" of a government-executed massacre clearly annoyed Holmes. "I resent this allegation that we've been colluding with the government in some way or not taking sufficient notice," he said.

"We have been the ones drawing attention to this problem when the media weren't very interested several months ago."

He also disputed a death toll reported in The Times that cited a "U.N. source" to support an estimate that at least 20,000 people were killed during the months-long final siege. "That figure has no status as far as we're concerned," Holmes said. "It may be right, it may be wrong, it may be far too high, it may even be too low. But we honestly don't know. We've always said an investigation would

be a good idea." He said it was based on an unofficial and unverified U.N. estimate of around 7,000 civilian deaths through the end of April and added on roughly 1,000 more per day after that.

The UN humanitarian coordination office (OCHA), headed by Holmes, responding to Times said civilian deaths were "unacceptably high," but denied a cover-up.

"The UN has publicly and repeatedly said that the number of people killed in recent months has been unacceptably high and it has shared its estimates with the gov-

ernment as well as others concerned," OCHA spokeswoman Elisabeth Byrs told AFP in Geneva. "The point is the UN has not been shy about the scale of human suffering and civilian casualties. It has been ringing the alarm bells for a long time."

Holmes further said the world will probably never find out how many innocent civilians died during the bloody final phase of Sri Lanka's war against LTTE. "I fear we may (never know), because I don't know that the government would be prepared to cooperate

with any inquiry," Holmes said. But there was no doubt "several thousand" civilians had died during the siege, he added.

During that siege, the UN had repeatedly criticized the government for shelling areas where civilians were trapped, warning that it could lead to a "bloodbath". There are "very large" numbers of civilians who are injured and "doubtless many of those civilians may die in the coming days because we cannot reach them with medical care," a representative told reporters on May 10.

OPINION

The making of a liberal quagmire

The liberals have finally got what they wanted, the military defeat of the LTTE. But Sri Lanka is further from a liberal peace than at any point in its bloody sixty year history.

Ashanti
Tamil Guardian

SOME of the liberals in Western policy establishments and the Sinhala chauvinists running Sri Lanka's state have for several years had more than a little in common. Both have long laid the blame for the island's crisis wholly on the LTTE and the broader Tamil national movement. And both have advocated a military solution to the conflict, irrespective of the catastrophic cost to the Tamil people.

For many years, many in the liberal policy establishments of the West have argued that the LTTE and Tamil nationalists are the single biggest obstacle to realizing a fully democratic, pluralist Sri Lanka. At the same time, they indulged Sri Lanka's many and obvious failings and chauvinism, characterized this ethnocracy as a fledgling democracy heroically struggling to cope with a multitude of problems such as poverty and unemployment amidst a Tamil terrorist problem.

These liberals had almost fanatical belief that once the LTTE had been crushed and the insolent Tamil nationalists put in their place, Sri Lanka would be well on its way to becoming an inclusive, democratic and peaceful polity.

Amid this unshakeable conviction, many liberals were eager to resume the war against the LTTE and when President Rajapakse did just that in 2006, fell enthusiastically in line. Indeed, only the Tamils and the LTTE protested the collapse of the Norwegian-facilitated peace process.

So now that the implacable liberals have finally got what they wanted, the military defeat of the LTTE, shouldn't they be pleased? Apparently not. It seems Rajapakse's military victory has not brought the island any close to a liberal peace. Indeed, Sri Lanka is further from a liberal peace than at any point in its bloody sixty year history.

Having "slaughtered" - in Human Rights Watch's terms - 20,000 Tamil civilians in just five months, the Sri Lankan state has now interned the 300,000 people of the Vanni behind barbed wire and machineguns. In brazen sight of the international community, Tamils are subject, at the state's will, to murder, abduction and rape. Separated from loved ones, starved, suffering grievous wounds, they are clinging to their humanity amid the state's deliberate and calculated violence. So much

for liberal peace.

Meanwhile, in the north, Jaffna is still an open prison where paramilitaries and soldiers maraud at will. The island's east, 'liberated' in 2007 to international acclaim, is a seething cauldron of ethnic tension, chronic insecurity and Sinhala colonisation. In the south, Tamils are harassed by Sinhalese on the streets and in their homes, whilst the police look on nonchalantly. So much for liberal peace.

Ironically, only the liberals are surprised. Everyone on the island - including even critics and opponents of the LTTE - have long well understood these are the dynamics that make up Sri Lanka.

So how did Western liberals, espousing peace and inclusivity, end up promoting a racist war that has wrought such destruction on the Tamils and fuelled a virulent Sinhala chauvinism?

It began with a persistent misreading and misinterpretation of the Sri Lankan conflict.

Liberals have long sought to characterize Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict as one that began when the LTTE attacked the Sri Lankan military in the early 1980's. Until that point, liberals claim, Sri Lanka was a thriving if somewhat flawed liberal democracy. All of Sri Lanka's subsequent ills, including below potential economic growth, societal tensions and political instability have thus been conveniently blamed on the Tigers - and Tamils for supporting it.

If only there was no LTTE, the liberals have argued (the literature is awash with this), then not only would Sri Lanka see rapid economic growth and development, but these would almost inevitably be followed by a liberal and inclusive political settlement and a thriving plural and civic culture.

This simplistic and reductive reading of Sri Lanka's conflict is problematic, chiefly not least as it fails to take seriously at all the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism deeply embedded in the state and Sinhala polity.

It thereby mistakes the LTTE, a symptom of Sri Lanka's problems, for the cause. At the same time, it mistakes state chauvinism, the cause, for a symptom.

Tamils, of course, recall the three decades of violence, exclusion and persecution by the Sinhala-dominated state, thirty years of deepening alienation that resulted in a resounding mandate for



an independent Tamil Eelam by 1976.

The LTTE and Tamil militancy more widely (there were at least five major armed movements in the eighties) are a consequence of the state's structural and violent oppression of the Tamils, rather than an exogenous factor that arrived from nowhere and triggered ethnic conflict in an otherwise unproblematic polity.

Tamils confronting this Western liberal misreading of the conflict have tirelessly pointed out Sri Lanka's history of oppression and repression that predated by many years the arrival of Tamil militancy. They have pointed to the disenfranchisement of Upcountry Tamils, the violent state-backed anti-Tamil pogroms, the state sponsored ethnic cleansing and Sinhala colonisation of traditional Tamil areas, the destruction of Tamil heritage (including the torching of Jaffna library with its irreplaceable and priceless manuscripts) and the deliberate economic neglect and strangulation of Tamil speakers and the Tamil speaking areas.

However, rather than engaging with the historic and structural forces that culminated in violent conflict in the early 1980's - i.e. with the 'roots' of conflict - many liberals have preferred to take comfort in simplistic frameworks whereby 'armed groups' - i.e. the LTTE - are the fundamental problem. Whatever the factors that led up to armed conflict, they asserted, the problem now was armed conflict itself.

Thus, the LTTE was pilloried and the state celebrated. The former was deemed unremittably violent, incapable of reform and fanatically committed to a crude ethno nationalist ideology. (This,

of course, is what the Tamils were saying about the Sri Lankan state and today's Sri Lanka speaks for itself.)

When in 2001 the LTTE's hard fought military stalemate with the Sri Lankan state created the conditions for a political process, the liberals seized the opportunity. Not to examine and address the structural causes of the conflict, however, but to crush once and for all the LTTE and the Tamil nationalist project.

The liberal hawks' will to war was undisguised. Before and throughout the peace process, they repeatedly cast aspersions on the LTTE's commitment and belittled its efforts to govern the areas under its control. Conversely, they papered over the state's chauvinism with bureaucratic and technocratic excuses. They poured scorn on the LTTE's attempts to reconcile international demands with its real and substantive security concerns, whilst ignoring the LTTE's concessions at the negotiation table.

Within months of the 2002 ceasefire, the liberals had completely forgotten that it was the LTTE that had called for international mediation and, from a position of military strength, first offered a unilateral ceasefire. Instead they began to assert that the 'reluctant' LTTE had been 'forced' into a ceasefire because of the 'war on terror' and that it could only be kept on the straight and narrow by more or less open political and military coercion.

Despite Tamils' pleas that a military balance was the only way to maintain stability in Sri Lanka, the hawkish liberals rushed to rearm the Sri Lankan state. Whilst actively working to militarily constrain the LTTE, they mas-

sively increased the Sri Lankan military's conventional capability and provided the state with unqualified diplomatic support as it brazenly violated key aspects of the Ceasefire Agreement (Article 2 on normalisation, especially).

Having rebuilt and massively expanded the state's economic base and conventional military capability, the liberals heaped blame on the LTTE for the failure of the peace process when it began to unravel amid the state's new-found confidence.

Why compromise when you can fight and win?

Thus, the eventual resumption of war in 2006 should be seen as nothing but the logical consequence of the simplistic but dangerous frameworks through which liberals pursued peace in Sri Lanka.

This is also why the possibilities for a meaningful and sustained political process in Sri Lanka are the bleakest ever: Sinhala chauvinism is now untrammelled on the island.

As Tamils have long argued, without a credible military threat the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism that led to the conflict and served to escalate it to this catastrophic point will unfurl in all its supremacist glory. In particular, the Sri Lankan state will not voluntarily move an inch towards a credible political solution to the Tamil question.

Indeed, arguing that because it has vanquished the LTTE, the Sri Lankan leadership now tells the world that it wants a solution based on the philosophy of Buddhism. Nothing here about a political solution compatible with the norms of liberalism and democracy for which the West backed a

Continued on p7

OPINION

Setting the hands of the clock right

TamilNet Editorial Board
TamilNet

THE events of the past few weeks, while marking a dark phase of Tamil history and indelible shame on contemporary world leadership, have imperceptibly brought in new equations in global power politics.

The onslaught on Eelam Tamil liberation, wrongly chosen by a brutal alliance of the world to test the effectiveness of 'War on Terror' and the diplomatic con of 'Human Rights', aiming at world domination, not only backfired at the perpetrators, but also paved way for the emergence of a counter alliance, worst in its outlook. The world will be witnessing the results very soon.

But, the unfortunate irony is that the Eelam Tamil question is always kept at the receiving end, as a 'punishment' for upholding the independence of the struggle.

The bias of the Indian Establishment towards the independence of Eelam Tamils and their liberation movement played a crucial role in keeping the genocidal Sri Lanka at the crest of the waves and the Tamils at the receiving end. But this treacherous foreign policy of India is heading for the same disaster Krishna Menon led India into in the 50s and 60s on the question of Tibet and China.

The stubbornness of the Indian Establishment in refusing to recognise the need for the liberation of Eelam Tamils is what that paved way for the Co-Chairs meddling cum failure and the prolonged agony in the island. The 'punishment' meted out by India for Tamils accepting Co-Chairs mediation is massacre and incarceration.

Now, all those who were a party to the war crimes, especially the new Strategic Partners, India and China using UN, are

busy in masking the war criminals and in abetting Colombo in treating all Tamils as Prisoners of War.

The camps and the 'rehabilitation' model adopted by Colombo and endorsed by the UN is explicit about it. The West backing a similar move in Pakistan's Swat Valley can afford to make only a verbal fuss of what is happening in the island, in making a whole nation as prisoners of war.

The trauma faced by Eelam Tamils everywhere, including in the diaspora, is immense. They have demonstrated a hitherto unseen solidarity with their cause. Now, their trauma has come to a stage of not merely denouncing all leaders of the world, but even cursing their own deities.

The world leadership, which didn't care for the will of the people didn't demonstrate its own will to bring in a solution either, other than confirming genocide. Therefore, the struggle is only further imposed on Eelam Tamils.

The sentiments expressed by the Eelam Tamils in the last few days show that they have not conceded 'victory' to Colombo.

The general thinking among them, is that the agenda for the catastrophe was set by the Indian Establishment with the connivance of M. Karunanidhi, and the coup de grace was served by the White House administration by its failure to act at the right time in doing what it was telling.

Tamils have still not seriously started thinking about the gravity of the treacherous roles played by China, Japan, Pakistan and some others.

The sentiments of the Eelam Tamils also show that Pirapaharan is not a mortal or physical entity, but a symbol for them. The

symbol will be there and the 'file' cannot be closed as long as the issues are alive.

Colombo and the Indian Establishment, harping on the scenario created by them, are in a hurry to close the file and turn the hands of the clock backwards by talking about the implementation of the 13th Amendment as solution. The Congress President Sonia Gandhi, even at the height of the election campaign, didn't move an inch from the 13th Amendment.

Tamils find it a mockery that it took decades of their struggle for India to come out with this half-baked solution and it took another two decades of bloodbath of Tamils just for India to talk about implementing it.

Adding insult to injury is Indian Home Minister P. Chidambaram's statement of sending the Eelam Tamil refugees in India back to join the already incarcerated people in the camps and the open prisons in the island.

Meanwhile, Eelam Tamils closely watch the various circles that come out with different shades of political formulas as solution, with an excuse that independence and sovereignty to Eelam Tamils is impossible in this generation, as the present world doesn't have 'appetite' for new nation states. India's Home Minister Chidambaram himself, slightly differing from his party chief, has called for a federal solution during his election campaign. Norway's International Development Minister Erik Solheim advocates federal with 'some autonomy'.

The main political parties of Tamil Nadu have said Tamil Eelam is the solution. But, one has to wait and see whether they would be sticking to that agenda in practice. Now it seems that some well-wishers in India are embarked upon promoting a confederation model. While thanking good intention, what the Tamil circles wonder is that who is

going to deliver these verbal proposals, when all leverages of Colombo are forfeited.

The reality faced by Tamils today is multifaceted genocide by Colombo. Political circles in Colombo tell that no solution will be forthcoming until the demographic and structural genocide of Tamils are completed. When something in the name of a solution is finally delivered to hoodwink, it will be only symbolic.

The Eelam Tamils and their political representatives have no obligation to anyone now, to engage in the deliberations of fruitless alternatives. But the world has an obligation now to tell the Tamils whether its opposition is to what it has perceived as 'terrorism' or to Tamil nationalism. Whether the need for another armed struggle, more effective than ever, is going to be imposed upon the Tamils or not, lies very much on the responses of the International Community to the precarious situation created by it.

It is also the responsibility of the International Community now to demonstrate in deeds, and not in words, the viability of political alternatives in the context of Sri Lanka that has beyond any doubt proved its genocidal capabilities during the current war.

Everybody knows that without the de-construction of the Sri Lankan state and its concept of 'Sinhala Only' sovereignty, no viable alternative can emerge.

Therefore, the Tamils are not at all impressed by any of the empty statements and diplomatic deliberations of the IC pleading Sri Lanka drunk with 'victory' to come out with 'political solutions', unless the IC directly takes over the Tamil provinces without caring for Sri Lanka's sovereignty, in order to bring in a political solution satisfying the national aspirations of Tamils.

Leaving such matters to the conmen and the gullible, the

Eelam Tamil mainstream has a historic responsibility on its shoulders to be performed right now, without wasting any time.

The foremost is the task of restructuring the political struggle. All the anger, frustration and unfulfilled aspirations have to be now translated into positive energy of formulating a political idiom suitable enough for a global discourse to achieve liberation.

Among the very few classical as well as living cultures of humanity, such as the Chinese, Hebrews and Arabs, the Tamils, especially the Eelam Tamils, have become an endangered identity. The world neither protected them nor allowed them to protect themselves. The response of Eelam Tamils to such a situation should suit their great cultural heritage.

If the present world system is working against them in toto and if the world doesn't have enough appetite to look into their righteous aspirations, then the Tamils matching to their civilisation should come out with introducing something innovative and creative to the world system itself.

If the oppression to their nationalism is trans-national, the Eelam Tamils have to respond by forming a trans-national government fully responsible to them based on democracy, to negotiate with the world and to look after their own affairs.

Needless to say, the appropriate beginning is re-mandating the fundamentals of Vaddukkoddai Resolution, and based on that democratically endorsed commitment, electing representatives for a trans-national assembly and government.

The Eelam Tamils democratically denouncing the shackles of Sri Lankan identity imposed on them is an important step. The Tamil request to the civilised world at this juncture is to listen to their democratic voices.

Edited for space

The making of a liberal quagmire...

Continued from p6

murderous military campaign.

Instead, the entire Tamil population is subject to militarised domination, internment and depredation (in the Northeast) or arbitrary racial violence (in the South). The Sinhala military is to be expanded by another 100,000 - even though victory has been declared. The 300,000 military is the basis for state-society relationship. Hardly liberal peace, then.

Sri Lanka's future is not one of "ethnic reconciliation", "peace-building", "development" and "unity", but one of deepening communal antagonisms, wholesale marginalisation of Tamil speakers (not just Tamils), as well as systemic abuse and violence by the state.

What is clear is that the beligerent liberals who enthusiastically advocated this war have little by way of a coherent policy response to this unfolding crisis.

Up to now, the usual response was to blame the LTTE for any and every problem in Sri Lanka and thus prescribe further violence and coercion against the Tigers and the wider Tamil liberation movement.

This has been the only liberal policy response. The LTTE has been proscribed by several Western liberal democracies, its members subjected to travel bans and its leaders have been openly targeted for assassination with international sanction. Meanwhile the wider Tamil liberation movement, both within Sri Lanka and in the Diaspora, has been subject to sus-

tained assault using anti terror legislation, sanction and even direct violence. Tamil civil society - when it holds the wrong political beliefs (i.e. an independent Eelam) - has been criminalised, its leaders and representatives imprisoned or murdered (the faceless killers could never be found, but no one, not even the Western liberals, cared).

The Sri Lankan state fully expects more of the same from the liberal West. Whilst subjecting 300,000 Tamils to hellish conditions of existence, it trots out the LTTE as justification: 'infiltrators'. Meantime, it calls on the West to attack the Diaspora.

But what should be starkly apparent now is that none of this is going to produce liberal peace on the island.

Those who thought the LTTE could be brought to a hurting stalemate and a negotiated solution thereafter pursued, seriously misjudged the uncompromising Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism that has driven Sri Lanka for the past sixty years. The fiction the Sri Lankan state wanted meaningful political engagement with the Tamils has been destroyed, along with 20,000 more Tamil bodies.

For years, LTTE leaders such as Anton Balasingham, S.P. Tamilselvan and P. Nadesan attempted to engage seriously with Western liberals. Whilst the Sinhala chauvinists ridiculed the liberal peace or mockingly adopted its rhetoric whilst spending Western aid and drawing on liberal political support, these LTTE figures attempted repeatedly to explain that

Tamil liberation is not illiberal.

Whilst the Tamils will mourn them and their comrades as heroes and martyrs, the international community will come to acutely feel their absence. Sri Lanka's crisis will not stand still and it will not improve. The international project to secure a stable and lasting solution to Sri Lanka's conflict thus stands at a crossroads. Will the liberals support further repression of the Tamils or will they finally confront the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism that has brought the island to its present misery? Whatever course is chosen, any credible attempt to ensure a stable and lasting peace in the island will require not just a radical break from the past but also a critical rethinking of past policies. This is a liberal quagmire.

NEWS

Late visit by Ban Ki Moon fails...

AFTER dragging his feet on a visit to Sri Lanka at the peak of the conflict to try and save civilians lives, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon finally visited Sri Lanka after the conflict came to a brutal end with the massacre of tens of thousands of civilians.

According to media reports, Ban told reporters on his flight from Frankfurt to Sri Lanka: "This is going to be a defining trip, a very crucial trip for the future of Sri Lanka and peace and stability in the region."

However, Ban who was seeking full access to the internally displaced persons, languishing in the camps returned without knowing when Sri Lanka would allow UN and other relief agencies full access to all camps.

Ban who was who was in Sri Lanka on Saturday, May 23 was taken on a guided tour of Menik Farm, the most presentable of Sri Lanka's squalid and dangerous internment camps for Tamils civilians, and a helicopter tour of the no fire zone where tens of thousands civilians were killed and wounded due to Sri Lankan army shelling and bombing.

While visiting the largest internment camp in Vavuniya, Manik Farm, on Saturday for three hours, Ban stressed the need for freedom of movement and immediate resettlement of the more than 300,000 Tamils held in camps.

The IDPs told Ban Ki Moon that they would want the U.N. to take full responsibility for the welfare of the refugees, sources accompanying Moon on his visit said.

"The UN has failed in several measures in preventing egregious human rights violations by Sri Lanka against unarmed civilian Tamils during the last several months, and this is the last opportunity to take bold action to repair the damage to UN's reputation. UN should shed its rhetoric on sovereignty and assume full responsibility for the Tamil people," an aid worker told a reporter after Moon's visit.

Reporters who accompanied the Secretary General unexpectedly received some space to talk to the refugees without any attending Government officials, sources said.

The IDPs complained to the reporters that Sri Lanka military, during its harsh filtering process, has separated many children from the parents.

They also complained that a selected set of refugee personalities coached by the Sri Lanka military was routinely selected to

engage with the visitors to the camp, pointing to a former Voice of Tigers employee, and said they were happy to have had the opportunity to talk to the reporters this time.

During his visit to Manik Farm, Ban went to a small field hospital, where he saw severely emaciated elderly people attached to saline drips and children with shrapnel wounds.

But UN officials told Reuters the most severely injured Tamils - amputees, victims of mine explosions or heavy artillery blasts - were at other hospitals Ban's delegation was not shown.

Ban Ki-moon was accompanied by UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordination John Holmes, Chief of Staff Vijay Nambiar, UNDP Resident Coordinator Neil Buhne, UNICEF country representative Philippe Duamelle and UNHCR Country Director Amin Awad.

Mixed Message

Ban made contradictory comments in the presence and then in absence of Sri Lankan officials, demonstrating he continuing policy of pleasing Sri Lanka.

Speaking to reporters in the presence of Sri Lanka's foreign minister, Rohitha Bogollagama, Ban said: "As I was flying over the war zone, I thought the fighting must have been very severe and inhumane for the people trapped," said Ban, who called the destruction "very sobering, very sad, very moving."

Ban was asked if he saw evidence of "massive bombing" during the flight over the former battle zone referring to accusations of Sri Lanka firing shells at civilians. Ban avoided answering the question by saying "the fighting must have been severe."

Commenting about the humanitarian conditions prevailing in the camp, Ban praised the Sri Lankan government for the help it was providing the Tamil civilians, while saying it lacked capacity - a subtle way of saying more can be done.

However, when speaking to CNN later Ban said, referring to the IDP camp he visited: "I have travelled around the world and visited similar places, but this is by far the most appalling scenes I have seen,"

He further said "Wherever there are serious violations of human rights as well as international humanitarian law, proper investigation should be instituted," and promised international action regarding the heavy shelling of civilian populations during the recent fighting.



Mr Ban failed to get international access to the internment camps holding the displaced Tamil civilians

... as Sri Lanka rejects aid access

SRI LANKA'S president on rejected a call by the UN Secretary General to lift restrictions on aid delivery to overcrowded displacement camps, saying the army must first finish screening the hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians held in the internment camps in north of the island.

President Mahinda Rajapakse's statement, on Sunday May 24, came in response to an appeal by Ban Ki Moon during a 24-hour visit to Sri Lanka for unfettered access for aid agencies to the camps, where nearly 300,000 Tamils were herded during the final stages of the war.

Ban's hurried visit was intended to press the government to ease what aid agencies described as a humanitarian crisis in the camps, with inadequate food supplies and reports of epidemics because of improper sanitation.

But Rajapakse said security had to be assured "in view of the likely presence of LTTE infiltrators" among the refugees. "As conditions improved, especially with regard to security, there would be no objections to such assistance, from organizations that were genuinely interested in the well being" of the displaced Tamils, he said.

The bluntness of the president's statement contrasted with the milder tone of a joint communique with Ban, released almost simultaneously.

In that statement, Ban said the U.N. would continue providing humanitarian assistance to the displaced people, and Rajapaksa promised to "continue to provide access to humanitarian agencies."

Meanwhile, the Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), one of the UN agencies operating in Sri Lanka expressed concern about the fate of people newly arriving at the camps.

The UNHCR reiterated calls for more assistance, citing the

lack of services available for aid workers assisting the refugees who have left the former conflict zones.

"There are several issues that need urgent attention, including overcrowding and the limited services available at the camps," said Ron Redmond, the UNHCR spokesman.

"Civilians coming out of the conflict zone are sick, hungry and suffering from acute malnourishment and dehydration," he said in Geneva.

Redmond said he did not know why the authorities were blocking access to the camps.

"It's urgent that assistance gets into those camps and that we are able to deliver. We've got lots of humanitarian supplies that need to be delivered," he told the brief-

ing.

"The latest massive influx of people, who have endured extreme conditions, will put an even greater strain on the internally displaced people sites in Vavuniya, Jaffna and Trincomalee," he said.

The UNHCR is concerned about government restrictions that are hindering the agency's access and delivery of aid supplies, particularly in Vavuniya district, the UN said on its Web site.

"We need to have access, I repeat, total access, without the least let or hindrance, for the UN, for NGOs and for the Red Cross," Elisabeth Byrs, spokeswoman for the U.N. Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told a news briefing.

ICRC suspends aid operations

INTERNATIONAL Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) which was involved in evacuating injured civilians, announced on Wednesday May 27 that it was suspending its aid operations due to difficulties caused by "additional restrictions" placed upon it by the Sri Lanka government. "Since last weekend there have been additional restrictions imposed on aid organisations, including the ICRC," Paul Castella, the head of the group's Sri Lanka operations, told Al Jazeera. "The authorities have said that because of security they had to restrict access to certain areas," he said. "What is the take of these civilians and what the conditions are we don't know because we are not granted access to the area."

"Restrictions have led to a temporary standstill in the distrib-

ution of aid" to the main camp holding 130,000 people, Monica Zanarelli, deputy head of operations in South Asia for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said on the ICRC's Web site.

Until last weekend, the ICRC had delivered water, food, personal hygiene kits, baby-care parcels, emergency household items and kitchen utensils to the camp, known as Menik Farm, in the country's north, which housed more than 130,000 refugees, Zanarelli said on the Red Cross website.

"The ICRC is not in a position to provide figures or even to know whether all casualties are receiving the care they require," Zanarelli said. Restrictions on access are "having a severe effect on the thousands of newly arrived displaced people," she said.

NEWS

Fresh calls war crimes probe in Sri Lanka ...

SRI LANKA faced fresh allegations on Friday, May 29, that its army had killed huge numbers of civilians during its offensive against the Tamil Tigers, as well as complaints it was continuing to block aid workers.

What precisely happened in the last weeks of the war is the subject of a growing number of international inquiries, even as Sri Lanka rejects those queries and continues to celebrate its victory.

Britain's Times newspaper said its investigation into the blistering war on the Tigers pointed to more than 20,000 Tamil civilian deaths, most of them killed by army shelling in the final weeks of the conflict.

Citing aerial photographs, official documents, witness accounts and expert testimony, the paper said the final stages of the conflict saw 1,000 civilians killed each day up to May 19, when the war was declared won.

An angry Sri Lankan government has dismissed criticism of its actions as absurd and maintains that it did not shell civilians and not a single civilian dropped blood during the conflict. Sri Lankan officials, in interviews,

said they should be getting international praise, not punishment.

"These figures are way out... What we think is that these images are also fake. We totally deny the allegation that 20,000 people were killed," defence ministry spokesman Lakshman Hulugalle said.

The renewed international concern surrounding Sri Lanka's defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) came after the island managed to torpedo Western demands for a probe into alleged war crimes.

At a special session of the UN's Human Rights Council in Geneva, Colombo managed to lobby Asian support and push through a resolution hailing the military victory.

Nevertheless, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay maintained her demand for an investigation.

"Establishing the facts is crucial to set the record straight regarding the conduct of all parties in the conflict," said Navi Pillay, who is also a former U.N. war crimes judge.

"Victims and the survivors have a right to justice and reme-



The actual number killed in the final months of the war may be even higher than the estimated 20,000 but as Sri Lanka denies international access to the final battlefield, where thousands are said to be buried in mass graves, the real number of Tamil civilians killed may never come out

dies."

Supporting Pillay's, call for the investigation of war-crimes of both sides to the conflict, the New York Times, in its Wednesday editorial said:

"The government claims it must screen out rebels hiding in the camps. But aid workers suspect other motives, including a desire to deny access to witnesses who may have seen abuses by government forces."

The editorial pointed out that the Tamils were "long oppressed by the Sinhalese majority," and added, "Most Tamils were driven to the guerrillas as a desperation

move after decades of abuse. Until the government treats all of its citizens fairly, there is no chance for the peace that President Rajapakse has promised his country."

Emily Wax writing on Washington Post says that there were clear signs of heavy artillery shelling on the strip of beach where tens of thousands of civilians huddled during the conflict between Sri Lankan government forces and the Tamil Tigers.

This observation noted after helicopter inspection of the site by independent journalists, interviews with eyewitnesses, and specialists who have studied high-

resolution satellite imagery from the war zone.

That evidence Wax says, contradicts government assertions that areas of heavy civilian populations were no-fire zones that were deliberately spared during the final weeks of military assault.

According to the Washington Post report, officials in the Justice Department in Washington are considering whether to seek criminal charges against Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Sri Lanka's defense secretary and a U.S. citizen, and Sarath Fonseka, Sri Lanka's army commander and a U.S. legal resident who holds a green card.

... but Sri Lanka rules out outside probe

BBC

SRI LANKA has dismissed calls for an independent inquiry into claims of human rights abuses by the military, saying its own courts will investigate.

Foreign minister Rohita Bogollagama said the claims that heavy weaponry was used in civilian areas during the war with Tamil Tigers were "fictional".

He said the claims were being used to boost accusations of genocide against the country's Tamil minority.

Aid agencies and the United Nations have called for an inquiry.

The exact number of civilians killed in the final weeks of the long-running war has not been established, but one report put it as high as 20,000.

An unverified and unofficial UN estimate said that more than 7,000 civilians were killed and

another 13,000 injured in the conflict from January to April this year, according to the BBC's Anbarasan Ethirajan in Colombo.

Mr Bogollagama said the allegations were intended to discredit the armed forces and embarrass the government of Sri Lanka.

Government forces were ordered to stop using heavy weapons on 27 April.

From that time onwards they were supposed to observe a no-fire zone where 100,000 Tamil men, women and children were sheltering.

"Those transmitted, unsubstantiated allegations against the military claimed heavy weapons in civilian areas being used in order to buttress the propaganda of genocide against the Tamil people," Mr Bogollagama said.

"This was both fictional and well-fabricated, with ulterior and sinister motives, in order to dis-

UN can investigate says war crimes judge

TamilNet

THE United Nations is able to investigate the war crimes which occurred recently in Sri Lanka, British human rights lawyer and international war crimes judge, Geoffrey Robertson QC said Sunday, May 31.

The avenues for the UN include the UN Human Rights Committee, which can investigate individuals' complaints against states under the International Convention on Human Rights, to which Sri Lanka is a signatory.

The UN Human Rights Council, by contrast, is a "highly politicized" body staffed by diplomats of various countries, including those abusing human rights, rather than human rights experts, he said.

Mr. Robertson has served as an appeal judge at the UN's Special Court for Sierra Leone

from 2002-2007 and is presently on the UN's Internal Justice Council.

Having been counsel in many landmark cases in constitutional, criminal and media law in the courts of Britain and the Commonwealth, Mr. Robertson makes frequent appearances in the Privy Council and the European Court of Human Rights.

Asked on BBC radio about the UN Human Rights Council's acceptance last week, by majority vote, of a self-congratulatory resolution tabled by Sri Lanka, Mr. Robertson said he wasn't surprised.

"Well, the Human Rights Council is a highly politicised body. It is made up not of experts on human rights, but of paltering diplomats. Europe only has seven seats ... We have countries like Russia and China obviously concerned to keep their own internal

problems down and away from international oversight. So the decision [on Sri Lanka] is not really surprising."

"[However] that's not the end of the story because UN officials can [still] look into it," he said.

"[] Sir John Holmes is concerned. [] Judge Navi Pillay wants to conduct an investigation."

"More importantly, there is the UN Human Rights Committee which sits in Geneva. It is a kind of court and individuals can complain [to it]. Unusually, Sri Lanka has actually signed up to the International Convention on Human Rights which has this is the body that investigates complaints. So any individual can complain against Sri Lanka."

"So there is certainly going to be an inquiry, I would have thought, by Human Rights Committee."

Continued on p19

Continued on p19

HOW OVER 300,000 TAMIL CIVILIANS CURRENTLY LIVE ... AND WILL CONTINUE TO LIVE FOR AN UNKNOWN PERIOD OF TIME



ஆலயம் தொடருவது சாலவும் நன்று

வோல்தம்ஸ்ரோ ஸ்ரீ கற்பக விநாயகர் ஆலயம் WALTHAMSTOW SRI KATPAHA VINAYAGAR TEMPLE

- 03-06-2009 புகன்குழை ஏகாதசி லக்ஷ்மி நாராயணதீர்த்த நாமாச்சனை
- 04-06-2009 வியாழன் பிரதோசம் ருத்ர தீர்த்த ஹோமம் பிரதோசகவாரி புரப்பாடு
- 05-06-2009 வெள்ளி வைகாசி வீசாகம் காலை 9.30மணிக்கு கணபதி ஹோமம், 10.30 ஸ்கந்த ஹோமம், மாலை 5மணிக்கு கப்ரமணியமாலா மந்த்ரஹோமம், 7மணிக்கு முலமுர்த்தி பூசை 8 மணிக்கு வசந்த மண்டப பூசை தொடர்ந்து முருகப்பெருமான் வீதிபூசை
- 07-06-2009 தூயிறு பெளர்ணமி மீனாட்சி அம்மனுக்கு வீசேடபூசை
- 08-06-2009 தங்கள் முலம் அனுமத் பூசை
- 11-06-2009 வியாழன் சங்கடஹ சதுர்த்தி திருவிழா காலை 10.00 மணிக்கு அபிசேகம் பூசைமாலை 5.30 க்கு அபிசேகம் தொடர்ந்து பூசை தருவிழா நடைபெறும்.

மாங்கள வாத்திய தேவைகளுக்கு தொடர்புகொள்க 020 8527 3819

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NEWS

UN Human Rights Council fails Tamils

IN what is seen as another blow to its already damaged credibility, the UN Human Rights Council on Wednesday, May 27, voted in favor of a resolution praising Sri Lanka, which western nations said would do nothing to help victims of the just-ended civil war or remedy widespread human rights violations.

An emergency session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) was initiated by the council's European Union members and supported by Argentina, Bosnia, Canada, Chile, Mexico, Mauritius, South Korea, Switzerland, Ukraine and Uruguay.

However, by passing procedures, Sri Lanka pre-empted scrutiny from a UN HRC emergency session by tabling its own resolution, supported by 12 allies, that praises itself and calls for funding by the international community.

Entitled "Assistance to Sri Lanka in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights," Sri Lanka's text was co-signed by Indonesia, China, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Bahrain, Philippines, Cuba, Egypt, Nicaragua, and Bolivia.

The Sri Lankan-proposed resolution described the conflict as a "domestic matter that doesn't warrant outside interference".

The resolution also supported Colombo's insistence on allowing aid group access to 270,000 civilians detained in camps only "as may be appropriate".

The resolution condemned attacks on civilians by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and their use of civilians as human shields in the final stages of the conflict, but said nothing about mass scale civilian killings committed by government forces or other human rights concerns including forced disappearances and the harassment of human rights activists and journalists.

The European Union and some other countries sought to make amendments to the Sri Lankan resolution. However, Cuba tabled a 'no action motion' claiming that the proposed changes would alter the tenor and intent of the consensual resolution.

Subsequently, the Sri Lankan resolution was voted on and carried by a majority of 17 member states.

Western diplomats and human rights officials were shocked by the outcome at the end of an acrimonious two-day special session to examine the humanitarian and human rights situation in Sri

Lanka after the blitzkrieg of the final military offensive that wiped out the Tamil Tigers.

Twelve countries, mostly European and including Britain, opposed the resolution after failing to win support for their version, which called for unfettered access to detained civilians and an internal investigation of alleged war crimes by both sides.

The Sri Lankan government hailed the outcome as an emphatic "diplomatic victory".

While the army and state-run newspapers continued to celebrate the victory on the battlefield, the government celebrated what it saw as a triumph on the diplomatic front.

"This is a strong endorsement of our president's efforts to rout terrorism, and the successful handling of the world's biggest hostage crisis," Sri Lanka's Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe said. "It is a clear message that the international community is behind Sri Lanka."

Samarasinghe thanked the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Group and the Organisation of The Islamic Conference (OIC) Group - two important cross-regional groups at the HRC - and in particular the support of the African Regional Group as well as some countries of the Latin American and Asian Groups for their support to Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lanka Ambassador in Geneva said that European nations had failed with their "punitive and mean-spirited agenda" against his country. "This was a lesson that a handful of countries which depict themselves as the international community do not really constitute the majority," Dayan Jayatilaka said. "The vast mass of humanity are in support of Sri Lanka."

Western diplomats said that the result called into question the entire purpose of the HRC - where the 47 members sit as equals with no right of veto for any country. The US and other newly elected members of the council did not vote. They are due to take their seats in mid-June. The United States only recently agreed to join it in the belief that the council had been reformed.

Many rights organisations calling for an independent probe into atrocities the Sri Lankan military committed against Tamils in the past few months were dismayed at the results.

Tom Porteous, the London director of Human Rights Watch,



The UNHRC voted in favour of Sri Lanka's self-congratulatory resolution, leaving the Tamils voiceless

said: "The Human Rights Council had a chance to prove itself by calling for a serious inquiry into violations of the laws of war and human rights abuses in Sri Lanka, and they failed dismally."

Juliette de Rivero, advocacy director in the Geneva office of New York-based Human Rights Watch, said: "This is a step backwards for the human rights council. The resolution fails to hold the Sri Lankan government accountable."

"The vote is extremely disappointing and is a low point for the Human Rights Council. It abandons hundreds of thousands of people in Sri Lanka to cynical political considerations," Amnesty International said.

The European Union also expressed regret at the failure to launch a probe into alleged war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan military during its offen-

sive against Tamil Tigers.

"The EU regrets that it was not possible for the Human Rights Council to agree on an acceptable outcome of the special session addressing the serious human rights violations and the humanitarian crisis," a statement said.

"We regret that the proposals presented by the EU to amend the Sri Lankan draft resolution could be neither discussed nor considered by the council" after a "closure of debate" rule was supported by a majority of members.

"Such motions contradict the very spirit in which the Human Rights Council was conceived," the Czech presidency of the 27-nation bloc said.

The EU said that the outcome of the rights council meeting in Geneva "does not, in our view, address the complexity and the seriousness of the situation on the

ground."

It said it would continue to work with the UN and its agencies to alleviate the suffering of civilians on the ground and to work for the achievement of durable stability."

UN Watch, a non-governmental organization based in Geneva described Sri Lanka's preemptive move as an outrageous abuse of the system.

"Sri Lanka's action today constitutes an outrageous abuse and show of contempt for the international human rights process," said Hillel Neuer, an international lawyer and the executive director of UN Watch.

"Sri Lanka does not deserve to be praised, but rather condemned for blocking humanitarian emergency relief to thousands, creating conditions leading to the

Continued on p13

A disgraceful vote

Michael Binyon
The Times

THE vote by the United Nations Human Rights Council to congratulate the Sri Lanka Government on its victory over the Tamil Tigers and to ignore calls for an inquiry into possible war crimes is a disgrace.

It marks a victory for all those countries facing domestic insurgencies who fear any serious investigation into their behaviour. It gives carte blanche to armies to use whatever means available to achieve victory.

And it is a terrible betrayal of the thousands of Tamil civilians who have been killed in the cross-fire as the Sri Lankan army pounded the remnant of the Tamil Tigers.

The vote came after two days of heated debate in Geneva on the widespread charges that both sides committed atrocities in the

final weeks of the long-running civil war on the island. The European members of the 47-strong council had asked for an emergency meeting to look into what they feared were very serious abuses.

But the council chose instead to debate a resolution submitted by Sri Lanka itself, which welcomed the "liberation" of tens of thousands of the island's citizens, condemned the defeated Tigers, made no mention of the shelling of civilians and kept silent on the desperate need to allow the Red Cross and other humanitarian groups into the camps where some 200,000 Tamil civilians have been forcibly interned.

To many Western critics, the Council has failed one of its first and most important tests.

The new council set up a new "universal periodic review" mechanism, intended to assess the human rights situations in all 192 UN member states.

The aim was to deflect accu-

sations that the West never allowed scrutiny of its own record while picking on the behaviour of governments in the developing world.

The vote on Sri Lanka, however, will reinforce the council's critics in the West. It was not simply that the usual suspects - China, Russia, India and Pakistan - who supported the Sri Lankan resolution, on the grounds that the conflict there was an internal matter and that the council should not intervene on the conduct of the war.

A clutch of Asian and Muslim countries, also wary of outside inspection of their record, also voted not to launch an inquiry into the events in Sri Lanka.

This fails the most elementary test of what the council is supposed to do.

Human rights violations occur largely as a result of conflict. The civil war that has lasted 28 years

Continued on p13

NEWS

Call to free British medic held in Sri Lankan camp

The Guardian

A BRITISH woman who was working at a hospital helping victims of Sri Lanka's civil war has been interned in one of the island's detention camps, prompting her family to plead for urgent diplomatic help to secure her immediate release.

Speaking to the Guardian, relatives of Damilvany Gnanakumar - known as Vany - said that she was detained a fortnight ago as the Sri Lankan army moved in to finish off the remnants of the Tamil Tigers after a military onslaught that left thousands dead and sent many more fleeing for their lives.

The British passport holder, who has a background in biomedical science, called the family home in Chingford, Essex, on 19 May, to beg for help.

"She said: 'I'm in this camp, you have to get me out of here,' but then the phone went dead," said her sister, Subha Mohanathas, 29, yesterday. She said that her mother, Lathaa, 45, was desperately worried, but she believed that her sister would pull through.

"Vany is one of the strongest people, she can do whatever she likes because she is not really frightened of anything.

"I just want my sister back with me as soon as possible. My mum is crying and we need her back. We didn't have anything to do with the war."

Gnanakumar had spent the last few months working in temporary hospitals in the no-fire zone, where doctors have struggled to save the lives of civilians injured during intense fighting.

Diplomatic efforts to secure her release have so far been unsuccessful and last night her family appealed to the Sri Lankan president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, to allow her to return to the UK.

She is being held in the Menik Farm camps outside the town of Vavuniya, a sprawling, sweltering expanse of tents across hundreds of acres of barren scrubland.

The family said that Gnanakumar had been staying in Mullivaykkal - the scene of some of the heaviest fighting - and had called in January to say that she had been caught up in the conflict and was unable to leave. On 12 May they saw her on a Tamil television programme working in a hospital.

"We had not heard anything from her until then, we didn't know whether she was still alive, whether something had happened to her," said Mohanathas.

Her father, Kandasamy Kumaran, 51, who has written to his MP, Iain Duncan Smith, appeal-

ing for help, said she had come into contact with some doctors and had said she was willing to help because of her background in biomedical science. She had also had training and work experience at a British hospital, he said.

"She was recruited by the Mullivaykkal hospital to help and nurse the injured. In fact, I saw her [on television] assisting and looking after the wounded patients," he said.

Gnanakumar's uncle, Navaratnasamy Naguleswaran, said the family had decided to make a public appeal because they were concerned that attempts to secure her release through the Foreign Office had so far proven unsuccessful.

He said the family had received a call last Friday from the Foreign Office to say that it was seeking her release, but that information since then had been sparse.

In an exclusive interview with the Guardian from the no-fire zone on 12 May, Gnanakumar described the horrors of the final days of the 26-year war. A shell had exploded at the hospital where she was working, killing 47 people.

"This is really a disaster. I don't know really how to explain it. At the moment, it is like hell," she said at the time. "For us, shell bombing is just a normal thing now. It is like an everyday routine. We have reached a point where it's like death is not a problem at all."

The Sri Lankan government maintains that civilian casualties were the result of attacks by the LTTE designed to generate adverse publicity for the military.

But the UN has described the civilian toll as "unacceptably high". Estimates for the death toll this year alone range from 8,000 to more than double that number.

UNHRC fails ...

Continued from p12

spread of diseases, and for seizing doctors who exposed to the world the untold suffering of innocent civilians."

Francis Boyle, Professor of International Law at the University of Illinois College of Law, referring to the resolution passed at the United Nations Human Rights Council on the Sri Lanka war, said: "This is one of the most unprincipled and shameless resolutions ever adopted by any body of the United Nations in the history of that now benighted Organization. It would be as if the U.N. Human Rights Council had



British citizen Vany Gnanakumar is among 300,000 Tamils held in Sri Lanka's internment camps

'This is too much. Why is the world not helping?'

The report filed on 12 May for The Guardian newspaper by UK medic Vany Gnanakumar, who is currently detained in Menik Farm camp in Vavuniya.

Vany Gnanakumar
The Guardian

THIS is really a disaster. I don't know really how to explain it. At the moment, it is like hell.

Most of the time we live in the shelter. There is not enough medical equipment, so it is really difficult to treat people. Food is a problem as well. There is no food at all here, there are no vegetables and no rice, they just eat whatever they can find, that's all. The hospital is located in a primary school so there is only one room. We just try our best to achieve what we can.

I was in the office working [when the shell hit]. It was definitely a shell, there is no doubt about that. I was about 20 metres away, and I was sure that it landed inside the hospital, so I went to the shelter. I got the news from

the doctors that there were people injured and dead. There was constant shelling so I couldn't leave the shelter.

For us, shell bombing is just a normal thing now. It is like an everyday routine. We have reached a point where it's like death is not a problem at all. No one has any feeling here now, it's like everyone says, "Whatever happens, it happens." That's it, that's the mentality every single person has here.

The most terrible thing that I have seen was when a mother had a bullet go through her breast and she was dead and the baby was still on the other side of the breast and the baby was drinking her milk, and that really affected me. I was at that place where it hap-

pened.

There is just too much to take. Children have lost parents, parents have lost children, it's just a common thing now.

[The shelling] is definitely coming from the government side, that can be sure, because it is only a small area on the LTTE side and from the sound and from the distance I can surely say it is from the government side.

I don't care about the government, I don't care about the LTTE, my concern is the civilians because through all these problems they are the people affected.

The government or the LTTE, they have got to do something, and if not, I can't imagine what will happen next.

Both parties have got to have a ceasefire. I think the international [community] has to either come into the country or get both parties to stop the fighting and start thinking about the civilians living here. Every single person living here asks why the international [community] is not doing anything.

I really want to come to the UK but I don't know. I'm talking to you now, but maybe tomorrow I'll be dead.

Disgraceful vote ...

Continued from p12

in Sri Lanka has seen numerous examples of such violations, yet there has been no serious outside investigation.

As a result, Sri Lanka will set a precedent for the future workings of the council. Essentially, it declares that victory in civil war is paramount, and that any incidental abuses are no one else's business. This is disastrous.

Sri Lanka has pointed a way that many countries faced with insurgencies are likely to follow: barring journalists and photographers in order to maintain a news

blackout, keeping out aid agencies so that no one can criticise the treatment of civilians and using the latest heavy weapons, without discrimination, in civilian areas in order to rout their enemies.

It is a bad precedent, and one that has just been endorsed in Geneva. At least, however, Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, was not accepting defeat. There was still a very real need, she said on Thursday, for an inquiry into "very serious abuses". It does not seem as though that inquiry will now be held by the council, however.

NEWS

Last hours of LTTE political leadership

As the Sri Lankan army closed in, the Tigers made a desperate plea to a Sunday Times correspondent to help stave off annihilation, said reports on May 25.

Marie Colvin
The Sunday Times

IT was a desperate last phone call but it did not sound like a man who would be dead within hours. Balasingham Nadesan, political leader of the Tamil Tigers, had nowhere to turn, it seemed.

"We are putting down our arms," he told me late last Sunday night (May 17) by satellite phone from the tiny slip of jungle and beach on the northeast coast of Sri Lanka where the Tigers had been making their last stand.

I could hear machinegun fire in the background as he continued coolly: "We are looking for a guarantee of security from the Obama administration and the British government. Is there a guarantee of security?"

He was well aware that surrendering to the victorious Sri Lankan army would be the most dangerous moment in the 26-year civil war between the Tigers and Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority.

I had known Nadesan and Seevaratnam Puleedevan, the head of the Tigers' peace secretariat, since being smuggled into rebel territory eight years ago.

At that time the Tigers controlled a third of the island; now these two men were trying to save the lives of the remaining 300 fighters and their families, many of them injured. Tens of thousands of Tamil civilians were trapped with them, hiding in hand-dug trenches, enduring near constant bombardment.

For several days I had been the intermediary between the Tiger leadership and the United Nations as the army pressed in on the last enclave at the end of a successful military campaign to defeat the rebellion.

Nadesan had asked me to relay three points to the UN: they would lay down their arms, they wanted a guarantee of safety from the Americans or British, and they wanted an assurance that the Sri Lankan government would agree to a political process that would guarantee the rights of the Tamil minority.

Through highly placed British and American officials I had established contact with the UN special envoy in Colombo, Vijay Nambiar, chief of staff to Ban Ki-moon, the secretary-general. I had passed on the Tigers' conditions for surrender, which he had said he would relay to the Sri Lankan

government.

The conflict seemed set for a peaceful outcome. Puleedevan, a jolly, bespectacled figure, found time to text me a smiling photo of himself in a bunker.

By last Sunday night, however, as the army pressed in, there were no more political demands from the Tigers and no more photos. Nadesan refused to use the word "surrender" when he called me, but that is what he intended to do. He wanted Nambiar to be present to guarantee the Tigers' safety.

Once more, the UN 24-hour control centre in New York patched me through to Nambiar in Colombo, where it was 5.30am on Monday. I woke him up.

I told him the Tigers had laid down their arms. He said he had been assured by Mahinda Rajapaksa, the Sri Lankan president, that Nadesan and Puleedevan would be safe in surrendering. All they had to do was "hoist a white flag high", he said.

I asked Nambiar if he should not go north to witness the surrender. He said no, that would not be necessary: the president's assurances were enough.

It was still late Sunday night in London. I tried to get through to Nadesan's satellite phone but failed, so I called a Tigers contact in South Africa to relay Nambiar's message: wave a white flag high.

I was woken at 5am by a phone call from another Tigers contact in southeast Asia. He had been unable to get through to Nadesan. "I think it's all over," he said. "I think they're all dead."

That evening, the Sri Lankan army displayed their bodies. What had gone wrong with the surrender? I would soon find out.

I discovered that on Sunday night Nadesan had also called Rohan Chandra Nehru, a Tamil MP in the Sri Lankan parliament, who immediately contacted Rajapaksa.

The MP recounted the events of the next hours: "The president himself told me he would give full security to Nadesan and his family. Nadesan said he had 300 people with him, some injured.

"I said to the president, 'I will go and take their surrender.'

"Rajapaksa said, 'No, our army is very generous and very disciplined. There is no need for

you to go to a warzone. You don't need to put your life at risk'."

Chandra Nehru said Basil, the president's brother, called him. "He said, 'They will be safe. They have to hoist a white flag.' And he gave me the route they should follow."

The MP got through to Nadesan at about 6.20am local time on Monday. The sound of gunfire was louder than ever.

"We are ready," Nadesan told him. "I'm going to walk out and hoist the white flag."

"I told him: 'Hoist it high, brother - they need to see it. I will see you in the evening'," said Chandra Nehru.

A Tamil who was in a group that managed to escape the killing zone described what happened. This source, who later spoke to an aid worker, said Nadesan and Puleedevan walked towards Sri Lankan army lines with a white flag in a group of about a dozen men and women. He said the army started firing machineguns at them.

Nadesan's wife, a Sinhalese, yelled in Sinhala at the soldiers: "He is trying to surrender and you are shooting him." She was also shot down.

The source said all in the group were killed. He is now in hiding, fearful for his life. Chandra Nehru has fled the country after being threatened, the MP says, by the president and his brother.

Over the past few days, Nambiar's role as UN envoy has come into question. His brother, Satish, has been a paid consultant to the Sri Lankan army since 2002. Satish once wrote that General Sarath Fonseka, commander of the Sri Lankan armed

Continued on p19

Colombo 'ended' the battle with a massacre

IN the final hours of the war, Sri Lanka executed a well-planned massacre of several unarmed civil officers of the LTTE with the aim of annihilating its political structure.

At the orders of a 'top defence figure,' an international arrangement involving ICRC, European diplomats and a Colombo government diplomat to arrange safe exit to the civil officers was defied, according to informed sources.

On Monday May 18, early hours around 3:00 a.m. Vanni local time, the LTTE Political Chief Balasingham Nadesan and LTTE Peace Secretariat Director Seevaratnam Puleedevan tele-



LTTE political leaders B. Nadesan (top) and S. Puleedevan (above) were shot while they were surrendering with white flags

phoned their contacts in Europe and informed them to tell the ICRC Head Office that only around 1,000 wounded cadres, civil officials of the LTTE and civilians remained in the so-called safety zone and there was no firing from the LTTE side.

They urged the ICRC to evacuate the wounded. A few hours later, Colombo's Defence Ministry website claimed finding the dead bodies of Mr. Nadesan, Mr. Puleedevan, Mr. Ilango (Tamillelam Police Chief), and LTTE Leader V. Pirapaharan's son Mr. Charles Antony.

On Sunday, May 17, SLA Commander Gen. Sarath Fonseka

told AFP that he will not allow the LTTE to 'regroup' and will ensure that there is 'no future' for the Tigers.

He also said that "the firm decision of the political hierarchy not to go for talks with the LTTE terrorists until they lay down arms had contributed significantly to all these war victories."

According to a press released from the LTTE's head International Relations, Selvarasa Pthmanathan, subsequent to LTTE's announcement that it has decided to "silence the guns" in view of the unbearable civilian

Continued on p19

OPINION

Demonstrate the politics of war

TamilNet Editorial Board
TamilNet

MORE than the massacre, maiming and incarceration, what causes the height of the trauma to Eelam Tamils is the utter disregard of the norms of civilization and shameful deceit committed by India, the International Community and the United Nations in the happenings of the island of Sri Lanka. This will remain as an indelible blot in the annals of history, irremovable scar in the minds of Tamils and will globally discredit the existing power systems, sowing seeds for their deconstruction in future, unless they at least act now in upholding political justice.

Any effort on their part to exploit the situation to impose political subjugation on Tamils, thinking that there is a political vacuum in Eelam Tamil nationalism, is sure to bring in further disaster.

The Tamil national cause cannot afford to be deviated and exploited by others through questions such as whether V. Pirapaharan is alive or not or whether the armed struggle has to be continued or not. The answer to the second question is going to depend very much on the successes and failures of the IC in resolving the conflict.

Meanwhile, the Eelam Tamil diaspora, the only section of the community that has the freedom and means to come out with authentic voice, has a historic responsibility in telling the world what they aspire for in no uncertain terms, and in seeing their righteous cause not hijacked by their enemies.

The Tamil diaspora in France and especially in Norway have already embarked upon this noble venture with foresight, by remandating the Vaddukkoaddai Resolution through unblemished popular politics.

It is high time the rest of the diaspora follow suit not only in specifying the course, but also in leading it further by democratically bringing in a political leadership to stand by that.

The existing structures should wholeheartedly, and in one voice, need to support it.

A grave concern of Tamils at this juncture is the stand of India. Whether it was in 1987 or now, the bitterness of Eelam Tamils about the Indian Establishment is its unrealistic stand of resolving the crisis within the state of Sri Lanka, not recognising the Tamil independence and sovereignty that have very much become a must today.

Tamil Nadu has a great role to

play now. As both the major parties of Tamil Nadu have openly stated that Tamil Eelam is the solution to the crisis, they should not waste any time now in declaring that in the state assembly. This is sure to inspire the Indian parliament and various governments of the International Community.

A few who saw the spontaneous, democratic demonstration of the political will of Diaspora Tamils as 'LTTE orchestrations' need to realise that the model experimented in the Norway mandate took place without any compulsion either in participation or in expressing opinion.

It is surprising that certain sections, which accept intimidated elections taking place at gunpoint in Sri Lanka as 'democratic' and envisaged further elections like that to ensure their positions criticising the free political expression of the diaspora through self-evolved structures.

However, this is not the occasion for the Eelam Tamil nation, either in the island or in the diaspora to waste time in fruitless arguments.

The Sri Lankan state is not going to spare the non-LTTE Tamil political forces either, and danger is imminent to them.

Unconfirmed reports say that a Colombo based political entity, having Eelam in its name, has been 'ordered' recently to conduct elections in the island under the identity of the ruling party that is fighting 'Tamil terrorism'.

As has been already demonstrated in the East, the idea is to see that Tamils should not even have their own political parties. This political genocide is one of the many facets of Colombo's agenda.

It is also high time now that all Tamil entities join together in truly reflecting the minds of the people they claim to serve rather than serving the minds of others. Failing, they may never be able to find political or social platform among their own people.

If political war is what India and the International Community want the Tamils to take up, the ball is in the court of India and the International Community now. The right sign and support have to come from them. If they know how to handle the Sri Lankan state, that has to be clearly demonstrated by them now.

But, if deceit continues to impose half-baked solutions that don't match the long-sufferings and sacrifices of Eelam Tamils, then they only invite troubles.



The lack of action by the international community may contribute to the radicalisation of the Diaspora

The Eelam Forecast

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora will take the place of the LTTE

Sadanand Menon
Outlook India

SO why are they bursting crackers in Colombo as if some IPL match was won? Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE chief, may be dead or alive. But that's completely beside the point. What everyone should be asking is whether the Tamil question in Sri Lanka is dead. Let's make no fuzzy mistake. The answer is a resounding no.

The present triumphalism of the Sinhala government and the carousing people on the streets of Colombo is a display of a kind of political idiocy. They have learnt nothing from over sixty years of ethnic conflict and almost thirty years of armed insurgency, which has claimed an unconscionable number of dead soldiers and militants-not to speak of an unacceptably high number of civilian casualties.

The notion of a Tamil homeland is not going to perish with Prabhakaran. The militant movement, which began in the mid-1970s in Jaffna, was in response to three decades of unbridled majoritarianism by the Sinhala state, which tried to squeeze Tamil aspirations and snuff out Tamil identity. Broadly speaking, these conditions continue to exist.

The Sri Lankan state itself will be in no mood to address any of these long-standing grievances. It's up to India and the rest of the international community to effectively persuade Colombo to pay attention to redressing this. It is apparent that before the dust settles, the Sri Lankan government will do its best to send across Sinhala settlers into the Tamil regions of the north and

east, even as a large segment of internally displaced people continue to languish in ruthlessly controlled 'refugee camps'. While humanitarian aid is sure to pour in, a substantial percentage of it is bound to be diverted to settle 'outsiders' in the newly depopulated Tamil regions. The strategy of demographic disaggregation is not unknown in our times and frequently used to neutralise nationalist ambitions. Ethnic porosity over geographic stretches becomes particularly achievable in smaller countries.

But what the Sinhala state now needs to heed is the new reality of a swelled out, prosperous and extremely vocal Lankan Tamil diaspora. Thirty years of militancy-topped by at least twenty years of LTTE hegemony-has decimated the Tamil youth, crippled the Tamil intelligentsia and denuded the Tamil population of any sort of alternative leadership at the local level. It is into this space that a newly articulate, million-strong, diasporic community with international connections is poised to step in. That is where the new leadership, new resistance and new political process will come from. This segment is better equipped to continue the struggle through constitutional means, even as it encourages stray elements to carry out neat surgical strikes on a vulnerable Sri Lankan state.

The Sinhala government is reportedly preparing to divide the newly conquered Tamil territories in the north and east for obnoxious renegade elements like Douglas Devananda, Pillaiyyan and Karuna to administer. This too is only going to lead to further alienation as armed acolytes of these warlords roam the streets bullying and extorting a belea-

guered population. Some of it is already happening in the east. Sri Lanka will have no mechanism to demobilise this Falstaffian army. A quick slippage into another kind of a civil war is inevitable.

No one speaks enough about India's own wretched role in the political and social mess that contemporary Sri Lanka is in today. In the 1980s, it was India's strategic interest in keeping president Junius Jayawardene from walking into the US camp (by allowing the American Seventh Fleet use of Trincomalee harbour) which led to the Indian state's alacrity in setting up training camps for militant Tamil youth groups like LTTE, TELO, EPRLF and PLOTE. These armed insurgents were to be used as a threat against any Sinhala intransigence. Ironically, India lost the plot pretty soon as the groups became involved in the usual internecine, inter-intelligence agency rivalries and dirty tricks. Soon, by 1987, the LTTE had ruthlessly decimated all other groups claiming to represent the Tamil cause and had declared itself independent of Indian control too. Subsequently, the role of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in turning the guns on the Tamils in Jaffna and the recent Indian collusion with the Sri Lankan state to stomp out the Tigers in the Vanni are well known.

However, the closing of this chapter in Sri Lankan history is bound to see the inauguration of an even tougher phase of challenges for the Rajapaksa oligarchy. Lack of governmental enthusiasm to correct its historic misdeeds is sure to breed a new Tamil politics this time which will lay the foundations for a new nation-state in the neighbourhood. The Rajapaksa regime's time starts now.

NEWS

Sri Lanka suspects European hand in IMF loan delay

THE Sri Lankan government and local media, who are increasingly hostile to the West, believe that European nations including Britain, France and Sweden are influencing the US Obama administration to block the IMF loan to Sri Lanka until Colombo adheres to its obligations under international humanitarian laws.

However, US opposition to Sri Lanka's request for a \$1.9 billion IMF standby facility appears to be waning. US Congressman Heath Shuler who was in Sri Lanka recently told reporters in Colombo that Sri Lanka deserves the loan for its development.

During the final phase of the war in Sri Lanka, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that "it was not the appropriate time to consider granting a massive IMF loan for Sri Lanka."

Asked to comment on Clinton's statement, Shuler said that this was not the message he was getting from the authorities and also it is vital to separate economic issues from politics.

Following Clinton's statement, Central Bank of Sri Lanka Governor Nivard Cabraal had said: "There is nothing in the governance structure of the IMF to indicate any political consideration be taken into account."

Also, the IMF has asked the US Supreme Court to lift dismissal a case seeking to force the US to deny Sri Lanka the loan, arguing that the plaintiff has no standing, the court lacks jurisdiction, there is no private right of action to enforce "policy goals," and under federal law both defendants - Timothy Geithner, Secretary of the Treasury, and Meg Lundsager, Executive Director of the IMF - are immune from prosecution.

Meanwhile, a number of humanitarian and rights organisations including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, International Crisis Group, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, have urged the US other IMF member countries to block the loan to Sri Lanka.



Despite economic chaos - Sri Lanka desperately needs an IMF loan of USD 1.9 billion - and the declaration of victory by the government in the 30 year battle with the Liberation Tigers, the Sri Lanka Army is set to grow from 200,000 to 300,000

SLA to grow despite economy and war end

DESPITE a financial crisis which has led to Sri Lanka seeking USD 1.9 billion emergency loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and even after declaring victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Sri Lankan Army is planning to increase its military strength by 50% according to its chief.

Over the past three years, Sri

Lanka's regime has spent 602 billion rupees or about \$US6 billion on the war - equivalent to 14 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008.

Following the declared victory over the LTTE and the end of brutal military campaign, far from there being any reduction in military expenses, Sri Lanka Army commander General Fonseka

says that the army would be expanded by 50 percent, leading to increases in defence expenses.

"Our strength is 200,000 and it will become 300,000 soon... We like to see young men joining us more quickly. We don't mind enlisting even 10,000 a month; we need a lot more soldiers to reach our goal," Fonseka told, ITN, a local Television station on

Monday May 25.

According to Fonseka, this huge army, one of the largest per capita in the world, will be used for a military occupation of the North and East of the island, primarily directed against the Tamil population.

"It will not be easy for them to build up a terror group as they did before," Fonseka told ITN.

Eradicate Eelam ideology - UNP tells Tamil parties

UNITED National Party (UNP), Sri Lanka's main opposition, has said the government should defeat the 'Eelam ideology' and stressed the need to take action on Tamil political parties to remove the Eelam 'tag' from their names.

Now that the LTTE is defeated, there is an urgent need to look at various ways of defeating the concept of 'Eelam' or a separate Tamil homeland through political means, UNP leader Dayasiri Jayasekara told reporters.

"Action needs to be taken regarding political parties carrying the name Eelam. The LTTE has imposed this concept on the minds of people who lived in the North and East.

"They have been made to believe they were living on a land described as Eelam under a separate flag. Now we have to through political means replace the Eelam concept or mindset with the one that we are all Sri Lankans," the UNP leader said.

'Action needs to be taken regarding political parties carrying the name Eelam' Jayasekara added referring to Eelam People's Democratic Party, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation, Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, People Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam and Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students.

Jayasekara said the UNP was delighted at the government's resolution being adopted at the

United Nations Human Rights Council on Wednesday with 29 nations voting in favour and added the government should going forward look at the reasons for some European nations voting against Sri Lanka at the special session, and revamp Sri Lanka's foreign policy to win them over.

"The United States and the European countries are our major trading partners. Without just focusing only on one section of the international community we

should focus on the others too," he said.

Underlining the need for the government and his party to work to a common agenda at least on national issues Jayasekara said: "The government should stop criticizing the UNP leadership and it members. We should agree on a common programme. If the government needs our help, they should tell us. If not we could carry out our political work on our own," he said.