

**INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY!
WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE ON
SRI LANKA?**

**APPEAL TO THE
UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**APPEL À LA PRISE DE CONSCIENCE DU
CONSEIL DES DROITS DE L'HOMME - NATIONS UNIES**

**LLAMADO PARA REACCIÓN URGENTE DEL
CONSEJO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS-NACIONES UNIDAS**

WEBSITE : www.tchr.net

12th session / 12ème session / 12º período de sesiones

14/09/2009 -- 02/10/2009



**TAMIL CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS - TCHR
CENTRE TAMOUL POUR LES DROITS DE L'HOMME - CTDH
CENTRO TAMIL PARA LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS
(ESTABLISHED IN 1990)**

**"WE HAVE REMOVED THE WORD MINORITIES
FROM OUR VOCABULARY"**

**ADDRESS BY MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA AT THE CEREMONIAL OPENING OF PARLIAMENT,
SRI JAYAWARDHANAPURA - KOTTE, MAY 19, 2009**

"We have removed the word minorities from our vocabulary three years ago. No longer are the Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and any others minorities. There are only two peoples in this country. One is the people that love this country. The other comprises the small groups that have no love for the land of their birth. Those who do not love the country are now a lesser group". *(Excerpt)*

http://www.president.gov.lk/speech_New.asp?id=74

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**"THERE IS NO ETHNIC CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA
AS SOME MEDIA MISTAKENLY HIGHLIGHT"**

MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA TO THE LOS ANGELES WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL – 28 SEPTEMBER 2007

"Ladies and Gentlemen, our goal remains a negotiated and honourable end to this unfortunate conflict in Sri Lanka. Our goal is to restore democracy and the rule of law to all the people of our country. 54% of Sri Lanka's Tamil population now lives in areas other than the north and the east of the country, among the Sinhalese and other communities. *There is no ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka - as some media mistakenly highlight. Sri Lanka's security forces are fighting a terrorist group, not a particular community.*"

"I see no military solution to the conflict. The current military operations are only intended to exert pressure on the LTTE to convince them that terrorism cannot bring them victory." *(Excerpt)*

http://www.president.gov.lk/speech_latest_28_09_2007.asp

* * * * *

**"....WE ARE EQUALLY COMMITTED TO SEEKING A NEGOTIATED AND SUSTAINABLE
SOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA"**

**MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA TO THE HINDUSTAN TIMES LEADERSHIP SUMMIT
AT NEW DELHI ON 13 OCTOBER 2007**

"It is necessary for me to repeat here that while my Government remains determined to fight terrorism, we are equally committed to seeking a negotiated and sustainable solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka. If those who carry arms against the State are willing to enter a process of genuine negotiation towards a peaceful and democratic solution, the government and the people will reciprocate. In this, it would not be out of place to look forward to understanding and assistance from our regional neighbours and friends, especially those with whom we share the strongest bonds throughout history. We will see in such understanding and assistance the true signs of emerging greatness". *(Excerpt)* http://www.president.gov.lk/speech_latest_13_10_2007.asp

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TAMIL CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS - TCHR
CENTRE TAMOUL POUR LES DROITS DE L'HOMME - CTDH
CENTRO TAMIL PARA LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS

(Established in 1990)

WEBSITE : www.tchr.net

**TCHR PARTICIPATION IN UNITED NATIONS
WORLD CONFERENCES AND OTHER MEETINGS**

- * *TCHR was a registered participant in the World Social Forum 2009 in Belem, Brazil Jan 27- Feb 1, 2009.*
- * *TCHR officially participated in the 61st annual DPI/NGO conference in UNESCO, Paris, 3-5 September 2008.*
- * *TCHR was a registered participant in the European Social Forum 2008 in Malmo, Sweden 17-21 Sept 2008.*
- * *TCHR officially participated in the 'United Nations 7th Global Forum, Re-instating good governance', in Vienna, Austria 26-29 June 2007.*
- * *Members of TCHR participated in the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) seminar in Geneva, Switzerland, 29-31 July 2007.*
- * *TCHR was officially accredited to participate in the United Nations Conference on Anti-corruption Measures, Good Governance and Human Rights, in Warsaw, Poland 8–9 November 2006.*
- * *A meeting was held on 7 March 2006, in the European Parliament – titled "EU contribution to the peace process in Sri Lanka". This was jointly organised by TCHR and Mr. Robert Evans, a member of European Parliament and of Labour Party in UK.*
- * *TCHR was officially accredited by the United Nations to participate in the World Summit on the Information Society – WSIS in Tunisia, 16 – 18 November 2005.*
- * *TCHR officially participated in the NGO forum of the UN World Conference Against Racism – WCAR in Durban, South Africa, from 28 August to 1 September 2001. TCHR held an information stall including an exhibition at the forum. The TCHR representatives also attended the main WCAR conference held in Durban, 31 August to 7 September 2001. (http://www.tchr.net/reports_wcar_detail.htm)*
- * *A meeting was held on 14 October 1998, in the European Parliament – titled "Press censorship in Sri Lanka". This was jointly organised by the Tamil Centre for Human Rights (TCHR) and Ms. Anita Pollack, a member of European Parliament and of Labour Party in UK.*
- * *In 1993, TCHR held an information stall and a photo exhibition on human rights violations, in the United Nations 2nd World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna, Austria, from 14-25 June.*
- * *TCHR participates in meetings of Treaty bodies and submits reports to the same.*

Fact finding missions to the North East of the Island of Sri Lanka

- * *May 2003* (http://www.tchr.net/report_studymission_2003.htm)
- * *December 2003 – addendum report* (http://www.tchr.net/report_studymission_2003add.htm)
- * *July-August 2004* (http://www.tchr.net/reports_visite_2004.htm)

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14 September 2009

The President
Members and Delegates
12th Session – UN Human Rights Council
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Distinguished Sirs / Mesdames,

First of all, we extend our congratulations to you for your appointment as President of the 12th session and following sessions.

Since the establishment of our organisation in 1990, we have been regularly reporting on the human rights violations taking place in the island of Sri Lanka to all United Nations Human Rights forums. Our reports are based on indisputable facts, the authentic details of which we receive from our sources directly from the places where incidents occur. The UN human rights monitoring bodies have appreciated the veracity of our reporting.

We wish to place before your esteemed honours our report on the violations of human rights and denial of fundamental freedoms perpetrated on innocent Tamil civilians in the North and East due to long years of war and military occupation. The human rights situation has been deteriorating there for many decades. Cultural and mandated genocide, multiple displacements and impunity are all very serious problems.

On 25 August 2009, the British Channel-4 TV, showed film footage in which Sri Lankan security forces were executing victims who were stripped naked, and whose hands were tied behind their backs. This is one of the many pieces of evidence which prove the way extra-judicial killings are carried out in Sri Lanka. This evidence of war crimes stresses the need for an immediate international investigation.

The situation of the 280,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in several internment camps remains critical. Diseases are rife, and there is a desperate shortage of medical help. There are regular disappearances from these camps, as people are abducted mysteriously in vans, in what appears to be an efficient terror system.

Even though INGOs and other institutions have given statistics and the locations of many IDPs, more than ten thousand further IDPs are being held in secret locations.

Press freedom, freedom of expression and human rights activities are in peril in Sri Lanka. Journalists and human rights defenders are arrested, tortured, abducted, disappeared and killed over-night. Members of civil society and Parliamentarians are undergoing severe harassment by the authorities under the pretext of fighting terrorism. International human rights law and international humanitarian law are being massively violated by Sri Lanka.

On 31 August, the Sunday Times columnist, editor of 'North-eastern Herald' monthly and the online magazine 'outreach.com', Mr J.S.Tissanayagam was sentenced to jail for twenty years rigorous imprisonment by the Colombo High Court. By this date he had already been detained for 18 months. ***Mr Tissanayagam was not arrested on the basis of any ongoing investigation against him.*** He was arrested in March 2008 at the Police station when he went to find out why his printer colleague and his wife had been taken to the Police Station. He was indicted in Court after being held in detention under the Emergency Regulations (EMR) /PTA for over six months. In any event 'rigorous imprisonment' is something for murderers and hardcore criminals and certainly not for journalists like Mr Tissanayagam with no previous conviction of any sort. ***No journalist in Sri Lanka has ever received this type of sentence, which is a flagrant violation of media freedom.***

Widespread misinformation is disseminated locally and internationally by the Sri Lankan government, in a systematic manner, to give a distorted picture of what is happening in Sri Lanka.

Sirs / Mesdames, the reports and statements of UN Special rapporteurs, UN Working groups, many States, VVIPs and international NGOs to this august forum and to the Special session on Sri Lanka in June of this year, clearly indicate that war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed by Sri Lanka.

As the above-mentioned personalities have also suggested, we kindly request this august body to act on these serious allegations. In addition, we urge this session to take immediate steps and prompt action to alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe that is being deliberately inflicted on the Tamil IDPs and the detainees in Sri Lanka.

Yours sincerely

S. V. Kirubakaran
General Secretary

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS - IDPs

STATISTICS

VAVUNIYA IDP SITE LOCATIONS AND CAPACITY DISPLACED AFTER 27TH OCTOBER 2008

AS OF 10 AUGUST 2009

VANNI IDPs IN WELFARE CENTRES - DISPLACED AFTER 27TH OCTOBER 2008 (DATA SOURCE - UNHCR VAVUNIYA)

	NO. OF FAMILIES	NO. OF INDIVIDUALS
Manik Farm School	273	925
Cheddikulam M V	525	1,750
Nellukulam M V	847	2,724
College of Education	1,723	5,511
Thandikulam School	324	977
Puthukulam MV	558	1,868
Andiyapuliyankulam MV	466	1,403
Komarasankulam school	663	2,087
Sooduventhapulavu Muslim School	561	2,036
Veerapuram Transit Site	1,824	5,469
Sumathipuram	1,750	5,442
Tharmapuram Site (former MKK site)	1,488	4,997
Manik Farm - Zone 0 (Kathirkamar Relief Village)	5,795	19,553
Manik Farm - Zone 1 (Ananthakumaraswamy Relief Village)	15,772	46,999
Manik Farm - Zone 2 (Ramanathan Relief Village)	17,152	55,032
Manik Farm - Zone 3 (Arunachchalam Relief Village)	14,740	43,794
Manik Farm - Zone 4	12,434	38,102
Manik Farm - Zone 5	1,540	4,992
Manik Farm - Zone 7	756	2,510
Total	79,191	246,171

VAVUNIYA - DISPLACED BEFORE JAN 2006

LONG TERM IDPs IN WELFARE CENTRES DISPLACED BEFORE JAN 2006 (DATA SOURCE- KACHCHERI VAVUNIYA)

	NO. OF FAMILIES	NO. OF INDIVIDUALS
Poonthoddam	523	1,896
Sithamparapuram WC	558	2,028
Total	1,081	3,924

Courtesy

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/B4C1AB500CA7682B8525761800532693/\\$File/map.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/B4C1AB500CA7682B8525761800532693/$File/map.pdf?OpenElement)

VAVUNIYA, JAFFNA, MANNAR, TRINCOMALEE AND OTHER DISTRICTS
IDP CAMPS AND HOSPITALS INFORMATION
As of 08 June, 2009

*(Produced through the generous support of various INGOs –
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Sri Lanka)*

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>IDP SITE</u>	<u>FAMILIES</u>	<u>INDIVIDUALS</u>
Vavuniya <i>(As of 8 June 2009)</i>	Menik Farm Aruviaru Sivanantha school	315	1,027
	Menik Farm Zone 1 (Semi permanent site)	15,236	46,458
	Menik Farm Zone 2 transit site	24,137	73,484
	Menik Farm (Zone-03-Block-A,B&C)	15,081	43,063
	Menik Farm Zone 4	14,276	41,142
	Menik Farm camp(Kathirkamarnagar village)	5,346	19,083
	Nelukkulam transit center	1,324	2,962
	Cheddikulam school	545	1,770
	Gamini school	867	1,933
	College of education, Poonthoddam	1,974	6,091
	Kovilkulam Hindu college	0	0
	Vavuniya Tamil MV, Secondary school site	1,711	4,843
	Vavuniya Muslim MV	0	0
	Vavuniya Sivapirakasa Ladies College	1,273	3,349
	Thandikkulam School	512	1,428
	Adiyapuliyankulam School	616	1,564
	Scandapuram Vany School	358	1,026
	Vavuniya Puthukkulam	773	2,384
	Va/Komarasankulam School	738	2,195
	Va/Velikkulam School	434	1,233
	Va/Samanankulam School (Elderly People)	N/A	114
Va/Sooduvenhapualvu Muslim School	561	2,036	
Veerapuram Transit Site	981	3,110	
Sub Total		87,058	260,295

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>IDP SITE</u>	<u>FAMILIES</u>	<u>INDIVIDUALS</u>
Jaffna <i>(As of 6 June 2009)</i>	Kopay Teachers' College	210	494
	Old Courthouse Jaffna	74	143
	Kodikamam School	304	994
	Mirusuvil Church	569	1,739
	Kaithady University Hostel	418	1,097
	Kaithady Children's Home	74	208
	Palmyra 1 (Research Instution)	246	717
	Palmyra 2 (Research Instution)	212	624
	Kodikamam Ramavil	818	2,440
	Chavakachcheri Hindu Ladies' College	454	1,376
	Nelliyady Central College	473	1,237
Sub Total		3,852	11,069

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>IDP SITE</u>	<u>FAMILIES</u>	<u>INDIVIDUALS</u>
Mannar <i>(As of 8 June 2009)</i>	Illupaikkulam	N/A	140
	English Training Center	N/A	294
Sub Total		0	434

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>IDP SITE</u>	<u>FAMILIES</u>	<u>INDIVIDUALS</u>
Trincomalee (As of 26 May 2009)	Sinhala School	757	2,294
	Muslim Maha Vidyalayam	1,384	4,403
Sub Total		2,141	6,697
In Trincomalee Hospitals (As of 26 May 2009)	General Hospital - Trincomalee		131
	Base Hospital - Kantale		29
	Peripheral Unit - Thampalakamam		35
	Field Hospital - Pulmoddai		0
Sub Total			195
<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>IDP SITE</u>	<u>FAMILIES</u>	<u>INDIVIDUALS</u>
Other Districts (As of 18 May 2009)	National Hospital - Colombo		57
	Teaching Hospital - Kandy		29
	Cancer Hospital - Maharagama		1
	General Hospital - Polonnaruwa		83
	Padaviya Hospital		413
	Mannar Hospital		1,539
Sub Total			2,122
Total		93,051	280,812

Courtesy -

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/6F6D19343765134DC12575D1003F4526/\\$File/map.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/6F6D19343765134DC12575D1003F4526/$File/map.pdf?OpenElement)

Ps.

Even though INGOs and other institutions have given statistics and the locations of IDPs, another more than ten thousand IDPs are being held in secret locations. - **Tamil Centre for Human Rights – TCHR.**

JAFFNA WELFARE CENTRE LOCATIONS

JAFFNA - DETAILS OF IDPs IN WELFARE CENTRES AS AT 31.05.2009 (DISPLACED BETWEEN 01.01.2006 - 31.12.2006)

Divisions	WCs	Families	Total
Jaffna	2	74	242
Karaveddy	2	44	169
Total	4	118	411

**JAFFNA - DETAILS OF IDPs IN WELFARE CENTRES AS AT 31.05.2009
(DISPLACED BEFORE 31.12.2005)**

Divisions	WCs	Families	Total
Nallur	1	12	47
Sandilipai	11	228	862
Chankanai	10	338	1,273
Uduvil	15	518	1,980
Tellipalai	11	528	1,918
Kopay	5	248	1,039
Karaveddy	2	27	96
Point Pedro	9	336	1,149
Maruthankerny	3	266	1,009
Total	67	2,501	9,373

**JAFFNA - DETAILS OF IDPs IN JAFFNA AS AT 16.07.2009
(DISPLACED SINCE 27 OCTOBER 2008)**

Name of Welfare Centres	Families	Individuals
Old Court House - Jaffna	75	152
Kopay Teachers' College	196	475
Mirusuvil RCTMS	565	1,764
Kodikamam GTMS	304	995
Kaithadi Ayurvedic University Hostel	389	1,043
Kaithadi Hindu Children Home	70	187
Kaithadi Palmyrah Research Institute	432	1,292
Kodikamam Ramavil	1,723	4,945
Total IDPs in Welfare Centres	3,754	10,853
Reunified IDPs		
- Outside the welfare centres	139	227
Total Births		47
Total Deaths		5
Transferred to Rehabilitation center		100
Grand Total of IDPs arrived to Jaffna	3,893	11,232

JAFFNA - IDP DETAILS

AS OF 31 JULY 2009

IDP DETAILS OF JAFFNA DISTRICT AS OF 31.07.2009	INSIDE THE WELFARE CENTRES		OUTSIDE THE WELFARE CENTRE		TOTAL	
	FAMILIES	INDIVIDUALS	FAMILIES	INDIVIDUALS	FAMILIES	INDIVIDUAL
IDPs after Oct. 08	3,754	10,853	-	332	3,754	11,185
IDPs after April 06	118	411	5,382	18,240	5,500	18,651
IDPs before Dec.05	2,501	9,373	19,142	64,694	21,643	74,067
Grand Total					30,897	103,903

Courtesy

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/1068E014458EA9A7C1257609002EA538/\\$File/Map.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/1068E014458EA9A7C1257609002EA538/$File/Map.pdf?OpenElement)

TENS OF THOUSANDS NEWLY DISPLACED IN 2008, LEADING TO ALMOST HALF A MILLION IDPs (APRIL 2009)

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre – 1 May 2009

- **By February 2009**, there were approximately **495,000** conflict-displaced persons in Sri Lanka
- Of this number, **281,698 were displaced after April 2006** and approximately **214,000 from the period before**
- The biggest number of IDPs in 2008 were in the Vanni where due to access restrictions getting accurate figures was impossible
- The UN was estimating around **230,000 IDPs in the Vanni as of November 2008**; the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies estimating **around 300,000 IDPs**; the government in some cases was suggesting a figure as low as 100,000
- By April 2009, the majority of IDPs in Sri Lanka were in the government-controlled areas where they had fled from the Vanni

As of February 2009, UNCHR was reporting a figure of 281,698 IDPs in Sri Lanka. This was in addition to approximately 214,000 conflict-displaced persons from the period before large-scale combat resumed in April 2006.

[http://www.internal-](http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/1BA99DE6D29D5AE7C12575A6005CFC35?OpenDocument#44.2.1)

[displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/1BA99DE6D29D5AE7C12575A6005CFC35?OpenDocument#44.2.1](http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/1BA99DE6D29D5AE7C12575A6005CFC35?OpenDocument#44.2.1)

PREVAILING CONDITIONS OF THE IDPs

DOLPHIN VAN SCARE IN VAVUNIYA CAMPS

BBC Sinhala service, 24 August 2009 - Displaced Tamil people are being daily abducted from camps in Vavuniya by people who come in vans, a displaced person told the BBC.

Speaking with BBC Sandeshaya from a camp for internally displaced people (IDP) in Vavuniya, the IDP said all the displaced try to hide in their tents as the 'Dolphin vans' arrive in the camps.

"We do not know what exactly happens as everybody hides as soon as they see the vans. But I know that two to three people are disappearing daily," he said.

Some IDPs may also be secretly leaving the camps by paying the authorities, he said.

"Some people have suddenly disappeared. I don't know whether they were abducted or left with the help of the authorities."

Meeting relatives

Those who have been already identified as LTTE operatives are sometimes helping the security officials to recognize those who have earlier supported the LTTE, according to the man.

The Tamil man who did not want to be identified due to fear for his safety said they are only allowed to meet relatives separated by a barbed wire fence.

"There are special tents outside the camps to meet the relatives. They are not allowed to touch anybody as both parties have to stay five metres away from the fence. If they need to hand over something, biscuits, fruits, etc, they have to throw it over the fence."

Three meals are provided in the camps, he said, but as the food is prepared for thousands of people at once, they are unpalatable.

When food is delivered the IDPs have to stay in queues for more than an hour, depending upon the camp, to get their quota of meals or dry food.

As the rainfall continues, he said, it is very difficult to live in the camps due to floodwaters and bad smell from the lavatories that have overflow.

The IDP says that it might even take about three years for the authorities to resettle all the displaced at the current pace.

Nearly 300,000 IDPs are held by the authorities in different camps in Vavuniya.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/sinhala/news/story/2009/08/090824_idp_vans.shtml

PLAN TO RESETTLE TAMIL IDPs IN THE MIDST OF ARMY AND SINHALA SETTLEMENTS *(Ravaya, a Sinhalese language news paper, lead story)*

Ravaya, 21 August 2009 - A source close to the President said that the release of IDPs has been postponed indefinitely with the government focusing on a plan to resettle them along with the new Sinhala and military settlements that are to be set up in the north.

The source further noted that the plan is to resettle people in areas in Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, below Mannar and above Vavuniya, where there are currently no people. The plan is said to remove all the old Tamil villages that existed in the respective areas.

Although thousands of displaced persons currently living in camps even after completing the security checks, they cannot be released due to the government's new plan.

According to the Defence Ministry and the Defence Secretary, 10,000 of the 300,000 people living in the displaced camps have been identified to have links with the LTTE. They are currently living in separate camps located within the main IDP camp in Vavuniya.

While former child soldiers of the LTTE are being rehabilitated at the Ambepussa camp, several other LTTE members are held at the Boossa camp.

Half of the government stipulated period of 180 days to resettle the displaced persons has lapsed. The government in order to receive aid from India and other countries said it would resettle the displaced within 180 days.

It is reported that elements opposed to the devolution of power within the government had proposed the above mentioned plan while the others who are supportive of power devolution have objected to it.

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

GOVERNMENT HAD REPORTED – HAD TOLD US THAT AS MANY AS 75,000 PEOPLE WOULD BE LEAVING THE CAMPS DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST

ERIC P. SCHWARTZ
ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION,
WASHINGTON, DC - AUGUST 19, 2009

ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHWARTZ:In Sri Lanka, where our efforts this year have amounted to over \$50 million in humanitarian assistance, I visited there last month. It's a very difficult situation. Some 280,000 people, at the time of my visit, were remaining in camps, the vast majority of whom were in the Manik Farm complex which I visited.

QUESTION: Which complex?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHWARTZ: Manik – M-a-n-i-k – Farm. And in the period of my visit and thereafter, we learned that the government had reported – had told us that as many as 75,000 people would be leaving the camps during the month of August. That was – I guess, on some level, it was encouraging news, but the basic principle of freedom of movement is at play in Sri Lanka. Everywhere around the world, displaced persons make their own judgments about when it is right to go back. And people, we have found, are pretty good judges of their own best interests.

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

Before I close, let me emphasize one other thing. We don't only deal with the headline crises. That's not what humanitarians are supposed to do and it's not what we do. We try to keep our attention focused anywhere in the world where large numbers of people are suffering and the dimensions of the crisis requires some degree of international engagement.

QUESTION: Can you talk about the couple of euphemisms, really – the freedom of movement is at play, as you said in Sri Lanka, and then you spoke of the continued confinement. Could you speak a little bit more about your trip? There was some rather confusing reporting that emerged after your trip as to what you had or hadn't said to the Sri Lankans in terms of people's confinement. Maybe if you could just –

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

QUESTION: So how many people are you talking about? What are the figures that you have? And are people being – I mean, maybe if – did you go to that area, have a look and see the conditions the people who were being confined in?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHWARTZ: Yeah, I did.

QUESTION: Being held against their will in?

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

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

Secondly, I felt that while there are some international organizations that are present in these camps and are doing great work, I felt that access to these camps should be easier for international providers of assistance and protection, and the government should make it, as I say, easier for outsiders to get in, both to conduct their assistance and protection activities. And I made those points very clearly in my meetings in Sri Lanka.

QUESTION: So when you say conditions were not great, I mean, were there communicable diseases? Do people have enough food? When you said there were basic services, that doesn't really – could you just explain? What do you mean by conditions were not great? They're not great for most IDP camps.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHWARTZ: Well, what I mean are a few things. Number one, there has been some survey of camp populations which indicates – which had indicated higher than – relatively high levels of malnutrition, wasting among children. Now, there was some belief that some of that may have been caused by the conflict itself and the surveying that took place shortly after people got into the camps, but I think that is, by definition, a source of concern.

There is concern about communicable diseases, especially when you're in a temporary facility. And on one level, we want that facility – those facilities to be temporary because we don't want them to take on the character of permanence. But if they are temporary, when things like rain happen, the latrines get washed away and the potential for communicable diseases get much greater, which is all the more reason to give people choices about what they should or should not be doing, can or cannot be doing. **(Excerpt)**

<http://www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/remarks/128046.htm>

A FIRST HAND PERSPECTIVE OF SRI LANKA'S LARGEST IDP CAMP ARE THEY REALLY 'OUR PEOPLE'?

18 August 2009, Groundviews - This is an interview in English secured by Vikalpa with a Sri Lankan Tamil who had visited his family at the "Ramanathan Transitional Relief Village" in May. His family is amongst 260,000+ other IDPs interned in Menik Camp.

In an interview conducted before the recent flooding, the speaker records the inhuman conditions and indignity IDPs have to face in these camps. Pointing to the irony of calling them 'relief centres', the speaker notes that with up to 19 persons having to share a single tent, hours of queuing for drinking water and to use toilets, what they are in fact are detention centres.

"The President of Sri Lanka, Hon. Mahinda Rajapakse says these people are his own citizens, but how they treat these people you can't believe" the speaker notes at the end.

<http://www.groundviews.org/2009/08/18/a-first-hand-perspective-of-sri-lankas-largest-idp-camp-are-they-really-our-people/>

SRI LANKA REFUGEE CAMPS 'FLOODED'

BBC News Colombo, 17 August 2009 - Heavy rains in northern Sri Lanka continue to cause suffering at the vast government-run camps where internally displaced people are held, reports say.

Heavy and sudden showers since Friday have caused havoc at the main complex of refugee camps at Manik Farm, home to some 230,000 people. The UN humanitarian affairs office says one zone is totally under water.

In another zone, **95 toilets are submerged**, water is contaminated with sewage and soakage pits have collapsed. The government is limiting access to the camps by aid agencies, journalists and other outsiders.

'Masquerade' fears

Photos sent from the camps show what looks like a sea of mud, but the UN says it has no information on the situation in one of the zones, and there are varying accounts of the overall picture.

One newspaper says 100,000 people have been left with no proper shelter, but a news website puts the number of families temporarily relocated at only 1,000.

The UN says that because of the bad weather, the authorities are now trying to speed up the resettlement of the refugees to their home districts. So far this process has been going slowly, with the government insisting it has to screen all refugees for possible links to the Tamil Tiger (LTTE) rebels.

Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa was quoted on Monday as saying that "LTTE terrorists masquerading as civilians" could resume attacks if released from the camps. But opposition leader Ranil Wickramasinghe said the conditions in the camps were worsening - and so too was Sri Lanka's reputation as a result.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8206290.stm

HEAVY RAINS COMPOUND IDP WOES

VAVUNIYA, 17 August 2009 (IRIN) - Heavy rains exacerbated poor conditions for hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) in northern Sri Lanka over the weekend.

"We're not prepared for this. I'm afraid things are going to get much worse," one international medical officer told IRIN in Vavuniya on 17 August, citing concerns over diarrhoea, dysentery and other waterborne diseases.

"From an epidemiological point of view, this is a public health disaster waiting to happen."

More than 280,000 people **live in 30 government camps in Vavuniya, Mannar, Jaffna and Trincomalee districts** after fleeing fighting between government forces and the now defeated Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May.

Of these, **246,000 are in 14 heavily guarded camps in Vavuniya, mostly in Menik Farm, a sprawling 809ha site divided into six zones** about 50km outside Vavuniya, which quickly became a sea of mud and misery when the rains struck.

"When the [vegetation] was cleared for the camp, little attention was paid to how water might flow in and out of the area," one resident said.

According to camp authorities, Zone 1 and 4 were the worst affected. Of some 37,000 residents in Zone 4, more than half were badly affected, with tents designed for five and now housing 12 inundated.

Mud and misery

"Within 20 minutes the whole area was flooded. Every tent was affected," said Ganeshan Sivasundram, 38, from Kanagapuram Village in Kilinochchi District outside his flooded tent in Zone 4. "How are we supposed to sleep like this?"

"Everything is wet," Singaratnam Ruban, 41, from Jeyapuram Village in Kilinochchi District, who has lived in the camp since March with his family, complained.

In Zone 1, where residents are living in semi-permanent sheds, toilets quickly overflowed. "All the toilets are flooded. Human excrement is floating everywhere," said Maniam Yogapragash, 33, a resident.

Limited facilities

"The water supply system is minimal, the excrement disposal system is pretty basic and the land is flat so what was once dust has now turned to mud," said one aid worker, who asked not to be identified. He talked about double amputees trying to get around in the mud and children playing in excrement.

"Yes, there are latrines being dug, yes, there is water being piped and tanked, and yes, the Ministry of Health is making huge efforts. But you have to remember, you have a city of over 200,000 here, most of whom live in tents. It's simply not enough," he said.

"We have provided cooked meals for the affected people and we are preparing to relocate the people if the situation becomes worse," Vavuniya government agent, CHM Charles, reportedly said.

But according to international aid workers returning from the field on Sunday evening, that time has come.

"Menik Farm is well named. The place is complete chaos," one international aid worker who also asked not to be identified, told IRIN. **"If you think this is bad, the monsoon rains will be 50 times worse,"** he said.

Monsoon rains on this part of the island are expected in September and generally last two to three months, making the weekend's flooding seem like "a walk in the park", residents say.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=85736>

UPDATE ON ACT ASSISTANCE TO CONFLICT IDPs

15 July 2009 - GENEVA, Action by Churches Together — The Government of Sri Lanka has asked aid agencies to scale down operations as the island nation's "challenges are now different" with the end of a 25-year war, the minister of disaster management and human rights said on July 9th to Reuters.

The news agency reports that the move comes amid increasing pressure from the international community to relax restrictions on aid agencies' access to camps which have housed nearly 300,000 internally displaced people from one of Asia's longest modern wars.

Now, six weeks after the conclusion of the war in Sri Lanka, the UN OCHA reports as of July 9th that camps in Vavuniya, Jaffna and Trincomalee currently hold approximately 280,000 IDP (***According to Christian Aid sources the figure has now dropped to 261,227 IDP***)

The current ACT Appeal for US \$2.7 million is currently 64% covered (US \$1.75 million income pledged and received) and includes projects of ACT members:

- ➔ National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (working with Methodist Church, YMCA and Church of Ceylon-Diocese of Colombo),
- ➔ Christian Aid (working with partner Of ERR),
- ➔ Norwegian Church Aid (with partner Sarvodaya), and
- ➔ Lutheran World Relief (with Federation of Social Development Organization (FOSDOO), Social Economical and Environmental Developers (SEED), and Jesuit Refugee Services-Sri Lanka (JRS)

Protection remains the primary concern for ACT International with nearly all IDPs confined within the camps, restricting their ability to access employment, attend regular schools, visit family and friends, and ultimately choose their place of residence.

To date, some 4,300 IDPs, mostly elderly, have been released and the Government has announced that another 9,000 have been cleared for release.

Approximately 9,400 individuals with links to the LTTE have been separated from the civilian population and accommodated in 'rehabilitation' facilities.

ACT members with and through their partners continue their assistance to IDPs in the camps with funding secured to date in terms of:

Food security and nutrition - Water and sanitation - Shelter repair - Health - Education and livelihood training - Advocacy

Access for implementation of some of the NCCSL projects is currently limited due to restrictions on access for certain types of proposed assistance. Negotiations with the relevant authorities to improve access are continuing.

The ACT Coordinating Office expects to issue a second revision of the appeal within the next week to incorporate changes to the CA and NCA projects.

<http://www.act-intl.org/news.php?uid=708>

TAMIL CAMPS

“WELFARE VILLAGES,” BUT LOOK LIKE MILITARY INTERNMENT CAMPS

The New York Times editorial, 16 July 2009 - More than two months after declaring victory over Tamil Tiger guerrillas, Sri Lanka's government is continuing to hold hundreds of thousands of displaced Tamil civilians in what it calls "welfare villages," but what increasingly look like military internment camps.

The civilians, many of whom were held hostage by the guerrillas in the bloody last stage of the long war, are not being allowed out of the camps, and access by human-rights organizations or journalists is highly restricted.

The government claims it is looking for Tamil Tigers among the refugees and clearing Tamil villages of landmines before letting people return. It may well be that there are former guerrillas hiding among the civilians — the Tamil Tigers had no compunctions about using civilians as cannon fodder or forcibly conscripting men

and children. ***But the screening process is dragging on far too long. And many refugees see it as another abuse of the country's Tamil minority. As one prominent Tamil politician told The New York Times's Lydia Polgreen, "This is simply asking for another conflict later on down the road." If President Mahinda Rajapaksa means it when he says he seeks reconciliation with the Tamils, he should start by letting these people return to their homes.***

The government's strict control on visits to the camps has also raised suspicions that it may be trying to block any investigation into possible government abuses committed in the last months of the war. Soldiers corralled the Tigers, along with hundreds of thousands of civilians into a narrow stretch of beach and, according to human-rights organizations, shelled the area repeatedly. The United Nations says that thousands of civilians were killed, though how and by whom remains murky in the absence of independent investigations.

Donor countries — including the United States, the European Union and Japan — as well as international aid organizations are helping provide food, shelter and clothing to the camps. Most have kept quiet so far about the Tamils' plight, evidently fearful that criticizing conditions in the camps could get them thrown out of the camps. The time for silence is over. The best way to help the Tamils is by demanding their freedom and an end to their long ordeal. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/16/opinion/16iht-edtamil.html>

THE WORLD MUST BOYCOTT SRI LANKA UNTIL IT STARTS RELEASING DETAINEES

DOCTORS' ORDERS

COLOMBO'S ORDER TO THE RED CROSS TO CUT BACK ITS WORK AT TAMIL INTERNMENT CAMPS IS AN OUTRAGE.

The Times editorial, 10 July 2009 - There is something despicable about forcing doctors to lie about war crimes. By their calling, doctors are committed to relieving human suffering, to helping the sick and preventing disease. It is therefore particularly disturbing to see the five doctors who remained with the besieged Tamil civilians as the Sri Lankan Army closed in being paraded before journalists to deny their earlier casualty reports. Men who risked their lives to save lives are now being forced to take part in a political charade to cover up the appalling suffering two months ago — suffering that is still being inflicted on 300,000 Tamils interned in detention camps in northern Sri Lanka.

As the army squeezed the Tamil Tigers into an ever smaller strip of beach, the doctors were the only source of news about the slaughter caused by the military's indiscriminate shelling. The United Nations found that more than 7,000 civilians were killed between January and May. Subsequent aerial photographs of beach graves, revealed in *The Times*, suggested that the figure was more than 20,000. World outrage embarrassed the Colombo Government. The doctors were swiftly arrested and nothing further was heard of them until Wednesday.

Their recantation, clearly made under duress, was as ludicrous as it was humiliating. Mechanically rehearsed but clearly nervous, they drastically reduced the death toll estimates, denied that a key hospital had been shelled and insisted that they had been forced to exaggerate the totals by Tiger fighters. In response the UN yesterday asserted tersely that it stood by its figures.

Few people will be fooled by Colombo's crude attempt at a propaganda victory. For the Government took a far more sinister and callous step yesterday when it ordered the International Committee of the Red Cross to scale back its operations in Sri Lanka, leave the camps where it has been monitoring conditions and halt its aid programmes. The need for expatriate assistance was much less now than before, the Government asserted. Sri Lankans were fully able to meet all the needs of those detained in "welfare villages".

The claim is an outrageous lie. Senior international aid figures said yesterday that about 1,400 people a week are dying at one of the big internment camps. Tamil civilians, rounded up after the government victory on the pretext of a security need to weed out former fighters, are suffering from hunger, disease, insanitary conditions, overcrowding and the enforced separation of families. ***The Government has taken almost no steps to free them. Indeed, a former Sri Lankan foreign minister has accused it of a policy of deliberate "ethnic cleansing" to change the population balance.***

Colombo's order puts the Red Cross in a difficult position. Historically, it has rarely spoken out — even about Nazi concentration camps — so as not to jeopardise access to those in greatest danger. It was the only aid agency allowed inside the war zone in the final stages of the conflict. But its few statements angered the Government. Sri Lanka wants no witnesses to what is now being done in these modern concentration camps.

If the Red Cross is forced to withdraw, however, the outside world should step in. The Sri Lankan Government is awaiting a \$1.9 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund to address its balance-of-payments crisis and post-war development. None of this money should be paid until independent aid agencies are guaranteed access to the Tamil camps and until Sri Lanka starts to release those detained. Other world bodies — the Commonwealth, the United Nations and even world cricketing organisations — should boycott Colombo until reconciliation begins. A nation cannot run concentration camps and expect the world to look away.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading_article/article6676993.ece

MANY SRI LANKA WAR REFUGEES LANGUISH IN CAMPS

New York Times, 10 July 2009, CHEDDIKULAM, Sri Lanka — When the piercing whistle and sharp thuds of artillery shells grew faint, S. Theventhran dashed to safety. After days of cowering in a narrow, open trench on a strip of beach in the north-eastern corner of Sri Lanka, he was cheered by the sight of Sri Lankan Army soldiers helping wounded and terrified survivors of the last stand of the Tamil Tiger rebels, who had held nearly 300,000 Tamil civilians hostage.

More than two months later, Mr. Theventhran, a 56-year-old Tamil civil servant, finds himself once again a captive, this time of the people who freed him from the Tigers' grip.

"We were liberated," he said in an interview at one of the sprawling, closed camps set up here to house those displaced in the war against the rebel group, known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. "Now we are prisoners again. I lost everything in this war. The Tigers killed my son. I lost my property. Now I have lost my freedom, too."

Hundreds of thousands of Tamils remain locked behind razor wire in camps almost entirely off limits to journalists, human rights investigators and political leaders. The Sri Lankan government claims that the people in the camps are a security risk because Tamil Tiger fighters are hiding among them.

But diplomats, analysts, aid workers and many Sri Lankans worry that the historic chance to finally bring to a close one of the world's most enduring and vicious ethnic conflicts is slipping away as the government curtails the rights of Tamil civilians in its efforts to stamp out the last remnants of the Tigers.

"The government told these people it would look after them," said Veerasingham Anandasangaree, a prominent Tamil politician who has been a staunch supporter of the government's fight against the Tamil Tigers. "But instead they have locked them up like animals with no date certain of when they will be released. This is simply asking for another conflict later on down the road."

The Sri Lankan government has portrayed its final battle against the 26-year insurgency by the Tamil Tigers, which ended in late May with the killing of the group's leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, as a rescue mission to liberate civilians held hostage by one of the world's richest and most ruthless armed groups, branded terrorists by governments across the globe.

"We can't say this was a war, it was a humanitarian operation to safeguard the people of the area," said Sri Lanka's president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, in a rare interview this week. "They knew we were not against the Tamil people, against the civilians. This was only against the terrorists."

Although many of the camps' residents are grateful to the government for freeing them from the Tigers, frustration and anger are building as it becomes clear that reconciliation and finding a political solution to the grievances of the Tamil and other minority groups in Sri Lanka will have to wait.

Conditions in the camps have improved since the early days in April and May when the sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of people caught the government and aid groups flatfooted. Hundreds of sturdy shelters are being built to replace hot, flimsy tents.

Children are attending schools, and health centres and hospitals are helping check the spread of infectious diseases. New water pumps and toilets have made life a little more bearable for the displaced.

But that has done little to tamp down the impatience of those living here. The screening process has lasted far longer than most people had imagined. ***Mr. Rajapaksa said he had ordered that 80 percent of the displaced should be resettled by the end of the year.*** But government officials say that this goal may be tough to meet because the extensive land mines across much of the north have not been cleared.

Many of the displaced people here said they would happily leave the crowded camps to stay with relatives elsewhere in the country until they could return to their villages. Some elderly people have been allowed to leave, but government officials refused to say when others who have been screened would be released.

Mr. Rajapaksa said that the residents of the camps, which the government refers to as “welfare villages,” must be confined for security reasons because anyone could be a hidden rebel fighter. The government says about 10,000 fighters have been identified so far, most because they turned themselves in.

Indeed, the murky status of the people held here in what many describe as internment camps is emblematic of the conundrum at the heart of Sri Lanka’s civil war. The Tamil Tigers so thoroughly insinuated themselves into Tamil communities, particularly here in the Tamil Tiger’s former stronghold in the north, that in the government’s eyes the two have become virtually synonymous.

“They recruited everybody,” Mr. Rajapaksa said, from old men to teenage girls. “Everyone was ready to take the gun.” <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/11/world/asia/11lanka.html>

PUTTALAM IDPs CONSIDER RETURN TO NORTH AFTER 19 YEARS

3 July 2009 - Following the end to armed conflict in Sri Lanka in May, a large group of Muslims forcibly ejected from the north by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are finally contemplating a return home. These displaced people have been living in IDP camps and settlements in the area of Puttalam in the north-west of the country since 1990. Many among the over 70,000 Muslims living in the Puttalam region are happy about the fall of the LTTE but uncertain about returning to the northern province. While older people are more enthusiastic about the prospect of returning and rebuilding their lives in areas of origin, the move does not appeal to the younger generation who have not experienced life outside the camps.

According to Sri Lanka’s relief and rehabilitation minister, many houses in the north which once belonged to the Muslims have been completely destroyed and some of the returnees will even find it difficult to locate their ancestral lands. The government will help the returnees to obtain necessary documents and also assist those who have decided not to return.

[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpCountries\)/0BB9CBD990450F5F802570A7004C148F?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpCountries)/0BB9CBD990450F5F802570A7004C148F?OpenDocument)

"TOO MANY PEOPLE" AT HUGE IDP CAMP – UN

COLOMBO, 11 June 2009 (IRIN) - Conditions at a huge government-run camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sri Lanka are still unsatisfactory, the UN’s top official in the country told IRIN, despite some improvements.

“The fundamental issue is that there are too many people in too small a place,” said Neil Buhne, the UN resident coordinator in Sri Lanka, adding: “We think it is the largest IDP camp in the world.”

In the past two months over 210,000 people have flocked to the camp, leaving aid agencies struggling to cope, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The camp, known as Menik Farm, covers over 500 hectares outside the town of Vavuniya in northern Sri Lanka, about 270km from Colombo. It has over 220,000 IDPs who fled fighting between government forces and the now defeated Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

As of 5 June, the UN Refugee Agency and its partners had erected some 6,500 emergency shelters and more than 13,000 tents - but much more is needed, OCHA said.

Buhne, who recently visited the camp, reports seeing 10-15 people in tents designed for five, but insisted improvements would happen.

Sanitation “woefully inadequate”

Improvements to water and sanitation facilities at the camp have been carried out, but in some places 100 people are using a single latrine when the standard should be around 20, Buhne said, adding that some pit latrines which were built when the camp was first opened in November 2008 were overflowing, causing discontent.

“The situation is that people are coping, but very obviously this [the facilities] are not adequate,” Buhne said.

“The biggest gap continues to be in the provision of adequate water and sanitation,” Richard Schmidt, head of office of Solidar in Vavuniya, said at their mid-year review.

“Already there are outbreaks in the camps such as chicken pox, hepatitis and diarrhoea, which will only get worse if water and sanitation does not improve,” he warned.

World Vision said water and sanitation was a major issue at many of the more than 40 camps set up by the government.

“The sanitation facilities in the largest camps where most of the displaced are living are woefully inadequate and at least 11,500 more latrines are needed in the camps to comply with international minimum standards,” it said in an 11 June statement.

At least 2,500 latrines were needed immediately to prevent a potential health crisis, ahead of the rains expected in two weeks time, it added.

Food

The World Food Programme (WFP) said sufficient food was reaching residents in all camps, but that it needed US\$5 million per month to ensure a steady supply of basic food. It was urgently seeking funds to avoid supply breakdowns.

“We urgently need \$35 million to meet the needs for this year. We need the funds fast, because it takes 3-6 months for us to ship food into the country,” Adnan Khan, the WFP country head, told IRIN.

Complimentary food for infants and lactating mothers in the camps was still an issue.

Access

Some groups are pressing for greater access to the sprawling site, citing restrictions on vehicles entering the site.

Earlier this month, Sri Lankan Minister of Human Rights and Disaster Management Mahinda Samarasinghe told a press conference the government was prepared to grant appropriate access where needed, but not unfettered access.

Buhne said access restrictions had improved over the past three weeks and had not affected the supply of food, medicine or construction materials, but had prevented advocacy and protection programmes from taking place, adding: “One of the big issues is garbage [disposal]. We have had some problems with some softer issues like that,” he said. <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=84805>

13,000 IDPs MISSING FROM SRI LANKA CAMPS - UN REPORTS

June 4, 2009 - “With the UN already under fire for withholding and downplaying the number of civilian casualties in Sri Lanka, another ongoing controversy has opened up concerning the number of internally displaced persons detained in the IDP camps in northern Sri Lanka. Between the May 27 and May 30 reports of the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, over 13,000 IDPs simply disappeared from the camps”, Inner City press said.

OCHA’s May 30 report states that “276,785 persons crossed to the Government controlled areas from the conflict zone. This represents a decrease of 13,130 IDPs since the last report (Sitrep No.18) on 27 May 2009. The decrease is associated with double counting. Additional verification is required.”

UN sources in Colombo are telling Inner City Press that senior UN officials above them, Sri Lankan nationals who are Sinhalese, are deliberately downplaying the 13,000 “missing” IDPs, which would otherwise be of much concern given the reports of disappearances from the camps, the seizing of teenage males for detention and females for sexual purposes.

<http://www.nowpublic.com/world/13-000-tamil-idps-missing-sri-lanka-camps-un-reports>

IN SRI LANKA 13,130 MISSING IDPs REPORTED BUT DOWNPLAYED BY UN, JOURNALIST BEATEN

UNITED NATIONS, June 2 -- With the UN already under fire for withholding and downplaying the number of civilian casualties in Sri Lanka, another ongoing controversy has opened up concerning the number of internally displaced persons detained in the IDP camps in northern Sri Lanka. Between the May 27 and May 30 reports of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, over 13,000 IDPs simply disappeared from the camps.

OCHA's May 30 report states that "276,785 persons crossed to the Government controlled areas from the conflict zone. This represents a decrease of 13,130 IDPs since the last report (Sitrep No.18) on 27 May 2009. The decrease is associated with double counting. Additional verification is required."

But earlier, OCHA had praised the "improved, systematic registration being undertaken in the camps."

UN sources in Colombo tell Inner City Press that senior UN officials above them, Sri Lankan nationals who are Sinhalese, are downplaying the 13,000 "missing" IDPs, which would otherwise be of much concern given the reports of disappearances from the camps, the seizing of teenage males for detention and females for other purposes, UK Channel 4 asserted with on camera interviews.

These UN sources are surprised, since even Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is under fire for downplaying what has happened to the Tamils, that the UN would be so seemingly cavalier about 13,000 "missing" persons from almost entirely Tamil internment camps.

Meanwhile, in further fall out, journalist Poddala Jayantha, secretary of the Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association, was kidnapped near his home and severely beaten with sticks before being dumped in a suburb of Colombo. The government had accused him of being too sympathetic to the Tamil Tiger -- or just to the Tamils. The UN, too, has its different way of trying to crack down on journalists. Watch this site.

And see (**June 5, 2009**) [Sri Lanka Denies IDP Reduction Reported by Inner City Press. Raises to UN On Sri Lanka, UN Insists It Stopped Counting the Dead, Silent on NGO Expulsion, Blue Eyed Slander](#)

MATTHEW RUSSELL LEE OF INNER CITY PRESS AT THE UN: NEWS ANALYSIS

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 -- Asked if the UN withheld its knowledge of civilians deaths in Sri Lanka in May, as it withheld satellite photos of the supposed "No Fire" Zone, the Spokesperson for Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Monday told the Press that "the 20,000 figure is not a UN number."

Despite some of the same doctors the UN previously relied on having still been in the Zone until the Army's final assault, Spokesperson Michele Montas said that in May there was "no way to know" how many civilians were killed.

But when Inner City Press asked for an update on the location and condition of the doctors who remained in the Zone offering treatment and casualty figures, they were called heroes by Ms. Montas. Heroes that the UN refused to believe? [Video from Minute 18:44.](#)

In the UN General Assembly, Mr. Ban categorically denied that the UN downplayed civilian deaths. Ambassadors interviewed by Inner City Press as they left the closed door briefing were generally not impressed. Unrelatedly, Inner City Press asked several whether Ban will give a more specific briefing about Sri Lanka to the Security Council, which had a number of "informal inter-active dialogues" as civilians died in the conflict zone.

Austria's number one representative told Inner City Press he was going to meet with this Turkish counterpart, the president of the Council for June, to request just that. The U.S. number three representative Rosemary DiCarlo said that a briefing of the Council by Ban is "still possible." With the UN's credibility on the line, to dodge such a briefing would be a new low.

In Sri Lanka, alongside reports of Tamil-owned shops being attacked, the Director of Sri Lanka's government Peace Secretariat Rajiva Wijesinghe is now known to have told a press conference **"there are many blue eyed children in that [IDP] camp, you will know some NGOs had a jolly good time."** As a low level credit-war has emerged, from who broke the 20,000 figure that the UN denies to who took the photos of the conflict zone, we'll happily source and credit the Wijesinghe quote to the Voice of America.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan defence sources crow that **"Ranvei Tvetenes, the Head of Norwegian NGO FORUT was deported on night of Saturday 29th May, 2009."** The UN screamed when some NGOs were expelled from Darfur. But the UN was silent when a more systematic expulsion took place in Sri Lanka. And now? We'll see.

ON SRI LANKA, UN'S DODGING COMES HOME TO ROOST, UK COULD HAVE PUT ON COUNCIL AGENDA MATTHEW RUSSELL LEE OF INNER CITY PRESS AT THE UN: NEWS ANALYSIS

UNITED NATIONS, May 29 -- As UN sources in Sri Lanka were quoted that beyond the 7000 civilian killings in the leaked UN estimates that Inner City Press obtained and published at the end of April, one thousand more civilians were being killed every day in May, responses at the UN in New York grew ever more muted.

Inner City Press asked Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's Deputy Spokesperson Marie Okabe if Mr. Ban will push to brief the Security Council about the May 23 tour of Sri Lanka. Ms. Okabe would not answer, saying "I have nothing to announce." Because Sri Lanka never by vote put on the Council's agenda, all members including Russia, China, Libya and Vietnam would have to agree, to hear from Ban. But is he even asking?

Inner City Press asked UK Ambassador to the UN John Sawers would what the Security Council did and didn't do as civilian casualties mounted in north Sri Lanka. Sawers responded that "we had the votes" to put Sri Lanka on the Council's agenda, but chose not to, to preserve "unanimity." He claimed that the Sri Lankan government felt pressure from the Council and the Ban administration's visits. Apparently they would have killed even more.

At a reception at the Russian Ambassador's residence on May 28, Inner City Press asked **Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN about reports of Sinhalese mob violence against Tamils.** He responded that while the fears are real, the country hadn't had a death by communal violence since 1983. He said that the newspaper editor arrested after the Tamil Tigers' last attempted plane bombing of Colombo has been released. The UN says that the doctors who remained in the conflict zone offering treatment and casualty figures are still in government detention.

On civilian death figures, at Friday's UN noon briefing, Inner City Press asked the UN's Marie Okabe is, beyond the previously leaked and published figures of 2600 by March 7 and 7000 by the end of April, the UN had compiled any figures at all in May. Ms. Okabe, alongside reading a long and convoluted answer, said "ask OCHA." And thus the run-around continues. We will continue to follow these issues -- watch this site.

[Channel 4 in the UK with allegations of rape and disappearance](#)

LIES, DECEPTIONS, HALLMARK OF SRI LANKA WAR

Telegraph, 18 May 2009 - Birds have now stopped singing in a land called Vanni. Sun, moon and the stars in the sky have hidden their faces. Angel of death flew over the skies of Vanni and took the lives of more than twenty five thousand innocent Tamil men, women and children in a single day.

Thousands of wounded are still crying out for help. They are bleeding to death on the streets. They have touched neither water nor food for days. Nobody has come to rescue them. Those who fight for the rights of the animals and those who preach about Buddha and Mahatma have no compassion for the dying Tamils.

Chinese weapons, Indian intelligence, Sinhala Armed personals and racist Sri Lankan leaders came together to perform one of the most cruel war that has cost the lives of many thousands innocents.

While thousands of innocent children and women are facing painful and slow death, Sinhala Buddhist extremists are celebrating victory with flags and fire crackers in the south of the country.

War that was started with hidden agendas of local and international forces, went on for months not just with the strength of the weapons but with well organised false propaganda done by the Sri Lankan officials.

This war was orchestrated and staged with lies and deceptions from the beginning till the end.

Sri Lankan leaders are still vomiting out worms of lies

Rulers of Sri Lanka are continuing to vomit out worms of lies to justify their atrocities against innocent lives. They started with "War on Terror" but changed the buzz word to "Humanitarian Operation" in order to deceive the international community. "War on Terror" was an accepted norm during the Bush era but lost its validity now. Therefore they had changed the name of the game to "Humanitarian operation"

Why do they lie?

Because they have many hidden agendas behind this dirty war. They want to hide the atrocities that are being committed against innocent civilians. They themselves know, what they are doing is wrong and not acceptable in a civilised world.

Above everything they want to protect India who are orchestrating the war in Sri Lanka. Indian intelligent agents and military experts are working closely with the Sri Lankan forces in the war zone.

How do they manage to lie?

They simply hide the truth. When the truth is hidden what comes out is lie.

Foreign journalists and aid workers are barred from the war zone and IDP camps. Those who try to enter and report about the war, are kicked out of the country if they are critical of the government.

Local journalists are intimidated, tortured and sometime killed. Telling the truth is considered a crime in Sri Lanka.

Phone lines are tapped. Web sites are blocked. Anybody who talk against the government is considered as Terrorist or Terrorist supporter.

In the war front, dead bodies of the civilians are burned to ashes using powerful chemicals. This is to hide the number of innocent civilians that have perished in the war.

Sri Lankan government officials very often organise staged visits to the IDP camps and force the refugees to lie to the foreign diplomats.

What did they lie about?

They lied about the objective of the war, weapons used, number of civilian casualties and military operations.

Although they initially claimed that the objective of the war was to defeat the LTTE, they have in fact killed and wounded several thousands of innocent Tamil civilians with heavy weapons. They used chemical weapons and cluster bombs on innocents, but they continue to deny the usage of such weapons.

Sri Lankan forces have destroyed Schools, hospitals and farm lands and made the whole place into a graveyard for the Tamils. This is also regularly denied by the Sri Lankan authorities.

This war has claimed more than fifty thousand lives just within the last few months but the Sri Lankan government is not going to open their mouth and tell this truth to the world.

Why didn't the UN intervene?

United Nations, who is supposed to be a guardian for the oppressed people in the world turned out to be a silent spectator of a manmade disaster that has taken the lives of many thousands.

There is a conspiracy behind this whole war game. China was initially blocking every attempt that was made by UK and France to discuss the Sri Lankan issue in the Security Council.

Ban Ki-moon's chief of staff Vijay Nambiar was sent to Sri Lanka to organise a cease fire. He failed to secure a ceasefire and returned back after meeting the Sri Lankan and Indian officials.

Interestingly Vijay Nambiar couldn't achieve anything constructive in his visit and he had also refused to meet the reporters.

This `unbiased` negotiator, who appears to actually be on the payroll of the Sri Lankan government, though indirectly, something that is obviously known to the United Nations. Vijay Nambiar's brother (Satish Nambiar) is a paid consultant for the Sri Lankan army, and has been since 2002. Is there any link between the UN and the Sri Lankan army's paid consultant?

UN has once again proved to the world that it is no longer a trust worthy international body that can protect the vulnerable.

They have all achieved what they wanted

What we are witnessing in Sri Lanka is neither "war on terror" nor a Humanitarian operation. This is simply a racist war against the Tamils conducted with the help of India and China. You wouldn't shoot at the passengers and bomb the whole bus, if you had to rescue the hostages.

Sinhala extremists are already celebrating and they have also started to intimidate Tamils in the South of the country.

India and China have started to work on their hidden agendas in Sri Lanka.

Tamils all over the world are mourning the death of their loved ones back home.

What Next?

When the rocket scientists designed highly complex derivatives and greedy traders traded these new emperors cloths, many investment banks collapsed. Pension funds lost money. Bankers committed suicide.

The whole financial disaster was caused by greedy and selfish individuals who had short term hidden agendas.

We took action. Greedy bankers and traders were taken to courts. New rules and regulations are now in place to prevent this happening again.

In the same way, the masters of this war in Sri Lanka should be brought to justice.

Sinhala government with racist agendas , China and India with their strategic interests and UN with corrupt officers are the evil ingredients of this dirty war that has cost the lives of many thousands innocent Tamils.

Leaders of Sri Lanka and some responsible officers in the UN, should be questioned in international courts in order to find out if they were responsible for the deaths of innocent Tamils.

If we didn't, we would end up seeing more of such evil games repeated over and over again.

<http://my.telegraph.co.uk/richarddixons>

CALL FOR ACTION ON TAMILS

The Catholic Leader, 30 August 2009 - BRISBANE archdiocese's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) has launched a petition calling on the Federal Government to pressure the Sri Lankan Government over its treatment of almost 300,000 Tamil civilians in internment camps.

The petition urges the Australian Government to call on the Sri Lankan Government to allow aid agencies, journalists, diplomats and human rights organisations better access to the camps.

It also calls for action to speed up the release of Tamils from the camps, to initiate an independent investigation of possible human rights violations during the military battle between Government forces and Tamil Tigers earlier this year, and to establish a process which promotes reconciliation by addressing the grievances of Tamils.

CJPC executive officer Peter Arndt said it was important that the situation for Tamils in the camps was not ignored.

"We are very concerned that the Government is not making action to help the Tamils in the camps an urgent priority because there is no public uproar about their plight," Mr Arndt said.

"It is three months since the bloody conflict ended in Sri Lanka and there is no evidence that anyone has been released.

"In any case, we have to ask why the Sri Lankan Government is allowed to detain its citizens indefinitely in the way that it has.

"They are not allowed to leave these military-run camps which have dreadful conditions even though many have family and friends to whom they can go."

Mr Arndt said the commission had received reliable reports of outbreaks of diseases like typhoid, serious overcrowding in many camps, inadequate obstetric care for thousands of pregnant women, over-stretched hospital facilities and children with chronic diseases like asthma not receiving appropriate care.

"Parents and children are separated from each other and they don't know where their family members are," he said. "The Sri Lankan Government said it would have eighty per cent of people in camps resettled by the end of the year, but, after three months, no-one has been resettled.

"People could be stuck in these poor conditions for a very long time and this should not be tolerated. "We have sent a copy of the petition and an information sheet to every parish in the Brisbane archdiocese and hope that Catholics will join us in calling on the Government to take stronger action to stop this dreadful situation from continuing." Copies of the petition and information can be downloaded from the commission's blog at

<http://cjpbrisbane.wordpress.com/>

Mr Arndt said signed petitions needed to be returned to the commission by September 18 and would be presented to the Senate soon after that date. The commission asked people concerned about the situation to also raise the issue with their local MPs and senators.

http://www.catholicleader.com.au/news.php/top-stories/call-for-action-on-tamils_52625

UNHCR CONCERNED ABOUT CONDITIONS IN IDP SITES IN SRI LANKA

This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson Ron Redmond – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at the press briefing, on 20 May 2009, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

As the fighting in north-east Sri Lanka comes to an end, the scale of the challenges facing UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies on the ground become more apparent. It is now estimated that up to 80,000 people have left the former fighting zone in the last three days, which brings the total who have fled the fighting in the last several months to 280,000.

Some 230,000 have been screened and registered and are currently accommodated in 41 sites spread across four districts. Another 50,000 people are undergoing screening and registration at various points and awaiting transportation to the sites.

The Government of Sri Lanka is facing great challenges in providing assistance to the internally displaced population. There are several issues that need urgent attention, including overcrowding and the limited services available at the camps. UNHCR and its partners continue to support the government in this process.

Civilians coming out of the conflict zone are sick, hungry and suffering from acute malnourishment and dehydration. Conditions at Omanthai school, where screening and registration takes place, have been described as sub-standard in terms of hygiene, health and shelter.

This latest massive influx of people, who have endured extreme conditions, will put an even greater strain on the IDP sites in Vavuniya, Jaffna and Trincomalee, which are already buckling under the pressure of the existing population.

UNHCR has put up 25,000 emergency shelters and is putting up an additional 10,000 to accommodate the tens of thousands of civilians who have left the combat zone and who are expected to arrive seeking shelter in coming days.

Our immediate priority is to support the government in decongesting the camps to allow more space to deliver essential services. Efforts are being hampered by the sheer numbers of IDPs, the speed at which they have been arriving and the limited space available to accommodate them.

In addition, restrictions to enter the IDP sites imposed by the authorities over the weekend are hindering UNHCR's ability to deliver assistance to the IDP sites (a vast area spanning 4,000 acres) in the district of Vavuniya, where a majority of the displaced population has been accommodated. This has undoubtedly hindered our ability to deliver assistance to the population in need.

Our efforts will now focus on stabilizing this population while assisting the government in preparing the conditions conducive for safe return to their areas of origin.

<http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/4a13ea982.html>

ICRC TO SCALE DOWN OPERATIONS

9-07-2009 News release 139/09, Colombo/Geneva (ICRC) – Following the cessation of active hostilities between the Sri Lankan State and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), ***the government of Sri Lanka has asked the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to scale down its operations in the country.***

The ICRC has had a permanent presence in Sri Lanka since 1989. Its role in the country has evolved over the years, always in response to changing needs. The ICRC first responded to the needs resulting from an uprising in the southern part of the country in the late 1980s. Later, in connection with the conflict between government forces and the LTTE, it carried out humanitarian activities which continued until earlier this year.

"The ICRC is in the process of reviewing its setup and operational priorities in Sri Lanka," said Jacques de Maio, the organization's head of operations for South Asia. ***"As a first step, it will close its offices and withdraw its expatriate staff from the Eastern Province while winding down its operations in the area.*** However, the ICRC will continue its dialogue with the Sri Lankan government on issues of humanitarian concern."

In accordance with its mandate, the ICRC reaffirms its commitment to address the humanitarian needs of those directly or indirectly affected by the recent conflict, including displaced people and returnees.
<http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/sri-lanka-news-090709!OpenDocument>

THIRD ICRC STAFF MEMBER KILLED IN CONFLICT AREA

13-05-2009 News release 09/100, Geneva/Colombo (ICRC) – A staff member of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was killed by shrapnel today near Mullivaikal, in the coastal area held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

His mother died in the same incident, which occurred around noon. This is the third time in just over two months that an ICRC employee has been killed inside the conflict zone.

"We are deeply saddened by the news of the deaths of our friend and colleague Sivakurunathan Majuran and of his mother, and extend our heartfelt condolences to their family and friends," said Paul Castella, the ICRC's head of delegation in Colombo. "This latest tragic incident shows how dangerous it is for everyone in the area."

Mr Majuran was 31 years old. He began working for the ICRC in October 2005 as a member of the water and habitat team. He was married and the father of a five-year-old child. His wife and child are still in the conflict zone; their fate is currently unknown.

Two other ICRC water technicians, Vadivel Vijayakumar and Sinnathurai Kugathanan, who had been involved in ICRC evacuations of sick and wounded people from the conflict area, were killed by shrapnel on 4 March and on 8 April, respectively. The ICRC is striving to continue to bring food to people trapped in the conflict zone and to evacuate patients. However, intense and uninterrupted fighting prevented it from carrying out these life-saving activities yesterday and today, 12 and 13 May. A new attempt will be made tomorrow.
<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/sri-lanka-news-130509!OpenDocument>

CHILD FUND AUSTRALIA LAUNCHES APPEAL FOR CHILDREN IN SRI LANKA'S IDP CAMPS

26 August 2009 - ChildFund Australia has today launched a fundraising appeal for children trapped in Sri Lanka's internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. The money raised will be used to assist at least 3,000 children in Vavuniya in the country's north, where the majority of the displaced are located.

Currently, more than 300,000 people are confined to the camps, with no clear plans to resettle them. Children and their families are living in overcrowded conditions with little or no access to basic necessities or effective protection.

ChildFund Australia CEO Nigel Spence says: "These children are already traumatised by what they've endured in the conflict - hiding in trenches to escape shelling, seeing family members killed and witnessing the destruction of their homes. Now they are having to adjust to life in the camps where there is a severe lack of food, water, healthcare and sanitation, and little or no access to education.

"Children who have been orphaned or separated from their families are particularly vulnerable, facing an increased risk of malnutrition, disease, sexual exploitation, abduction and trafficking."

ChildFund Australia's affiliate in Sri Lanka was one of the first NGOs to gain access to the camps. Local staff have been distributing emergency relief items, such as water, clothing and hygiene kits, and have also begun implementing education, play, sports and trauma recovery activities for children. **(Excerpt)**
http://www.childfund.org.au/news/detail/index_html?content_id=735

18,000 STUDENTS YET TO BE PART OF TEMPORARY SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Sunday Times, 31 May 2009 - Over 18,000 schoolchildren who fled along with the last batches of civilians into government-controlled areas and are now in transit camps in Omanthai, Vavuniya, have yet not been absorbed into the temporary school system that has been put into operation by the Ministry of Education and the UNICEF.

"We need to put up temporary shelters for these students to carry on their learning and we hope to do that soon," Education Ministry Secretary Nimal Bandara told The Sunday Times.

According to him the government has allocated funds to put up ten more temporary structures costing nearly Rs. eight million in the IDP camps.

He said finding the necessary staff for these children would, not be a problem as there are over 3000 schoolteachers among the displaced people.

The programme by the UNICEF and the Education Ministry was launched to look into the education needs of 50,000 school children whose education was disrupted due to the final phase of the war in the north.

Mr. Bandara said the government has allocated Rs. 40 million to provide desks and chairs for both students and teachers and school uniforms for the displaced while temporary structures have been put up to carry on education activities for over 25,000 children whose schools in Vavuniya have been taken over by the government as temporary shelters for the Internally Displaced People (IDPs).

"We have provided material and infrastructure to carry on with the education of these students of Vavuniya without interruptions as much as possible," Mr. Bandara said.

In addition to this, 32,000 school children who came into the camps before May 15 have been provided with temporary learning facilities. Mr. Bandara said that the UNICEF distributed school kits for these children while the Ministry provided them with the necessary text books.

He said discussions were under way to bring back teachers who had got temporary appointments in Jaffna and Colombo due to security issues in the north.

WAR ORPHANS TO GET ORPHANAGES

PROBATION AND CHILD CARE SERVICES DEPARTMENT SEEKING THEIR EARLY RELEASE FROM CAMPS

As many as 441 children under the age of 18, living in camps, have been identified as orphans by the authorities, but the figure could be much higher, according to the Probation and Child Care Commissioner of the North, Arul Raj.

He said steps are being taken to entrust these children to the care of orphanages in the Northern Province. "We have made lists of children who have been identified as orphans and given the names to the authorities to get them released from the camps. We expect them to be released early next week so that we can make arrangements with the police to produce them in courts where the judges would recommend them to children's homes," he said.

According to Mr. Raj the children are now being cared for in 20 welfare centres within the camps where government administration officers and welfare officers are in-charge. Meanwhile Child Development and Women Empowerment Ministry Secretary M. Sumanadasa said they have been informed by the Thiruketheeswaram temple orphanage in Mannar that they could accommodate 300 children and the Probation

Commissioner has found orphanages for 210 children in Vavuniya district and 100 children can be accommodated in homes in Mannar. He said if the need arose the ministry was prepared to establish new permanent care centres outside of the camps.

“The Child Protection Authority has informed us that they are willing to give a four storied building to accommodate these orphaned children and we can provide the centre with trained care givers,” Mr. Sumanadasa said. Meanwhile children who are under the care of a relative or a guardian will be identified and those who wish could be legally handed over to the current caregivers or they could be accommodated in orphanages.

In normal circumstances a guardian is given Rs 500 a month for the care of a child but the Probation and Child Care Services Department is looking at the possibility of increasing this allowance. “Since these children are IDPs and the families who are taking care of them are also in a similar situation we would like to give a bigger amount. We are discussing the matter with UNICEF,” Mr. Raj said.

He also said 239 children have been identified as those who were in the care of orphanages in former LTTE controlled areas and a formal request has been made to the camp administration to release these children to the care of the Probation and Child Care Services Department. “Once they have been released from the camps we will produce them in courts and allocate them too to homes in the Northern Province,” he said.
http://sundaytimes.lk/090531/News/sundaytimesnews_49.html

FAMILIES TRAPPED IN SRI LANKA CAMPS FEAR FOR MISSING CHILDREN

(see page – 33)

PRESS FREEDOM

MEDIA BANNED FROM COVERING LOCAL ELECTIONS IN TWO NORTHERN CITIES

5 August 2009 - Reporters Without Borders is outraged by the Sri Lanka government’s decision on 3 August not to allow journalists into the northern cities of Vavuniya and Jaffna to cover the first local elections to be held since the defeat of the Tamil Tiger rebels earlier this year. All outsiders are being denied entry for “security” reasons.

“It is unacceptable that the government should impose such a ban on nothing more than the vaguest security grounds,” Reporters Without Borders said. “As well as violating the population’s fundamental rights by preventing them from circulating freely, this measure dashes any hope of a transparent election.”

The press freedom organisation added: “The government continues to violate press freedom while journalists are attacked with complete impunity, and both local and foreign newspapers are often censored. Death threats are made against local newspapers such as *Uthayan* and journalists continue to be killed and to disappear, but few investigations are launched and hardly any are successful. Sri Lankan journalists cannot go on working in such intolerable circumstances.”

Vavuniya and Jaffna, the cities where local elections are to be held on 8 August, have a Tamil majority and are near the areas formerly held by the Tamil rebels. No one is now allowed into the cities without permission from the defence ministry.

Lakshman Hulugalle, the head of the government’s security information centre, said journalists would not be able to visit the two cities and would have to rely on the information provided by the government.
http://www.rsf.org/spip.php?page=article&id_article=34082

ASSOCIATED PRESS CORRESPONDENT PENALISED FOR HIS WAR COVERAGE

22 July 2009 - Reporters Without Borders today called on the Sri Lankan government to give a more convincing explanation about its refusal to renew the press visa of the *Associated Press* correspondent in the country **Ravi Nessman**.

Nessman, an American national who has been based in Sri Lanka since 2007, was forced to leave the country on 20 July after his visa was not renewed.

Advisor to the head of state, Lucien Rajakarunanayake, said the refusal was because foreign correspondents were not allowed to stay in the country for more than two years, but one international media correspondent said he had never heard of this “rule”. A spokesman at the American news agency called the decision “very disturbing”

Nessman had a by-lined exclusive on a UN internal report drawing attention to the real toll of civilian victims of the conflict in the north and east of the country that ended when the Sri Lankan army defeated the Tamil Tigers in May 2009. The report seriously implicated top UN and government officials.

“News agencies have been some of the few media that managed to cover the bloody conflict in Sri Lanka independently. Now journalists are being unfairly punished for having written these reports,” the worldwide press freedom organisation said.

“After attacking human rights activists and doctors, the government is now taking it out on foreign journalists who reported on the suffering of the people. It’s extremely unfortunate,” the organisation added.

Reporters Without Borders has obtained information that at least eight foreign reporters or contributors to international media have been forced to leave the country because of threats from the authorities or their supporters since 1st January 2009. At least 30 Sri Lankan journalists have fled their country since the start of 2008. <http://www.rsf.org/Associated-Press-correspondent,33949.html>

ACCESS TO INDEPENDENT NEWS WEBSITE BLOCKED

13 July 2009 - Reporters Without Borders condemns the blocking of access to the independent *Lanka News Web* website (<http://www.lankanewsweb.com>) within Sri Lanka since 11 June. The site’s editors believe the blocking was prompted by a report posted earlier that day about President Mahinda Rajapakse’s son, Namal Rajapakse. The press freedom organisation also deplores Namal Rajapakse’s seizure of news media videos.

“The tension that already exists between the media and government in Sri Lanka will not be improved by blocking websites,” Reporters Without Borders said. “No one should be immune from press criticism, including members of the president’s family.”

Lanka News Web reported that, when visiting the Menik Farm Camp as head of the NGO, Tharunyata Hetak, the President’s son had stones thrown at him from persons violently opposed to his visit. Before leaving, he ensured that the video recordings of the incident were confiscated from the cameras of the media personnel accompanying him.

The *Lanka News Web* blocking is the latest evidence of a decline in freedom expression in Sri Lanka and comes two weeks after the revival of a Press Council that has the power to jail reporters and media executives. <http://www.rsf.org/Access-to-independent-news-website.html>

34 JOURNALISTS & MEDIA WORKERS KILLED DURING PRESENT GOVERNMENT RULE JOURNALISTS FOR DEMOCRACY IN SRI LANKA (JDS)

Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS) express its serious concern that even after government’s declaration of war victory and end of war, intimidations and harassments to media and journalists continue with increasing ferocity. People of Sri Lanka are deprived of their right to information and media and journalists are forced to practice unprecedented level of self censorship.

It is in this context JDS reports with anger and great sadness that thirty-four journalists and media workers have been killed with no recourse to justice since the present government was formed. **Out of 34 killed, three were Sinhala journalists, two Muslims and 29 were from the Tamil community.** A complete list of all journalists is attached herewith. In addition, 10 journalists and media workers were abducted. **Journalist Jeyaprakash Tissanayagam, his printer Vetrivel Jesiharan and Jesiharan’s wife Vadivel Valarmathi remain in custody since their arrest over a year ago.** These killings and abductions clearly demonstrate the culture of impunity that prevails in Sri Lanka.

The United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government came into power in April 2004 with the present President Mahinda Rajapaksa as its prime minister. Never before in the history of Sri Lanka have such a number of journalists and media workers been killed in such a short period of time.

During the same period, intimidations and threats against journalists and media increased unabated. This situation resulted **in more than 50 journalists leaving Sri Lanka fearing persecution.**

JDS supports the eleven point plan put forward by International Press Freedom Mission to redress the perilous press freedom environment in Sri Lanka and pledges to work with all democratic forces within and outside the country to achieve human and democratic rights for all peoples in Sri Lanka.

JDS calls upon the United Nations, governments and other international organisations to put pressure on the government of President Rajapaksha by taking all practical means at their disposal to end the culture of impunity and to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS) is an action group of journalists, writers, artists and human rights defenders who fled persecution in their country and convened in Europe in order to campaign for democracy, human rights and media freedom in Sri Lanka.

Executive Committee
Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka
26.08.2009

RECORDED LIST OF KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS

APRIL 2004 – MARCH 2009

2004

1. Aiyathurai A. Nadesan – Journalist / 31 May
2. Kandaswamy Aiyer Balanadaraj – Writer / 16 August
3. Lanka Jayasundera – Photo journalist / 11 December

2005

4. Dharmaratnam Sivaram – Editor / 28 April
5. Kannamuttu Arsakumar – Media worker/ 29 June
6. Relangee Selvarajah – Journalist / 12 August
7. D. Selvaratnam – Media worker/ 29 August
8. Yogakumar Krishnapillai – Media Worker / 30 September
9. L. M. Faleel (Netpittimunai Faleel) – Writer / 02 December
10. K. Navaratnam – Media worker / 22 December

2006

11. Subramaniam Suhirtharajan – Journalist / 24 January
12. S. T. Gananathan – Owner / 01 February
13. Bastian George Sagayathas – Media worker / 03 May
14. Rajaratnam Ranjith Kumar – Media worker / 03 May
15. Sampath Lakmal de Silva – Journalist / 02 July
16. Mariadasan Manojanraj – Media worker / 01 August
17. Pathmanathan Vismananthan – Singer and musician / 02 August
18. Sathasivam Baskaran – Media worker / 15 August
19. Sinnathamby Sivamaharajah – Media owner / 20 August

2007

20. S. Raveendran – Media worker / 12 February
21. Subramaniam Ramachandran – Media personnel / 15 February
22. Chandrabose Suthakar – Journalist / 16 April
23. Selvarasah Rajeevarman – Journalist / 29 April
24. Sahadevan Neelakshan – Journalist / 01 August
25. Anthonypillai Sherin Siththiranjana – Media worker / 05 November
26. Vadivel Nimalarajah – Media worker / 17 November
27. Isaivizhi Chempian (Subhajini) - Media worker / 27 November
28. Suresh Limbiyo – Media Worker / 27 November
29. T.Tharmalingam – Media Worker / 27 November

2008

30. Paranirupesingham Devakumar – Journalist / 28 May
31. Rasmi Mohamad – Journalist / 06 October

2009

32. Lasantha Wickrematunga - Editor / 08 January
33. Punniyamurthy Sathyamurthy – Journalist / 12 February
34. Sasi Mathan – Media worker / 06 March

<http://jdsrilanka.blogspot.com/2009/08/sri-lanka-thirty-four-journalists-media.html>

SRI LANKA - WITH END OF WAR, MEDIA SHIFTS FOCUS

COLOMBO, Aug 12 (IPS) - These days, the front pages of mainstream Sri Lankan newspapers are dominated by reports of clashes between two Muslim groups, the drama of two baby elephants separated from their mothers and government efforts to ban porn sites and curb adult-only movies. This shift in news focus is a radical departure from the days when newspapers were choked with war coverage.

"I think the clashes between two Muslim factions have been overplayed, maybe because there is no other news," said Mohamed Ameen, a veteran Sri Lanka journalist.

Since the end of a bloody Tamil rebel campaign for independence for the country's minority Tamils in May, Sri Lankan newspapers are struggling to fill the void created by the sudden end to war news.

"What do we report now? That's the question journalists are asking," said Ariyananda Dombagahawatte, Editor of the Sinhala-language, Sunday Lankadeepa, the country's largest selling newspaper with more than 350,000 copies.

"Who thought the LTTE (rebels) would be defeated or who imagined (Velupillai) Prabhakaran (the elusive rebel leader) would get killed? No one was prepared for that, least of all we journalists," he added.

For some 25 years – during the course of the battle between government troops and LTTE rebels – newspapers have been tailored on a diet of war news which took a chunk of 'Page 1'. Now newspapermen are struggling for fresh story ideas and new ways of attracting readers whose daily dose of war news is more or less off the pages.

The issue confronts more the vernacular media than the English language-press because Sinhala newspapers have a far wider reach in the country where the majority speak Sinhalese and have been supporting the military crackdown against the rebels. Thousands have died in the conflict since 1983.

Victor Ivan, Editor of the mainstream 'Ravaya', a Sinhala language newspaper, says journalists are confronted with a major challenge and believes the debate and discussion would now shift from the war to other issues like reform of the state, education, refugees, ethnic emotions, transport, parliament, election systems, the judiciary, and the sort.

"But in this new focus, the challenge means journalists have to read up more and be able to understand and analyse topics which are more complex unlike before when news was just a phone call away," he said.

Most reporters call their military contacts or media spokespersons in the military for stories which were mostly straightforward reporting of events or clashes, a problem one publisher said led to a drop in good investigative reporting.

"That is one of the problems we'll have – how to handle proper investigative reporting on corruption and other issues of public importance. Reporters in the past two decades were content with calling their contacts to reporting war and other related news," the publisher who owns a stable of newspapers and magazines in Sinhala and English said. He requested anonymity.

Newspaper reports on the war have varied over the years from high spurts during heavy battles in the war-front to low intensity particularly during peace talks between the government and the rebels. Sri Lanka's development, social and economic-news media changed sharply after July 1983 when minority Tamils were attacked, many killed and their properties destroyed by rampaging mobs from the majority Sinhalese community in the worst bout of ethnic unrest.

Even though the economy hasn't grown to its full potential due to the unrest and world opinion, the thirst for war news has led to a plethora of newspapers, radio and television stations against a handful in the early 1980s.

Editors from the English language press however say war news has not been their main priority. Sinha Ratnatunga, Editor of the Sunday Times, Sri Lanka's largest-selling independent English weekly, says there was a lot of interest in the war particularly during a period of fighting or a major incident and especially during the final military onslaught (earlier this year).

"But over the years we also balanced war related news with a lot of political news and other developments. War news was not exactly our staple diet," he said, referring to his newspaper.

He said with lots of elections due in the next few months, presidential and parliamentary polls included, reader interest will shift back to the politicians and that's what newspapers will be focusing on at least in the months ahead.

Defence correspondents, journalists who write weekly newspapers columns on military and war-related affairs, still focus on military matters but its more about how the war was won, new appointments and changes in the military hierarchy.

Sunday Lankadeepa editor Dombagahawatte says the news content cannot change overnight. "We need to keep running stuff on how the war was won for at least a few months and quietly shift gear. You can't do it immediately because this (thirst for war news) is what we created over the years. Trying to stop it now would be like suddenly stopping a man drinking water." He said he noticed a slight drop in the circulation of Sinhala language newspapers after the war ended in May for these reasons.

Chaturanga Perera, a Colombo business executive and vociferous reader of both English and Sinhala newspapers, says war and business news is normally what gets his attention. "Yes, there is a kind of vacuum created by the sudden drop in war news but I believe since we have been reading newspapers all our life, we will move with the changes in news content," he said.

Another veteran journalist, Siri Ranasinghe, Editor of the largest circulating Sinhala-language daily 'Lankadeepa', the sister paper of the Sunday Lankadeepa, says the vacuum created by no war news means newspapers have to look at new stories and what to report. "While normal crime news will be our focus, development news would get more play in newspapers now," he added.

Indeed this Sunday's newspapers were filled with clashes between Muslim groups in Beruwela, south of Colombo and other developments. Next week's polls in the north have also got a lot of play. There was only, just a few paragraphs about the discovery of a huge cache of weapons left behind by fleeing rebels. <http://www.theasiamediaforum.org/node/1562>
(END/2009)

ASSASSINATION OF LASANTHA WICKREMATUNGE

POLICE AGAIN FAIL TO SUBMIT REPORT

The Sunday Leader, 28 June 2009 - The police have so far failed to submit the investigation report into the murder of the Editor in Chief of *The Sunday Leader* Lasantha Wickrematunge.

When Wickrematunge's murder trial was taken up on Thursday, June 25 at the Mt. Lavinia Magistrate's Court, the Mirihana Police failed to turn up in courts although they had been ordered to submit the investigation report.

Police Spokesperson SSP Ranjith Gunasekera told *The Sunday Leader* that the investigation teams have not updated him on the present investigation progress and added that the investigation teams do not want to reveal the details to the media as it could hamper the ongoing investigation process.

The murder trial of Wickrematunge will be taken up again on July 9.

Meanwhile , the Freedom of the Press Committee in a letter last week to President Mahinda Rajapakse has said that they hoped the end of the civil war would be accompanied by a relaxation of the government's harsh and myopic treatment of Sri Lankan journalists.

The letter said, "U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, has called on your government to ensure the prosecution of those responsible for the murder of Lasantha Wickrematunge on January 8. He was editor-in-chief of the independent newspaper, *The Sunday Leader*, and had been outspokenly critical of government attacks on the press. In his last editorial, he foresaw his own death at the hands of the government."

Copies of the letter were also forwarded to Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake Mass Media Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe and Inspector General of Police Victor Perera among others.

<http://www.thesundayleader.lk/20090628/NEWS.HTM#Police>

STATEMENT BY SONALI SAMARASINGHE WICKREMATUNGE

Widow of Lasantha Wickrematunge, 2009 UNESCO World Press Freedom Laureate

World Press Freedom Day Conference in Doha , Qatar , 2009

"Your Highness, Mr Director-General, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of my late husband and fellow journalist, Lasantha Wickrematunge, I wish to thank you most sincerely for this great honour you have done him. Lasantha would have been so proud, so humbled, to have known that an august, independent, international jury of his peers had seen in him, a fit candidate to receive this prize.

On his behalf, and on behalf of fellow journalists worldwide who continue to risk life and liberty, to provide for us, all the freedoms we so cherish, from the bottom of my heart I thank you. His parents and his children will be so proud, to know of the recognition you have given their son, their father... as indeed am I, now his widow.

The fact that Lasantha is the second journalist to be honoured posthumously since this prize was created 12 years ago is testimony to the risk many journalists run in the pursuit of their calling. Two years ago you honoured Anna Politkovskaya, an unapologetic critic of military and political excess, who was brutally murdered in Moscow in October 2006.

The life trajectories of Anna and Lasantha bear bizarre similarities. They were both born in 1958. They were both courageous critics of state-sponsored violence and spoke fearlessly for human rights. They were both threatened with death over a period of years. They both suffered repeated attempts on their lives. And they both chose not to flee, but to stay on and fight to the end. They both knew full well that they would pay with their lives. And they both knew who their murderers would be.

But the fate that befell Anna and Lasantha is not an isolated one. In Sri Lanka , it has become the norm for journalists to be killed in the pursuit of their profession. **No less than 16 dissident media professionals have been assassinated - all of them in commando-style attacks-since President Mahinda Rajapakse took office in November 2005.** That is about one in every two months. Presses and television stations have been destroyed in these raids, as indeed have the newspapers Lasantha and I edited.

Apart from those who have lost their lives, we need to remember also those journalists who languish in Sri Lankan prisons with no charge or with only the flimsiest and most childish of contrived charges pressed against them. In other cases, false charges are levelled so as to harass dissenting journalists.

Dozens of journalists-including myself-have been forced to flee Sri Lanka. I have no doubt that should I return to Sri Lanka, my remaining days would be few indeed.

Other journalists have been threatened personally by the president or his brothers, three of whom he has elevated to high public office.

Indeed, **on 11 January 2006 Lasantha too, was personally threatened by President Rajapaksa.**

The free Sri Lanka in which I was born no longer exists. Our country has entered a Dark Age characterized by tyranny and state-sponsored terror, where the government publicly, cynically and unapologetically equates democratic dissent to treason. The sinister white van in which the state abducts its perceived enemies including journalists, many of them never to be seen again, has become a symbol of untold dread. Yet, we need to remember that violence against journalists is only the tip of the iceberg. ***Tens of thousands of ordinary Sri Lankan civilians - men, women, children, and the aged-have been herded into concentration camps where they are held against their will. There they languish in the most horrible of conditions, trapped behind barbed-wire fences and beneath the radar of a world which, perhaps rightly, is more concerned with the arguably greater tragedies unfolding in places such as Darfur.***

But what has been their crime?

They belong to an ethnic minority living in an area infested by the Liberation Tigers, one of the most murderous terrorist organizations the world has ever seen. The Tamil civilians of Sri Lanka 's north are caught in a vice-like grip between LTTE terrorism on the one side and state terrorism on the other. And I use that word advisedly, for the Sri Lankan government is perhaps the only one on this planet that persists in bombing its own civilian citizenry.

That this is a racist war is not a secret. I would not go so far as to use the word genocide, but it would not surprise me to see it used in future international legal action against the government. At any rate, the government itself has plastered the countryside with enormous placards lauding the military with the slogan, in Sinhala, the language of the Sinhalese majority to which I too, belong, stating: "Soldiers, our race salutes you!" Not "the people", not "the country", but the race. And all these placards exhibit the stated provenance of the Ministry of Defence or other government institutions.

Interestingly, none of these hoardings are in Tamil, the language of the people the government claims it is seeking to liberate.

I make this point because it is urgent and important that the world realizes what is happening in Sri Lanka before it is too late.

To the readers of the newspaper he edited he left a final message. And I would like to leave you with my husbands' last words.

"We have espoused unpopular causes, stood up for those too feeble to stand up for themselves", he wrote. "We have made sure that whatever the propaganda of the day, you were allowed to hear a contrary view. **For this I -and my family- have now paid the price that I have long known I will one day have to pay.** I am - and have always been - ready for that. I have done nothing to prevent this outcome: no security, no precautions. I want my murderer to know that I am not a coward like he is, hiding behind human shields while condemning thousands of innocents to death. What am I among so many? It has long been written that my life would be taken, and by whom. All that remains to be written is when."

Thank you."

Sonali Samarasinghe Wickrematunge
Widow of Lasantha Wickrematunge, Editor Sunday Leader
(Excerpt)

<http://www.nowpublic.com/world/lasantha-receives-unesco-world-press-freedom-prize-2009>

PERSECUTED

Editorial

The Sunday Leader, 28 June 2009 - I firmly believe that journalists who report the facts as they are known are not subversives. When reporters can work and report freely, society is not threatened. In fact it is made stronger and more confident.

On Thursday, June 25, all the local newspapers of Jaffna that defied publishing an anonymous and defiling notice against the LTTE came under attack by an armed group in the early hours. The notice was brought out in the name of 'Tamil Front Protecting the Country' allegedly linked to a paramilitary group operating within Colombo. Thousands of copies of the local newspapers, **Valampuri, Uthayan and Thinakkural (Jaffna edition)**, were burnt in huge flames by an armed group at Aanaippanthi and Kannathiddi junctions at 5 a.m. Thursday, while the newspapers were being taken for distribution. The distribution workers were also brutally attacked.

Again on Thursday a freelance contributor who wrote the astrological column in our sister paper the *Irudina* was taken in by the CID and questioned for over 24 hours. His crime, allegedly predicting a bad period for the government and a good period for Opposition Leader, Ranil Wickremesinghe. A prediction, one would think, that only Ranil Wickremesinghe would have believed.

It appears that anyone believed or suspected of conveying messages that are critical of the government are not only "traitors" but "terrorists" too. Government ministers have not ceased to use inflammatory language against journalists and media institutions. This has led to widespread self-censorship among journalists in order to protect their lives.

For example, **Iqbal Athas, Defence Correspondent for The Sunday Times** says he stopped writing his weekly column as a result of threats. Athas also reports from Colombo for CNN and is a correspondent for *Jane's Defence Weekly*.

Even if this government is not directly responsible for the attacks on journalists, it has created the conditions for such persecution with impunity. Government spokesmen continue their attacks on journalists naming them as "traitors" and "security risks."

It was in February this year that Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake in a local TV news bulletin referring to the prospect of capturing the LTTE leader alive said, **that if Prabhakaran had been a "girl" the soldiers could have "touched" or "fiddled with" her body!** What is absolutely frightening here is that not only is the Prime Minister of the country in a position to make comments of this nature in public but that no one seems to have seen anything wrong in the Prime Minister's remarks.

This is the crux of the matter. Civil society in this country is dead. The main opposition United National Party is yet to awake from the long snooze it is in. There is a general sense of apathy – the majority stakeholders in this country will do nothing to ensure that freedom of expression, democratic rights, fundamental and human rights are protected.

In this backdrop, no journalist perceived to be contradicting the work of the Establishment will be tolerated. Even if such contradictions lead towards a better, more stable and peaceful society.

This maybe the practice in lands such as Israel, whose cruelty in anti-Palestine offensives is well known to the world. In the post 9-11 context, the fight against terrorism and the concern over national and international security have resulted in detention centres, torture chambers, sexual abuse of prisoners and many other brutal violations of basic human rights.

If we are to look for comparisons, military reporting all through the Iraq war was identical to war reporting in Sri Lanka. Any alternative voice or voice of dissent was never tolerated.

We could only surmise that this government best understood the rash strategies of the war against terrorism adopted by the former Bush administration.

We can only hope that they did not forget to look at what happened thereafter. There were repercussions, the benefits of which are being reaped today in the United States of America. **(Excerpt)**

<http://www.thesundayleader.lk/20090628/editorial-.htm>

US RAPS SRI LANKA OVER JOURNALIST'S JAIL SENTENCE TO 20 YEARS

WASHINGTON (AFP), 31 August 2009 - The United States criticized Sri Lanka Monday for sentencing to 20 years in prison a Tamil reporter whose case has been highlighted by US President Barack Obama.

"We were disappointed to learn of the verdict and the severity of the sentence," State Department deputy spokesman Robert Wood said after a court handed down the sentence against J.S. Tissanayagam.

"We continue to be concerned about the state of media freedom in Sri Lanka. Journalists remain under threat and consequently continue to practice self-censorship," he added.

"We will continue to follow Tissainayagam's case closely as it proceeds through the appeals process," Wood said in an email exchange with AFP.

"We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to do everything it can to ensure Tissainayagam's health and safety in prison," he added.

Tissanayagam, 45, who contributed to the local Sunday Times and ran a website, Outreachsl.com, that focused on the island's minority Tamils, was found guilty on three counts under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

A court official said he was ordered to do 20 years of hard labour in jail.

He was found guilty on charges of receiving money from the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to fund his website and causing racial hatred through his writings about Tamils affected by the conflict.

Obama mentioned Tissanayagam in his May 1 World Press Freedom day statement describing him as an "emblematic example" of a journalist who was being persecuted for doing his work. Sri Lanka said Obama had been misinformed.

http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/afp/090831/usa/srilanka_unrest_media_press_freedom_us_1

SRI LANKA JUDGES CONFUSE JUSTICE WITH REVENGE

Reporters Without Borders, 31 August 2009 - "The imposition of this extremely severe sentence on Tissanayagam suggests that some Sri Lanka judges confuse justice with revenge," Reporters Without Borders said. "With the help of confessions extracted by force and information that was false or distorted, the court has used an anti-terrorism law that was intended for terrorists, not for journalists and human rights activists." (Excerpt) http://www.rsf.org/spip.php?page=article&id_article=34343

WAR CRIMES

SRI LANKA - WHAT KIND OF "VICTORY"?

17 May 2009 - Written by: Andrew Stroehlein

Reuters and AlertNet are not responsible for the content of this article or for any external internet sites. The views expressed are the author's alone.

After months of battle, government forces tightening an ever constricting noose around the Tamil Tigers seem to have finally beaten the rebel group. Still, deep concerns remain for tens of thousands of civilians caught up in the fighting.

The Tigers' "international representative", Kumaran Padmanathan, has been quoted conceding defeat, though fighting is still probably continuing in small pockets where some groups of fighters remain. The Sri Lankan government released a press statement yesterday saying that all the civilians were out of the conflict zone.

But that is a strange and very worrying claim. In recent days, the UN had been estimating that 50,000 to 80,000 civilians were still trapped. What has happened to them? The UN's description of a "**blood bath**" last weekend could be an understatement. The US may have fresh satellite images that could help answer the question.

Whatever the case, there are surely hundreds or even thousands of injured people -- civilians and non-civilians -- in desperate need of evacuation and medical treatment. The ICRC needs to be granted full access to the region immediately to treat and evacuate any survivors. This was previously prevented by the government on security grounds, but the authorities have no excuses now if, as they say, the military operation is over.

Of the civilians who are already in the government's care, the cases of four individuals in particular need to be highlighted. They were government-employed health workers in the conflict zone trying to help treat the wounded to the very end. Unfortunately, the government also suspects them of providing information from inside the zone to international journalists and others over the past months -- including evidence of government shelling of areas with large concentrations of non-combatants, which may constitute a war crime.

Doctors Varatharajah and Shanmugarajah, and Dr. T. Sathiyamurthy, the regional director of Health Services in Kilinochchi, are currently believed to be in custody at Omanthai. Also at risk is the Additional District Secretary from Kilinochchi, who is now in one of the internment camps in Vavuniya. The ICRC has apparently not been allowed access to them.

Some have said that the army's attacks on medical facilities in recent weeks were a deliberate attempt to silence these individuals. True or not, the government's history of disappearing its critics gives cause enough to fear for the lives of these individuals now in their custody.

<http://www.alertnet.org/db/blogs/3159/2009/04/17-200024-1.htm>

FAMILIES TRAPPED IN SRI LANKA CAMPS FEAR FOR MISSING CHILDREN

The Independent, 22 May 2009 - Up to a fifth of refugee Tamil children have been lost or abducted, reports Andrew Buncombe from Colombo

In a world where people had lost everything, she held up the photograph as if it were the most precious thing imaginable. It showed a young boy, no more than three years old, dressed in a blue and white outfit. It was Shanmugam Saraswathi's grandson Manimaran, and she had no idea where he was. "Please help me find him," she said, as she held up the picture.

Ms Saraswathi -- a Tamil civilian who fled the war zone in Sri Lanka's north and is now being held at a refugee camp near the city of Vavuniya -- is not alone. Aid agencies fear that hundreds of children have become separated from their parents in the chaos that followed the escape of up to 300,000 people from the last land controlled by the LTTE rebels. There are even allegations -- denied by the government -- that a number of children have been abducted from the camps by paramilitaries who enjoy tacit support from the authorities.

Ms Saraswathi, who had been in the camp for three weeks, said that Manimaran's mother, father and elder sister had been killed in the fighting and that the last she had heard of her grandson was that he was being cared for by a neighbour. Now she was losing hope of ever seeing him again.

With journalists prevented by the authorities from reaching the camps except on occasional, escorted visits, Ms Saraswathi's story was passed to The Independent by a trusted intermediary. "I don't know where he is," she added, standing in the playground of the school. As she spoke another half-dozen women gathered nearby, each with their own photograph, each with their own, similar story. It is impossible to estimate how many families have become dislocated as they wait in the refugee camps, surrounded by razor wire and from which they are unable to leave. A report by Save the Children suggested a fifth of all children were either missing or separated from one or both of their parents.

The charity said that while the Sri Lankan government had taken some measures to reunite such families, the situation remained dire. "The influx of people into the government camps was so large and so fast that I've come across hundreds of children who have lost their parents along the way," Stein Lied, a protection officer, said recently. "The running was so panicked that I've even met a lactating mother who lost her newborn as she was escaping."

Concern about such children mounted yesterday as another NGO alleged there was persuasive evidence that teenagers were being abducted from the camps by paramilitary groups. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers said it had received verified reports of abductions from camps in Vavuniya. It said several paramilitary groups, including the Eelam People's Democratic Party and People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam, apparently had unhindered access to the camps. It claimed that humanitarian workers said that most of the abductions have happened at night when there is less security.

The government staunchly denied the accusations yesterday. Mahinda Samarasinghe, the Minister for Disaster Management and Human Rights, said: "That is not correct. We have the responsibility for the protection [of people] in the camps."

Mr Samarasinghe said while there had been an initial problem of children being separated from their families, the issue was now being addressed and that around 3,000 families had now been reunited. He said telephones and databases had been set up at the camps to help families. He also said attention had been addressed to the problem of the flood of refugees overwhelming emergency medical facilities. "I'm not too proud to say that we can improve, but we are working on things together with our international partners," he added.

Meanwhile, the government said it planned to return most of the nearly 300,000 civilians to their homes by the end of the year. After visiting Indian ministers met President Mahinda Rajapaksa to express their concerns about the humanitarian situation, a joint statement was released saying the government had a 180-day plan to resettle the majority. Earlier in the week a government spokesman conceded that some of the refugees could be held for up to two years.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/families-trapped-in-sri-lanka-camps-fear-for-missing-children-1689240.html>

IS THIS EVIDENCE OF SRI LANKAN 'WAR CRIMES'?

Updated on 25 August 2009

By Jonathan Miller

Channel 4 News shows footage claimed to show Sri Lankan forces executing Tamils earlier this year. Jonathan Miller reports.

Just three months after the Sri Lankan government declared the country liberated from the Tamil Tigers, video footage has emerged apparently showing government troops summarily executing Tamils.

Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka, which obtained the material, said it was filmed in January - when the international media were prevented by the Sri Lankan government from covering the conflict zone.

Tonight, the Sri Lankan High Commission denied the government had carried out atrocities against the Tamil community.

The Sri Lankan government launched a large scale military offensive in January capturing the Tamil Tiger held town of Kilinochchi. The army then steadily pushed the rebels into an small area of the north-east.

Be warned - there are extremely disturbing scenes in this report from our foreign affairs correspondent Jonathan Miller.

Sri Lanka High Commission response

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

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

http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/world/asia_pacific/is+this+evidence+of+sri+lankan+aposwar+crimesapo/s/3321087

NAKED, BOUND AND SHOT HOW 'TAMIL REBEL' WAS KILLED BY SRI LANKAN SOLDIER

The Times, 26 August 2009 - The man is young, naked, bound and blindfolded; a corpse lying across his legs. A soldier approaches him in what appears to be Sri Lankan army uniform and shoots him at point-blank range, apparently amused at the death. "It's like he jumped," he says.

The footage, released last night, appears to show what the Tamil community and human rights campaigners have long alleged: that in its final surge against the Tamil Tiger rebels this year, the Sri Lankan Army summarily killed prisoners. Channel 4, which broadcast the video, says that it was recorded by a Sri Lankan soldier on his mobile phone in January, when government forces overwhelmed the stronghold of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) at Kilinochchi.

After the murder the video, taken in daylight, pans out to show eight bound corpses, all shot in the head and all but one naked. Voices in the background speak Sinhalese; as the footage concludes, viewers see a ninth bound victim shot. The capture of Kilinochchi was a milestone in the army's final push against the Tamil Tigers, which triumphantly concluded a 27-year war in May. But by January, when the video was allegedly filmed, foreign and most local journalists had been banned from the conflict zone.

NGOs and overseas observers were also largely kept away, meaning that the timing and location of the video are virtually impossible to verify. Channel 4 said that the video was smuggled out of Sri Lanka in the past two days by a group called Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka, which has previously issued statements through the Asian Human Rights Commission. Within moments of the video being posted online, Sri Lankans reported that they were unable to access the Channel 4 website.

The Tamil Tigers fought for nearly three decades for a separate homeland in Sri Lanka, using suicide bombers, child recruits and soldiers trained to swallow cyanide rather than be caught.

As the end of the war approached, the Government was accused of almost equally brutal tactics including, according to the United Nations and documents leaked to *The Times* in May, a share in the deaths of up to 20,000 civilians under mortar fire. It and the Tigers have used the news blackout surrounding the war to claim that accusations against them are fabricated.

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

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

Reports in May said that government soldiers killed two high-profile Tigers, Balasingham Nadesan, the head of the LTTE political wing, and Seevaratnam Pulidevan, who led its peace secretariat, as they approached bearing a white flag and having asked by text message to surrender. The body of the Tigers' leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was shown on government video having been shot in the head. The Government, described by Amnesty International as "trapping the country in a vicious cycle of abuse and impunity", has also been held responsible for murders beyond the battlefield such as the killing of Lasantha Wickrematunge, an anti-government journalist shot dead in Colombo in January.

In a posthumously published editorial, Wickrematunge said that the Sri Lankan President and Government would be responsible for his death.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6809968.ece#cid=OTC-RSS&attr=797084>

SRI LANKA WAR CRIMES EERILY SIMILAR TO SREBRENICA SCORPIONS' TERROR

PROF FRANCIS BOYLE

26 August 2009 - Summary executions violate Common Article 3 to the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949, to which Sri Lanka is a contracting Party, prohibiting in subsection 1(d) "... the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court...." Violations of the Geneva Conventions are war crimes, said Professor Francis Boyle, after watching the video on the cold-blooded extra-judicial killings carried out by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers, published by a German-based group 'Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS)' Tuesday.

"We have a video of the same being done to Bosnians at Srebrenica by Serbia's 'Scorpions,' which I viewed with one of the few male survivors while in the killing fields of Srebrenica itself," Boyle added, continuing: "Of course the Scorpion executions were just a small element of the Serbian genocide at Srebrenica."

A video of Serb paramilitary soldiers Scorpions, caught in the act of murdering six Bosnian Muslim youths in July 17, 1995, near the town of Trnovo, Srebrenica, discovered 10 years later, shocked Serbia and led to the arrest and later conviction of the soldiers. The six Muslim men and boys were forced to lie down with their hands tied before being shot in the back by their captors. Two of the victims were 17, while the others were in their 20s and 30s. A Belgrade war-crimes court sentenced four Scorpions to a total of 58-years in prison.

The New York Times reporting on the story on the 6-person massacre by the Scorpions, said: "The faces of the perpetrators can be seen and their insults to the Muslims can be heard. The film was shot by a Scorpions member."

In remarkable eerie similarity with the SLA crimes, the SLA terror video was also obtained by an SLA soldier using a mobile-phone camera, and the SLA soldiers are also heard spewing insults to the naked Tamil prisoners. "Scorpions, however, did not strip and then murder the Bosnians in the nude. But the GOSL Army did exactly that, which is even more akin to what the Nazis did to the Jews, depriving their victims of the last shred of their humanity before dying," Boyle observed.

On the disappearances inside internment camps, the press release issued by the JDS said: "The Sri Lankan government justifies the internment of approximately 280,000 Tamil people, for over three months now, on the basis that they are 'screening' for LTTE cadres. These camps still remain out of bounds for independent media and human rights observers. Apart from these known camps, it is widely believed that there are over 10,000 Tamils held in undisclosed locations. Further, as a recent BBC report reveals the interned Tamils have to regularly experience the trauma of the appearance of the 'dolphin vans' in the camps – as these whisk away people – *who then disappear.*"

Commenting on the disappearances, Boyle said, "when the enforced disappearances are "widespread" or "systematic" they become Crimes against Humanity under the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court," adding: "Crimes against Humanity are the precursor to genocide, just as Hitler and the Nazis did to the Jews--I also visited Dachau."

The Scorpions (Škorpioni) were a Serbian paramilitary group which actively sought out the extermination of other ethnicities in the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. The unit was formed in 1991 in what was then the breakaway Croatian Serb Republic of Serbian Krajina. The Scorpion leader was Slobodan Medić. (*Courtesy*)

UN FACES FIERCE CLASH OVER CALL FOR SRI LANKA WAR CRIMES INQUIRY CATHERINE PHILIP IN COLOMBO

The Times, 26 May 2009 - Sri Lanka is to clash with Western powers at the United Nations Human Rights Council today in an effort to ward off any investigation into alleged war crimes committed during its military offensive against the Tamil Tigers.

The country has marshalled a team of powerful allies led by China, Russia and India to fight off a European-backed resolution at today's special session on Sri Lanka calling for an inquiry into abuses on both sides of the conflict.

Observers at yesterday's preliminary meeting in Geneva, which was described as acrimonious, said that the 47-member Council was divided over the European resolution, with 18 countries for and 18 against. The other nine are undecided. The division sets the stage for a session today that will test the very purpose of the Human Rights Council. Israel, which had an investigation into its Gaza offensive forced on to it by the Council, is furious at the prospect of Sri Lanka escaping the same fate.

The European resolution that Sri Lanka is aiming to defeat has already drawn the ire of human rights groups for failing to push for an international war crimes inquiry. It calls on the Sri Lanka Government to conduct its own investigation into breaches of international law and allow unfettered access to camps where more than 200,000 displaced Tamil civilians are detained. Sri Lanka has submitted a counter-resolution, sponsored by at least 14 allies, in which it praises its own Government for liberating civilians and urges the international community to offer it more financial assistance.

The two competing agendas clashed in the preliminary meeting when an Asian bloc led by India, Pakistan and Malaysia argued for today's special session to be abandoned altogether. India, China and Egypt walked out of the meeting after this was refused. Sri Lanka goes into today's meeting backed by powerful new allies such as China, which provided much of the military hardware for the final offensive that defeated the Tamil Tigers last week after a 25-year war. The Tigers formally acknowledged yesterday that their leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, was among the dead.

Several undecided countries, including Chile and Mexico, are pressing for a compromise resolution incorporating elements of both drafts. Whichever resolution makes it to a vote must be passed by a simple majority. Unlike on the UN Security Council, no country can veto a resolution. Observers said that the outcome was "still in play", due in part, to the lack of independent assessments about the situation in Sri Lanka.

The Government's decision to ban all journalists, aid workers and other independent observers from the conflict zone and restrict access to the camps where displaced Tamil civilians have been detained has meant that information about what happened has been slow to emerge. *The Times* was among the first small group of journalists to see the "no-fire zone" on Saturday while accompanying Ban Ki Moon, the UN Secretary-General, on a helicopter flight. Afterwards Mr Ban said that the sight was the most appalling scene he had come across in his long international career. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article6361091.ece>

'SHELLS LIKE RAIN': PRIEST DESCRIBES SRI LANKA 'NO-FIRE' ZONE

CathNews, 26 May 2009 - A Sri Lankan priest, Fr Amalraj, who was caught with his parishioners in the so-called "no-fire zone", has described army shelling as like rain and also accused the LTTE of killing people in the last week of the just concluded civil war.

The area where Fr Amalraj and his parishioners were trapped is a scene of such utter devastation that it mocks its very name, *The Times* reports. "There was heavy shelling from the army side. The LTTE shot people. The army were trying to capture us," Fr Amalraj told the paper.

"The people were caught in between in the last moment for the LTTE and the crucial point in the battle, for the army. I cannot say which side was crueller." Fr Amalraj and his parishioners had been on the run since November, when they had fled their village. They had kept one step ahead of the advancing front, but were trapped in the end on a narrow strip of land on the eastern side of the Nanthikadal lagoon, north of Mullaitivu, in February, soon after it was designated as the "no-fire zone".

"The shelling was just like raining," he said. "Within this two square kilometres there were more than 100,000 people, packed in and shells raining down." The UN believes that between 8000 and 10,000 civilians have died in the conflict since the beginning of this year.

But Fr Amalraj says he thinks the total is about 20,000." Now the priest and his people are trapped again behind barbed wire in a camp known as Mannik Farm. "The concentration camps of the Second World War are here in Sri Lanka," Fr Amalraj said. Among those being held in camps are 20 Catholic priests who stayed with those trapped in the conflict zone until the resistance was finally wiped out this week.

"They were inside bunkers with the civilians until the army came and rescued them after the killing of [Tamil Tiger] leaders," Fr Damian Fernando, the spokesman for Caritas, said. One priest who was inside the conflict zone was still unaccounted for, he said. <http://www.cathnews.com/article.aspx?aeid=13992>

TAMIL PEOPLE VICTIMIZED BY THE SRI LANKA AUTHORITIES
PROF ELIE WIESEL - NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE, (1986)

30 June 2009 - Wherever minorities are being persecuted we must raise our voices to protest. According to reliable sources, the Tamil people are being disenfranchised and victimized by the Sri Lanka authorities. This injustice must stop. The Tamil people must be allowed to live in peace and flourish in their homeland.

SIX INTERNATIONAL NGOS WRITE TO PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

THE CARTER CENTER

FREEDOM HOUSE

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

ILHR - INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

PHR - PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

JBI - JACOB BLAUSTEIN INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

June 18, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We, representing several human rights organizations, are writing to express our deep concern about the situation in Sri Lanka and urge you to take immediate steps to address the dire human rights and humanitarian situation in that country.

Since December, during the last phase of intense fighting, tens of thousands of civilians have been killed, injured or displaced. Independent observers and media were denied access to the conflict zone. Three medical doctors who were providing independent information were arrested and held incommunicado. Even after the government claimed military victory, it denied access to camps and to the former safe zone where the final battle took place.

Despite repeated warnings by several international organizations of impending mass killings of civilians and despite strong statements of concern by you and several other world leaders, more than 20,000 civilians are reported to have been killed. ***The Times of London and Le Monde have published investigations, based on reliable data, and suggested that most of the civilian deaths were caused as a result of shelling by the Sri Lankan government.*** Thousands more were injured and the International Committee of the Red Cross was prevented by the Sri Lankan government for providing medical assistance resulting in many more civilian deaths.

The failure of the international community to take concrete action to protect civilians in Sri Lanka has given the green light to regimes around the world and has signalled that there is nothing that the international community will do when a government kills its own people under the cover of sovereignty.

It is now imperative that the United States assume the leadership necessary to mobilize the international community to protect the surviving civilians and to hold accountable those responsible for mass atrocities. Failure to do so would encourage governments to commit mass atrocities without fear of consequence. That is why your immediate action is important at this juncture.

We appeal to you to take steps to urgently address the plight of those in de facto internment camps and to initiate action to hold accountable those responsible for the mass killings. There are reports that some in the camps have already died from starvation or malnutrition. The United Nations Human Rights Council has called for an emergency meeting on Sri Lanka, but a UN resolution calling for immediate and unrestricted access to the camps failed, leaving individuals there still at risk.

Plight of those in the camps

Over three hundred thousand persons who fled the conflict zone are held in government run "internment camps." Unrestricted humanitarian aid to those held in the camps will make the difference between life and death, and yet access for the UN and NGOs to the camps continues to be hampered by the government. According to Ms. Magdalena Sepulveda, who delivered a statement on May 26, 2009, on behalf of all UN Special Procedures mandate holders: "The Government of Sri Lanka, citing security concerns, after three months continues to detain in temporary camps the more than 300,000 men, women and children who escaped fighting. This gives rise to concerns of arbitrary detention. Many have endured months of terrible conditions in the conflict zone before their present internment...We deplore that in the camps some have already died from starvation or malnutrition." According to Amnesty International, there are consistent reports of widespread and serious human rights violations facing the displaced people, including enforced disappearance, extrajudicial executions, torture and other ill-treatment, forced recruitment by paramilitary groups and sexual violence.

Sri Lankan government has misled the international community by consistently stating that there are no more than 70,000 to 100,000 civilians at risk. This is despite statements by the UN and international organizations that **there are around 250,000 civilians at risk**. Now, with the civilians out of the conflict zone, more accurate number of over **300,000** came to light.

Need for International Commission of Inquiry

Human rights organizations have documented serious violations of international humanitarian law by both the Sri Lankan government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during this period. Despite repeated denials, government forces repeatedly shelled densely populated areas, including ***at least 30 attacks on hospitals, in the government declared "no-fire area" where it had urged civilians to take shelter***. The LTTE violated laws of war by using civilians as human shields and by using lethal force to prevent their escape. Three Sri Lankan doctors who provided detailed information about government shelling and civilian casualties in the conflict zone to outside media and human rights organizations have also been detained merely for fulfilling their ethical duties to their patients, in a clear violation of the rules of medical neutrality.

The situation for civilians was made worse by the Sri Lanka government's inadequate delivery of relief supplies and the government's refusal to grant access to the region for aid agencies as required by international humanitarian law.

The Sri Lankan government's record on investigating serious human rights abuses is poor and impunity has been a persistent problem. There have been serious ongoing violations of human rights ***and a backlog of cases of enforced disappearance and unlawful killings that run to tens of thousands***, as described for example, in the 2008 Human Rights Watch report "Recurring Nightmare." Despite this track record, there have been only a small number of prosecutions.

Past efforts to address violations through the establishment of ad hoc mechanisms in Sri Lanka, such as presidential commissions of inquiry have produced few results, either in providing information or in leading to prosecutions. To address abuses associated with the recent fighting, there is an urgent need for an independent, international commission of inquiry into many credible allegations of laws of war violations, including possible war crimes, by both sides, as well as illegitimate detentions.

Mr. President, we urge you ***to publicly call for an international commission of inquiry*** and to take necessary steps to achieve it. We also urge you to take steps for the full protection of internally displaced persons, including independent access to camps, former areas of conflict and to conflict-affected civilians by humanitarian and human rights organizations and the media.

Sincerely,

Mr. Larry Cox, Executive Director

Amnesty International USA

Ms. Karin Ryan, Director, Human Rights Program

The Carter Center

Ms. Jennifer Windsor, Executive Director

Freedom House

Mr. Robert Arsenault, President

International League for Human Rights

Ms. Felice D. Gaer, Director

Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

Mr. A. Frank Donaghue, Chief Executive Officer

Physicians for Human Rights

Cc: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton
US Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice

Betsy Hawkings, Coordinator • Human Rights Leadership Coalition • 600 Pennsylvania Ave, SE 5th Floor,
Washington, DC 20003 • (T) 202.544.0200 • (F) 202.546.7142 • bhawkings@aiusa.org

SRI LANKA URGED TO PROBE THE MURDER OF TAMIL MPS

By Lisa Schlein

Voice of America, Geneva, 01 July 2009 - The Inter-Parliamentary Union is calling on the government of Sri Lanka to mount a thorough investigation of the murders of three Members of Parliament, two of them Tamils. The IPU's Human Rights Committee, which has wrapped up its latest session, has examined cases of abuse of some 300 MPs in 29 countries.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union says the Sri Lankan government no longer has any reason for not investigating the murders of the Parliamentarians now that its long-running civil war with the Tamil Tiger rebels is over.

Chair of the IPU's Human Rights Committee, Canadian Senator, Sharon Carstairs, says the government has always maintained it was unable to investigate the murders because they occurred in rebel-held territory. She says that excuse no longer exists.

She tells VOA, Tamil Parliamentarians are subject to arbitrary arrest, harassment and intimidation. She says her Committee is concerned about the situation of 12 Tamil Parliamentarians. She says they essentially have been stripped of their rights of freedom of movement and of their ability to perform their legislative duties.

She says the Tamil Parliamentarians are reluctant to leave the capital, Colombo, because their security is not guaranteed.

"So, there is great fear among the Tamil Parliamentarians," Carstairs said. "So, what we hope from Sri Lanka at this point is to get a new signal from them that Tamil Parliamentarians will have freedom of movement, they will have adequate security, they will be full participants of the government of Sri Lanka because they are duly elected Parliamentarians." **(Excerpt)**

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-07-01-voa47.cfm?rss=asia>

STATEMENT BY HEAD OF STATES AND VVIPs

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For immediate release April 24, 2009
STATEMENT ON CONTINUING CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA

The United States is deeply concerned about the plight of innocent civilians caught up in the conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers, and the mounting death toll. We call on both sides to stop fighting immediately and allow civilians to safely leave the combat zone.

We call upon the Government of Sri Lanka to stop shelling the "safe zone" and blocking international aid groups and media from accessing those civilians who have managed to escape. International aid workers should have access to all sites where internally displaced persons are being registered and sheltered. The United States is working with international partners to attempt to care for those civilians who can be reached.

We call on both sides to strictly adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law. We are very concerned about reports of violations, and take these allegations very seriously.

It would compound the current tragedy if the military end of the conflict only breeds further enmity and ends hopes for reconciliation and a unified Sri Lanka in the future.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-on-Continuing-Conflict-in-Sri-Lanka/

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release **May 1, 2009**
STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT IN HONOUR OF WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

World Press Freedom Day is annually observed on May 3 to remind us all of the vital importance of this core freedom. It is a day in which we celebrate the indispensable role played by journalists in exposing abuses of power, while we sound the alarm about the growing number of journalists silenced by death or jail as they attempt to bring daily news to the public.

Although World Press Freedom Day has only been celebrated since 1993, its roots run deep in the international community. In 1948, as people across the globe emerged from the horrors of the Second World War, nations saw fit to enshrine in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights the fundamental principle that everyone "has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Even as the world recognizes the central and indisputable importance of press freedom, journalists find themselves in frequent peril. Since this day was first celebrated some sixteen years ago, 692 journalists have been killed. Only a third of those deaths were linked to the dangers of covering war; the majority of victims were local reporters covering topics such as crime, corruption, and national security in their home countries. Adding to this tragic figure are the hundreds more each year who face intimidation, censorship, and arbitrary arrest – guilty of nothing more than a passion for truth and a tenacious belief that a free society depends on an informed citizenry. In every corner of the globe, there are journalists in jail or being actively harassed: from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe, Burma to Uzbekistan, Cuba to Eritrea. **Emblematic examples of this distressing reality are figures like J.S. Tissanayagam in Sri Lanka**, or Shi Tao and Hu Jia in China. We are also especially concerned about the citizens from our own country currently under detention abroad: individuals such as Roxana Saberi in Iran, and Euna Lee and Laura Ling in North Korea.

Today, I lend my voice of support and admiration to all those brave men and women of the press who labour to expose truth and enhance accountability around the world. In so doing, I recall the words of Thomas Jefferson: "The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and where it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-by-the-President-in-honor-of-World-Press-Freedom-Day/

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release **May 13, 2009**
STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT ON THE SITUATION IN SRI LANKA
AND DETAINEE PHOTOGRAPHS

South Drive

4:12 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Hello, everybody. Sorry to keep you guys waiting. Good to see you. I want to take a few moments at the top to talk about something that, with all the big issues going on, hasn't received much attention, but I think is worth talking about briefly.

As some of you know, we have a humanitarian crisis that's taking place in Sri Lanka, and I've been increasingly saddened by the desperate news in recent days. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians are trapped between the warring government forces and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka with no means of escape, little access to food, water, shelter and medicine. This has led to widespread suffering and the loss of hundreds if not thousands of lives.

Without urgent action, this humanitarian crisis could turn into a catastrophe. Now is the time, I believe, to put aside some of the political issues that are involved and to put the lives of the men and women and children who are innocently caught in the crossfire, to put them first.

So I urge the Tamil Tigers to lay down their arms and let civilians go. Their forced recruitment of civilians and their use of civilians as human shields is deplorable. These tactics will only serve to alienate all those who carry them out.

I'm also calling on the Sri Lankan government to take several steps to alleviate this humanitarian crisis. First, the government should stop the indiscriminate shelling that has taken hundreds of innocent lives, including several hospitals, and the government should live up to its commitment to not use heavy weapons in the conflict zone.

Second, the government should give United Nations humanitarian teams access to the civilians who are trapped between the warring parties so that they can receive the immediate assistance necessary to save lives.

Third, the government should also allow the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross access to nearly 190,000 displaced people within Sri Lanka so that they can receive additional support that they need.

The United States stands ready to work with the international community to support the people of Sri Lanka in this time of suffering. I don't believe that we can delay. Now is the time for all of us to work together to avert further humanitarian suffering.

Going forward, Sri Lanka must seek a peace that is secure and lasting, and grounded in respect for all of its citizens. More civilian casualties and inadequate care for those caught in resettlement camps will only make it more difficult to achieve the peace that the people of Sri Lanka deserve. *(Excerpt)*

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-by-the-President-on-the-Situation-in-Sri-Lanka-and-Detainee-Photographs/

SRI LANKA - CESSATION OF FIGHTING

Ian Kelly

Department Spokesman, Office of the Spokesman

Washington, DC

May 19, 2009

The United States welcomes the cessation of fighting in Sri Lanka and the apparent conclusion to its long-running conflict. This 26-year-old conflict has cost tens of thousands of Sinhalese and Tamil lives, uprooted countless Sri Lankans from their homes, left thousands maimed or wounded, and has brutally divided the nation.

The United States remains deeply concerned for the welfare of the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) uprooted by the recent fighting. We especially recognize the tremendous loss of life and hardship endured by civilians in northern Sri Lanka during the past weeks and months, and are relieved that this loss of life has ended. We urge the Government to allow humanitarian access to the camps and to work hand in hand with the UN, ICRC, and non-government organizations to ensure all IDPs are accorded rights and care meeting the highest international standards. We are prepared to work with the Government to provide for the basic needs of all of its citizens, and abide by its commitment to return the majority of IDPs to their homes by the end of this year.

To truly defeat terrorism, the Government of Sri Lanka needs to begin to heal the wounds of the conflict and work toward building a democratic, prosperous, tolerant and united Sri Lanka and work toward justice and reconciliation for both sides. A lasting peace in Sri Lanka depends on Sinhalese, Tamils and all other Sri Lankans working together to achieve new power sharing arrangements that safeguard and promote the rights of all Sri Lankans.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/05/123651.htm>

BENEDICT XVI PRAYS FOR SRI LANKA - URGES INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO AID CIVILIANS

BENEDICT XVI PRAYS FOR SRI LANKA

VATICAN CITY, MAY 17, 2009 - Urges International Community to Aid Civilians).- Benedict XVI is asking humanitarian groups to aid the children, women and elderly of Sri Lanka, as he said he would pray for peace and reconciliation in the country.

Before praying the midday Regina Caeli today with those gathered in St. Peter's Square, the Pope turned his thoughts to Sri Lanka, where Asia's longest modern war has been waging since 1983.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam conceded the war today after they were unable to defend the last half square mile of land they controlled in a losing battle to gain their independence as a separate Tamil nation.

The United Nations estimates more than 4,500 civilians have been killed in the past three months alone.

The Pontiff assured "those civilians who find themselves in the combat zone in the northern part of the country of my affection and spiritual nearness."

"There are thousands of children, women, and elderly there from whom the war has taken away years of life and hope," the Holy Father added. "In this respect, I would like once again to address an urgent invitation to the opposing sides to facilitate the evacuation [of the civilians] and join my voice to that of the United Nations' Security Council which just some days ago asked for guarantees of their safety and security.

"Furthermore, I ask the humanitarian organizations, including Catholic ones, to do all they can to meet the refugees urgent food and medical need."

Benedict XVI entrusted Sri Lanka to the Holy Virgin of Madhu, and prayed that God "will hasten the day of reconciliation and peace." ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org))

STATEMENT BY MINISTER CANNON ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SRI LANKA

May 19, 2009 (1:45 p.m. EDT) No. 135 - The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today issued the following statement concerning recent developments in the conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam:

"Canadians are very concerned about the aftermath of the military action in Sri Lanka and the appalling effect it has had on civilians. This terrible, decades-long war has inflicted untold devastation and heartbreak on Sri Lankans. The Government of Canada wishes to express its concerns about civilian casualties, and to convey its condolences to the people of Sri Lanka and those around the world who have lost friends and family members in this horrific conflict.

"I spoke yesterday with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to discuss the situation in Sri Lanka. We agreed that there is a need for the international community to coordinate assistance and support to the people of Sri Lanka, and that it will be important to work with the international community in urging the Government of Sri Lanka to cooperate with these efforts.

"We will work together to support the United Nations in providing humanitarian assistance. We call on the Government of Sri Lanka to give the United Nations and other international humanitarian agencies immediate access to internally displaced persons. Canada remains concerned about the fate of civilians.

"Canada urges the Government of Sri Lanka to begin to find a long-term political solution that responds to the legitimate aspirations of all the people of Sri Lanka. Canada is prepared to assist Sri Lankan efforts to find political reconciliation and a lasting peace."

For further information, media representatives may contact:

Foreign Affairs Media Relations Office - Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada -613-995-1874

www.international.gc.ca/index.aspx

http://w01.international.gc.ca/MinPub/Publication.aspx?lang=eng&publication_id=387175&docnum=135

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS CANNON AND ODA ON THE SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

May 21, 2009 - No. 139

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Honourable Bev Oda, Minister of International Cooperation, today issued the following statement on the situation in Sri Lanka:

“Canada calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to allow full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all civilians affected by the conflict in that country and to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers.

“Canada calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided to affected populations in accordance with international humanitarian principles. We also call on the Government to facilitate the work of humanitarian actors, including through the provision of additional visas to enable humanitarian workers to assist populations in need.

“We further call for the freedom of movement for all internally displaced persons and for the Government of Sri Lanka to facilitate the voluntary return of these persons to their homes in safety and with dignity as soon as possible. We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that the protection of and assistance for internally displaced persons are consistent with international standards.

“We call on the UN and other partners to work together to ensure a coordinated humanitarian response and to support the voluntary return and reintegration of civilians back into their communities so that they may live safe, secure and productive lives.

“We call on the Government of Sri Lanka to move forward immediately with the President’s vow to launch a political process that is inclusive of all communities in Sri Lanka. This process must ensure that all the people of Sri Lanka can live in safety and receive the full protection of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Foreign Affairs Media Relations Office - Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada - 613-995-1874

www.international.gc.ca/index.aspx

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-eng.do?m=/index&nid=452459>

OTTAWA RIPS SRI LANKA FOR DEPORTING ‘SECURITY THREAT’ BOB RAE

Rae calls Sri Lankan government liars for branding him a supporter of the defeated Tamil Tiger rebels

National Post, June 10, 2009, OTTAWA -- The federal government has formally registered its "dismay and displeasure" with the Sri Lankan government over the deportation of Liberal foreign affairs critic, Bob Rae.

During the dispute, Mr. Rae called a Sri Lankan government spokesman a liar for branding him a supporter of the defeated Tamil Tiger rebels.

The diplomatic incident comes shortly after Sri Lankan protesters caused disruptions in Ottawa and Toronto that have attempted to draw attention to the violence in their homeland, but have only angered many Canadians.

"It is absurd to suggest that Mr. Rae represents a threat to Sri Lankan national security, or is a supporter of LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam]," said Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Emma Welford.

"We have registered to the Sri Lankan government our dismay and displeasure concerning this unacceptable treatment of a Canadian parliamentarian. Mr. Rae received consular assistance throughout this ordeal." Mr. Rae travelled to Sri Lanka on a private visit with a valid visa issued by Sri Lankan authorities, Ms. Welford noted.

"Upon arrival, Mr. Rae was detained, accused of being a national security threat by the government of Sri Lanka, and refused entry into the country." Mr. Rae, who rejected the accusation against him as defamatory, was deported from Sri Lanka on Wednesday.

"He is barred from entering the country. He is being deported. . . . We have intelligence information that he is supporting the LTTE," chief immigration controller P.B. Abeykoon said, according to Agence France-Press in Colombo, the country's capital.

"To describe me as 'an LTTE supporter,' as an army spokesman has done today, is a lie, pure and simple," Mr. Rae said in an e-mailed statement. "The Sri Lankan government has made this decision because they have apparently reached some ill-conceived and defamatory conclusions about me. But after 30 years of public service at home and abroad, I have to say, this decision reflects on them, and not on me."

Mr. Rae has been involved in the Sri Lankan civil-war issue for more than a decade, as chairman of the Forum of Federations, and later as an MP. He has travelled extensively throughout the country, and has met people on both sides of the conflict.

Mr. Rae said the Sri Lankan High Commission in Ottawa granted him a visa, and he discussed his visit to the country with High Commissioner Daya Perera, as well as the Foreign Affairs Department in Ottawa.

Mr. Perera told Canwest News Service that a "very upset" Mr. Rae telephoned him from the Colombo airport to see what he could do at, what was then, 1:30 a.m. local time in Sri Lanka. The envoy began calling back home to senior government officials, but, at that hour, he could reach no one.

"I said, 'I'll do what can,' " Mr. Perera recalled. "I like Mr. Rae. There was nothing I could do about it." Mr. Perera said the High Commission had no information that Mr. Rae was a security threat when it issued him his visa, but he could not reconcile that with the information that his country's immigration officials apparently had.

Mr. Perera said he planned to convey the Canadian government's concern over the matter to his own, and he hoped that, if Mr. Rae was willing, he could meet with him to talk about the incident.

The envoy said he hoped the two countries could put the incident behind them. "Our relationship is far too strong to be broken by this." Mr. Rae arrived in Colombo on Tuesday evening, and was delayed for 12 hours at the airport. He was in the company of Canadian consular officials. "Since that time, I have spent over 12 hours at the airport, trying to find a reason for this decision," Mr. Rae said in an e-mail before he was put on a plane out of the country.

"I have had the full support of officials here and in Ottawa. The government of Sri Lanka is sticking to its position, and I am being put on a plane to London at 1:15 p.m. Sri Lankan time. I shall be back in Canada some time Thursday." The Tamil Tigers, who have been fighting since 1983 for an independent state for the country's Tamil minority, were recently defeated by Sri Lankan military forces in a civil war that's believed to have killed as many as 70,000 people.

At least 200,000 were forced from their homes during the recent violence. Mr. Rae has accused Canada of not doing enough to assist Sri Lanka. In a May blog posting, Mr. Rae said he asked Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon to go to Sri Lanka. "Canada's voice has been pathetically silent, missing the point that this is a catastrophe in the making," Mr. Rae wrote on May 27. "Canada's absence and silence are a disgrace."

On a May 19 blog entry, Mr. Rae vowed to go back to the affected areas. "But it is hard not to cry at what has been lost, how much life has been destroyed, and what must still be done to bring justice to the peace that is being proclaimed so loudly." <http://www.nationalpost.com/todays-paper/story.html?id=1681300>

SWISS CALL FOR POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN SRI LANKA

THE SWISS GOVERNMENT HAS WELCOMED THE END OF THE ARMED CONFLICT IN THE NORTH OF SRI LANKA.

19 May 2009 - It regretted however that international humanitarian law had been violated and appealed to all parties to comply with and to ensure respect for international regulations and obligations.

"Switzerland calls on Sri Lanka to grant rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to the distressed population, particularly for internally displaced persons," it said in a statement on Tuesday.

The government also called on all parties "to refrain from incitement to hatred and to work towards reconciliation by means of unilateral or jointly agreed measures". The foreign ministry repeated its willingness to provide support in the areas of humanitarian aid, humanitarian protection and the elaboration of institutional solutions for the protection of minorities.

On Tuesday Sri Lanka's president declared his country "liberated from separatist terror" as the military said it recovered the body of Tamil Tiger rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran.

In his victory address to parliament, President Mahinda Rajapaksa appeared to reach out to the minority Tamils, for whom the rebels had said they were trying to carve out a homeland. He also alluded to promises to forge a power-sharing agreement with them.

The conflict killed more than 70,000 people over 25 years. Another 265,000 ethnic Tamils were displaced in the recent offensive and many have been sent to overcrowded camps in the north. There are 42,000 people of Sri Lankan origin in Switzerland, of whom 90-95 per cent are Tamils.

http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/news_digest/Swiss_call_for_political_dialogue_in_Sri_Lanka.html?siteSect=104&sid=10716796&cKey=1242737103000&ty=nd

MILITARY OFFENSIVE CONDUCTED BY THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT EXACERBATED HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN THE NORTH OF THE COUNTRY

DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER OF SOUTH AFRICA, EHRAHIM EBRAHIM

Pretoria – The South African government today Thursday 21 May 2009 expressed deep concern over developments at the weekend in Sri Lanka. The military offensive conducted by the Sri Lankan government has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the north of the country and resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians and the displacement of many hundreds of thousands of citizens.

Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim said, "The South African government expresses grave regret at the manner in which the military offensive was conducted and urges the United Nations Human Rights Commission to urgently investigate possible violations of international human rights law and contraventions of the Geneva Convention."

"The South African government calls on the Sri Lankan government to urgently allow humanitarian aid into the affected areas as well as access to international media," continued Deputy Minister Ebrahim.

"The South African government has noted the conciliatory tone in the speech of President Mahinda Rajapaksa on 19 May 2009 and express our hope that the end of the military campaign will result in a peaceful dialogue with all minorities to address their long standing grievances. We will continue to support any efforts aimed at bringing about peace and reconciliation between the parties," concluded Deputy Minister Ebrahim.

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ANNEXES

TAMIL RANKS 15TH LINGUISTIC GROUP IN THE WORLD!

TCHR, 25 May 2009, RJ052/PR/2009 - The "Ethnologue" organisation says that in nearly two hundred countries, more than 6,800 languages are in use; that out of these languages only 2,261 have writing systems and that all other languages are only spoken.

Analysis of these languages on a regional basis, shows that: nearly 2,200 languages are spoken in Asia, around 2,000 in Africa, nearly 1,000 in the Americas, 1,300 in the Pacific region and 230 in Europe.

When we consider the living languages and look at the top twenty most spoken in the World, we see that the ***Tamil language ranks between fifteenth and seventh position.***

It is interesting to compare this linguistic group with those people whose language is linked to a specific country - such as Poland, Italy, Turkey, Greece, Indonesia, Korea, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma) and Iran. There are many other examples in Europe and Asia. The speakers of these languages, ***which rank far below Tamil, have a Country of their own!*** For information, it is even to be noted that many Tamil words are in use in the English language.

At the same time, the ***Sinhalese language ranks only at sixty-eighth position*** and it is only used in Sri Lanka. This fact should be considered seriously by the International Community, which pretends to be ignorant of this truth. We are reminded of the 'Chicken and Egg' story!

The Tamil Language which is spoken in Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, Mauritius and a few other countries is the result of colonial emigration from South India of Tamils in the British Colonial period. During the same period, in 1862, Tamils were brought from South India to work in the tea plantations in the Up-country area in then Ceylon.

These Tamils are ***not to be confused with Tamils who have lived in the Island for thousands of years***, long before the arrival of Buddhism and the birth of the Sinhalese language in the island. The actual historical evidence of the island's Tamil Kingdom, prior and during the colonial period can be found in Universities, Libraries and government Archive Centres in Portugal, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. ***Fortunately***, this evidence cannot be destroyed like the documents destroyed in the Jaffna public Library by the heinous Sri Lanka government-sponsored arson attack in 1981. This was done deliberately to completely destroy historical evidence of the Tamil Kingdom and the history of the Tamil people in the Island.

It is to be noted that the Tamils were taken to South Africa to work in the sugar cane industry at the same time as Tamils were brought to Ceylon to the tea plantations. But today none of the Tamils in South Africa work in the sugar cane industry. Even with the horrendous history of Apartheid, Tamils have prospered well in South Africa. Today they are in part Academics, Economists, Industrialists and many are in key positions in South African decision-making bodies. However, in the Up-country in Sri Lanka, Tamils are still in the tea plantations picking tea leaves as they have done, under extremely exploitative conditions, for generations. This shows that Ceylon or Sri Lanka's racism against Tamils is worse even than the evils of Apartheid in South Africa.

Under the Ceylon 1948 Citizenship Act and the laws of disenfranchisement, the Tamils of Indian origin (who are known as plantation Tamils or up-country Tamils) were deprived of selecting their representatives to Parliament. More than a million plantation Tamil workers were rendered stateless. The majority of them were repatriated back to India in 1964. These people had lived in the Island for over hundred and fifteen years and they were the backbone of Sri Lanka's economy – the tea, rubber and cocoa industries.

It is surprising that the people who speak one of the oldest languages in the World, which ranks in fifteenth position as most spoken language, do not even have any fundamental political rights in the Island of Sri Lanka. Why is this? The present feeble attempts of the International Community with regard to the Genocide being committed against the Tamils, exemplify and hint at what also happened in the past.

The current atrocities - the most vile slaughter of the Tamil people - follow six decades of ill-treatment, discrimination, torture and killings – conspicuously ignored by the international community - despite the fact that human rights defenders and others, have worked day and night for over two decades, documenting and exposing these massive violations.

Article 1 of both the ***International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*** and the ***International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)***; the UN Charter; Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many other instruments provide strong legal basis and encouragement for the re-establishment of Tamil Kingdom in the island of Sri Lanka. Furthermore the mandate given by the Tamil people in the 1977 and 2004 general elections stands witness to this case. ***(Excerpt)***

MASSACRE OF CIVILIANS AND PEACE EMISSARIES

TCHR, 19 May 2009, PG037/PR/2009 - When Ceylon (Sri Lanka) was granted Independence by the British in 1948, the humiliation, intimidation and killing of Tamils started against one or two, then a few, then hundreds. This gradually increased to the killing of thousands.

As thirty-five years of the Tamils' non-violent struggle was continuously repressed by military means, militancy was eventually born in the island. This paved the way for an armed struggle. The Tamils in the North and East voted overwhelmingly in the 1977 General Elections in favour of exercising their Right to Self-Determination – and this mandate was taken forward by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam – LTTE.

The war has had many ups and downs for both sides, and Sri Lanka systematically sought the help of the International Community. The struggle in exercise of the Tamil people's Right to Self-Determination was branded as "terrorism" by the government and the international actors endorsed this. They supported the Sri Lanka government's position in seeking a military solution to the Tamil national question, completely ignoring the terrorism of the state.

Today, genocide has taken place against the Tamils, with direct and indirect help of the International Community. Of course within the last few months **some** international actors have opposed the military solution, and have raised their objections with the Sri Lanka government. But Sri Lanka rejected their requests outright and continued their brutal genocide against the Tamils.

This year alone, nearly ten thousand have been killed, many are missing and nearly three hundred thousand have been incarcerated in concentration camps.

While genocide has been taking place, many crimes against humanity and war crimes have been committed by the Sri Lanka government. Two days ago, unarmed Peace Emissaries – the Head of the Political Division of the LTTE, Mr B Nadesan; and the Head of the Peace Secretariat, Mr S. Puleedevan – were executed in cold blood as they approached the Sri Lanka armed forces holding white flags, surrounded by many civilians.

Both these men had untiringly dedicated themselves to work towards a just peace in the island and had taken part in the recent peace negotiations between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

There are still thousands of bodies all over the roads and terrain in the Mullaitivu district, and thousands of injured people. In the IDP camps (concentration camps) people have no water nor food – the situation is beyond desperate.

But government-sponsored celebrations of military victory are taking place in Colombo and the South – ***without a single word being mentioned about the agony and suffering of the Tamil people.***

This fact has to be taken seriously by the International actors who encouraged the Government of Sri Lanka to pursue a military solution to the Tamil national question. All the atrocities have to be seriously investigated and the culprits who committed this genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, must be punished.

What political solution does the International Community have, to offer the Tamils at this very moment - a people who remain without any political rights for nearly six decades, **whose language ranks the 15th position in the world?** There are already more than six hundred thousand Tamil refugees in countries world-wide. We take this opportunity to predict a few important points at this juncture:

1. Very soon, there will be serious and widespread communal riots against the Tamils in Colombo. We have already seen initial attacks within the last few days. This will be the government agenda, as it is stated continuously in their international propaganda that there are more Tamils than Sinhalese in Colombo!
2. The government which has claimed a successful military solution for the country's ethnic crisis, is now preparing to target the Tamil diaspora! This has already been openly stated from top to bottom by government representatives
3. The government which has successfully carried out Sinhalisation and planted statues of Buddha in Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Mannar and Jaffna, now will do the same in the Vanni district.
4. The Sri Lankan government will not find **ANY** political solution to the six-decades-old Tamil ethnic problem. On 28 September 2007, President Mahinda Rajapaksa said in his speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council that, ".....***There is no ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka - as some media mistakenly highlight. Sri Lanka's security forces are fighting a terrorist group, not a particular community.***"
5. It is high time that the international community realise how quickly the Sri Lanka government will abandon all Tamils who were used in their fight against so-called terrorism.

In conclusion, the time is ripe for the International Community to realise how the propaganda mechanisms of the Sri Lanka government were working against the legitimate Right to self-determination of the Tamils.

SRI LANKAN WAR CRIMINALS SHOULD BE CHARGED LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY

TCHR, 22 July 2009, QJ052/PR/2009 - While discussing this press release, some of our colleagues predicted possible reactions of the Sri Lankan government. One said it may be the routine intimidation and harassment; another said that as usual they will target certain individuals through their state media and Embassies. But on the whole everyone said TCHR should be prepared for the worst.

Let us look at the current realities and the facts regarding the Tamils in the North East – the Tamil homeland. The Sri Lankan government is celebrating military victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam – LTTE. In the vocabulary of the Sri Lankan government, the majority of the people in the South and certain States and individuals in foreign countries, it was a victory against Terrorism.

However, do the majority of people in the North East or the Tamil diaspora and Tamils in general accept or agree with this vocabulary? This is an important question and the government of Sri Lanka can neither put words into the mouths of the Tamils nor can it force its ideas and dreams onto the people.

For anyone who is really for human rights, good governance and democracy, it is understandable how and why the current situation is misrepresented by the Sri Lankan government. This is a strategy for survival rather than a representation of reality. In other words it is a massive build up of lies and deceptions with no foundation, waiting to collapse in a storm of truth and reality.

PAST THREE DECADES

The birth of the LTTE in the North East in 1970s came from the ashes of the several Sinhala riots against the Tamils; Sinhala colonisation and Buddhisisation in the North East; violent responses to the Tamils non violent struggle; unilateral abrogation of pacts and contempt for the democratic mandate voted by the people of the North East in the free and fair elections in 1977, in exercise of their right to self-determination.

During several Sinhala riots against the Tamils - thousands were killed, raped, displaced and their properties were looted. Two important pacts signed in 1957 and 1965 between then Sinhala Prime Ministers and then Tamils leaders were unilaterally abrogated by the Sri Lankan government. The Tamils' non violent struggle since 1948 for their fundamental political rights and aspirations was violently suppressed by the Sri Lankan government and its security forces. This led to the birth of the LTTE and then its rapid development over the years, with massive support of the people. Eventually the LTTE established a successful de-facto government in the North East. This existed for nearly two decades with all infra-structures in place - this is history.

It cannot be denied that there were some mistakes made on the part of the LTTE. There were occasions when even the LTTE acknowledged these. But the majority of the people in the North East still accepted and endorsed the LTTE administration, right until 18 May 2009.

During the same thirty years, every Sri Lankan government which negotiated, signed agreements and fought with the LTTE - committed massacres, caused disappearances, raped Tamil women, starved people to death, aerielly bombed and shelled Tamil areas destroying hundreds and thousands of schools, churches, temples and other public and private buildings. The catalogue of suffering of Tamils at the hands of every government is long.

While waging war, Sri Lankan governments engaged in smart international propaganda campaigns, cleverly blaming and recognising each others' predecessor's violations against the Tamils at least in part. However, the ultimate conclusion of every government was that they were fighting a war against terrorism. To some extent this version was accepted by the international community without taking into account the history of the island and the fact that the LTTE was being punished disproportionately by the mighty powers of the world.

According to former Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka (November 2005 to January 2007), Mr. Mangala Samaraweera, the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice lobbied many EU states to ban the LTTE, in June 2006. This implicitly shows that many EU states did not want to ban the LTTE but due to a request from Condoleezza Rice, they felt obliged to do so. (**Daily Mirror, 26 June 2009**)

<http://video.dailymirror.lk/videos/19/hard-talk-with-mangala-samaraweera>

The LTTE participated in negotiations with at least four Presidents – President J. R. Jayawardena in 1986 in Bangalore-India; President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1989; Prime Minister and later President Chandrika Kumaratunga in 1994; and President Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2005. When these negotiations failed, loud and clear statements by the LTTE argued that the Sri Lankan government leaders were not interested in finding a negotiated settlement to the Tamils' long standing grievances. But this was not accepted by the international actors, possibly because of the LTTE's military structures having a Navy as well as an Air Force and their track record of military victories.

If any of these Presidents had felt that the LTTE had played a foul game in the negotiations, one after the other, four Presidents would never have invited the LTTE for further peace talks. Now the objective of the Sri Lankan governments becomes very clear, it was purely to buy time until they had fully prepared for a war of victory.

GOVERNMENT POSES - 'NATIONAL UNITY'

Anyhow, as said and predicted by the party to the conflict, the LTTE, - the present Sri Lankan government with the help of other political parties including the UNP in the South, has systematically found a military solution with the wider help of many other States.

One should not forget that the present government is trying to pose as a '**government of National Unity**'. Many members and ex-Ministers of the UNP, JVP, JHU, part of the NSSP and also non grata and non elected Tamils make up the present government. It is a hidden fact that the unity of the SLFP, UNP and JVP is an exhibition or facade – a drama. Unity and disunity among them are staged as appropriate to suit the questions and queries of outsiders.

It must be remembered that the present Mahinda Rajapaksa government has antagonised not only the LTTE and its sympathisers, but generally every Tamil locally and internationally. Tamils are unable to believe in a future solution because the Sri Lankan government has not learned anything from the past. All successive governments believe in one mantra – that is the **Sinhalisation and Buddhisation** of the whole island, especially the North East.

Every Sri Lankan government lives in the present and is not bothered about the future. This is one of the reasons the Island has seen so much bloodshed. The President and his family may be today's heroes for the South but the future could brand them as the worst warmongers, traitors who caused disunity in the island. There is no doubt that after a couple of years, the International propagandists of the Sri Lankan government are going to tell the world, "**yes it was a mistake made by Mahinda Rajapaksa's government, but now we have a different government which is ready to look into the grievances of the Tamils**". During that time, as there will be a different government and different officials in other countries, it is easy to predict that such statements would even be believed. But Tamils will remain victims and half of the population will no longer be alive.

The way the government handled the war, it has sown seeds for more violence in the future, rather than eradicated terrorism, as they have claimed.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Today, the President and others may be escaping international punishment for war crimes - crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, traditional war crimes and genocide. But history has taught us that when there is a change of certain governments, the very countries which came to the rescue of violating countries facing indictment for war crimes may eventually bring the same countries to the international court. The denial of systematic destructions of today will be rectified tomorrow.

A good example is the Armenian genocide during Ottoman Empire in 1915-1917. While Turkey resisted widespread calls for it to recognise the genocide, after several years many countries did accept it. Some Turkish individuals who denied the genocide ended-up in a court in a foreign country and were found guilty. Even though it is not a pre-condition for Turkey to accept the genocide to enter the European Union, Turkey still faces difficulties.

We presume that the Sri Lankan authorities will remember what happened with the Nuremberg Trial and ad hoc tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Not forgetting of course, the recent indictment of the President of Sudan. It is true that Sudan is not a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court – ICC, but there are mechanisms which can be utilised by mighty powers, as and when determined.

TRIAL SUIT IS WAITING

We assume that the President and other violators of war crimes in Sri Lanka are aware of what happened to President Chandrika Kumaratunga, when she visited the Netherlands in the late 90s. Under local law, a suit was filed against her by a Lawyer in the Netherlands and the judge could not find enough evidence to proceed with that case. This allowed Chandrika to fly out of the Netherlands. If enough evidence had been filed, today Sri Lankan history would have been written differently. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, presently, the lack of evidence is not an issue – on the contrary, evidence is overflowing. Filing a suit in a democratic country is not limited to the President of a violating state. It is applicable to anyone representing the violating country, other than the Ambassador of that state.

This is why Sri Lanka has recently appointed a notorious **military commander as their Ambassador to Germany**. In fact, they are testing the pulse of the West regarding their violations. Germany was one of the countries that took a serious initiative in the Special session of the Human Rights Council on Sri Lanka, in last May.

Excerpt from the TCHR Urgent appeal of 28 June 2001 - Ref : AC/16/01 “Justice has no Border”

“.....Under the International legal framework of human rights, Sri Lankan political leaders, along with their security counterparts can be held to account for their war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Sri Lanka.

Those of us who live in democratic and civilised countries should make use of the law of these countries and bring the Sri Lankan war criminals to account, who freely come and go on holiday.

The case filed against President Chandrika Kumaratunga in Netherlands has showed us the path.....! (end)

It cannot be denied that the armed struggle supported by the majority of the Tamils in the North East, has come to an end - maybe permanently or maybe temporarily – with a massive number of killings and deaths, disappearances, casualties and displacements. The survivors of the Vanni war find themselves in places which are worse or equal to the Nazis' Auschwitz & Buchenwald extermination camps and concentration camps. Half the cadres who were carrying out this struggle are dead, many are in custody of the Sri Lankan security forces undergoing various harassments and torture, some have been disappeared and some of them may be alive.

Those who are in the camps, where inhumane conditions are rife, are killed and disappeared every day. The women are raped, the children harassed, families' members are separated and there is no proper shelter, food or medical facilities. The hygiene conditions are horrendous. Recently there has been a serious outbreak of meningitis and encephalitis.

International NGOs, Social Workers, Media personnel and others are not allowed to visit these camps. This is what is happening to the victims of war and their families who fought for their fundamental political rights and aspirations for the last six decades through non violent and other means.

The government has to admit that it treats Tamils differently to the Sinhalese. A comparison between the military victory over the JVP in 1989 and the Vanni war is a good example. When the JVP was decimated by the Sri Lankan security forces - how many Sinhalese in the South became IDPs and how many IDP camps existed in the South? Were any people in the South kept in camps for months in the name of screening?

This is where one has to seriously think of the true nature of the LTTE's struggle for the right to self-determination of the Tamil people. If the LTTE is not fully supported by the majority of the Tamils, then why is this so-called screening process going on? Here the logic put forward in the past that **“the LTTE is the Tamils and Tamils are the LTTE”** is proven to be accepted by the government itself.

The banning, unbanning and eventual banning of the LTTE is a clear indication that the government doesn't want the outside world to realise the support that the LTTE enjoyed among the Tamils in North East. The government fears that the LTTE may become a political force in the North East.

PLIGHT OF THE IDPs

On 19 May 2009, President said in the parliament that, **“....There are only two peoples in this country. One is the people that love this country. The other comprises the small groups that have no love for the land of their birth. Those who do not love the country are now a lesser group.”** He continues, **“No longer are the Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and any others minorities.”**

What does he mean? Is he saying that “***those who do not love the country are traitors?***” or “***Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and any others minorities are now Sinhalese?***” The message has a double meaning.

We are sure that the President is well aware that 300,000 victims of the Vanni war have been incarcerated in forty odd inhumane extermination camps and concentration camps for more than two months.

SOURCES VISITED CAMPS

A few of our sources have visited some of these camps. When they entered for the first time, they were surprised to see that the Soldiers at the entrance guarding these camps were wearing masks. Only after they entered inside the camps, did they realise that the camps were full of injured, sick and elders who are left to die. Hygiene conditions are appalling and flies everywhere, hence the masks.

Those whom they have met and spoken with previously were not seen on their next visit. The women whom they met earlier had been raped and harassed by the soldiers. The children have no schooling. The injured have no proper medicine. The hungry have no proper food. The wives, husbands, children pleaded with them to find their parents, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and other family members. Those who want to follow their spiritual practices have no place to do so, nor persons to carry out their rituals and rites.

The tyranny and this appalling situation have continued for days, weeks, months and years. Yet the President said in his speech on 19 May, “***....In the past several decades those (Tamils) people did not have the right to a meaningful life. They were denied the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to development. I shall give all of that to those people. I accept that responsibility.***” These words have no meaning other than for international publicity.

Development and Reconciliation may be sweet words for outsiders but not for those who are in the extermination and concentration camps. It is shameful that a government which claims to respect democracy and exists in 21st century, has these camps. The homes of those interned IDPs are almost all looted by the soldiers and the paramilitary working with the government.

It is strongly believed that the IDPs of any part of the North East will be resettled only after the Sinhalese people have been well settled and statues of Buddha have been erected in most of those areas. De-mining is a pretext to prevent resettlement and the government is shedding crocodile tears over it. Do these people face anything worse in their own places of residence than what they are undergoing in the extermination camps and concentration camps? All this is happening behind an iron curtain.

Some victims of the Vanni war are held in incommunicado, undergoing torture and forced to appear to give interviews in favour of the government to the press. The Government uses such sinister acts to hide the truth. Who will consider these interviews seriously?

POLITICAL SOLUTION IS A MYTH

The Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) will be winding up operations with effect from July 31 and the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) has also been asked to wind up its affairs.

Sri Lanka has a history of finding excuses to avoid implementing a political solution for the Tamils.

Please see the sequence in which the present President has talked about this matter : Initially he said that a political solution would be offered once the military operations ended. Then he stated that, the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) was in its final stage and once finalised would be implemented. Now the APRC has been replaced with a new committee, known as the committee for Development and Reconciliation. This committee has nothing to do with a political solution and the latest is that the President wants a new mandate for any political solution to the Tamil question. Now he thinks that his second term in office is the best period for it. In between, there was an occasion when he said in USA : “***there is no ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, as some media mistakenly high light***”.

These are the new thoughts of the government - as the LTTE is no more in existence in the ground and there is no other Tamil leadership which is in a position to challenge the government, to seriously consider any political solution. At least now the mighty powers will understand why the Sri Lankan government was determined to brand the LTTE as a terrorist organisation and also sought their help to wipe them out.

IS IT DEMOCRACY?

While the government gained a military victory, the independent media in the South was silenced by illegal forces which are working with the government. No media is allowed to report anything about the suffering of the people during the war nor even about the inhumane conditions in the camps nor how the government has achieved this military victory.

Some journalists in the South have been branded as traitors and these journalists and their families are facing various hardships and threats. Some have already left the island for their safety. Many journalists in the North East and in the South have already been killed.

On 19 May 2009, in his speech to the Parliament, the President said, **“.....I will also not permit anyone to destroy democracy in our country...”**

The government which presents itself to the world as democratically elected is now looking for a way of extending the period of the Parliament and the Presidency through a referendum! Sri Lankan governments introduced all their anti-Tamil legislation under the guise of democracy.

In the past, President J. R. Jayawardena had many referendums. If the Sri Lankan leaders think that a referendum would be the best way to show their commitment to democracy, they must courageously hold a referendum in the North East, on the Tamil ethnic question.

If this government chooses to ignore the Tamils' grievances, then in another few years, there may be worse incidents, than those experienced in the past. However successive governments have always benefited from the twin agendas of Sinhalisation and Buddhisisation of the North East. The present government is no exception. In fact, this twin agenda is going to be ***its eventual political package to the Tamils.***

The President and his family cannot hang onto power forever, in Sri Lanka. When their period comes to an end, that is the day that they will be answerable for all the heinous mistakes of today.

Even the Tamils who supported the government, miscalculating that the elimination of the LTTE is the only way forward, are now regretting. The Eelam People's Democratic Party - EPDP members and a nominated Minister in the government are being forced to contest the election on the ruling party ticket – they were prevented from contesting through EPDP. Then the TULF President who fully endorsed the war is now complaining that he is unable to carry out his election campaign in Jaffna because government people are obstructing his party's campaign.

The following was said to the IPS, on 17 July 2009, by two Tamil politicians who supported the government in the latest war :

"These elections do not mean anything to the people. The people are undergoing total agony. Every house has a relative who is missing, killed, injured or in IDP camps," said ***V Anandasangaree, the leader of the Tamil Liberation Front.***

Dharmalingam Sidarthan, the leader of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) said, "Even though these two places (Vavuniya and Jaffna) were not directly affected during the final stages of the war, people had lost many of their kith and kin". "Therefore, we had asked the government not to hold the elections until the people were mentally stable."

The government is testing the ground with Municipality elections in the North, while 300,000 people are kept in the inhumane IDPs concentration camps in Vanni district and another 200,000 in other places. ***They have already hidden the elections results of 1977 and 2004 in the North and East.*** Even if they lose this election, they will have their own explanation. But if they win the election with their routine vote-rigging, the results will be used to further strengthen their appeal to the International Monetary Fund - IMF and to the EU for GSP plus. ***(Excerpt)***

KANDYANS URGED FOR THREE FEDERAL STATES IN 1928 AND 1948

by Lakshman Kiriella

The Sunday Observer, 5 January 2003 - After years of colonial rule, when Sri Lanka was on the way to constitutional reform, the Donoughmore Commission was set up by the British Government in 1928 and several representations were made to the Donoughmore Commission. The most liberal and far-sighted memorandum was sent to the Commissioners by the Kandyan leaders at that time.

They pointed out to the Commissioners that for nearly hundreds of years before the coming of the Portuguese, Sri Lanka was divided into three Kingdoms of Ruhunu, Maya and Pihiti and if the British were to depart at a particular time, they should create three self-government areas comprising:

1. The Northern and Eastern provinces in which the Tamils predominate
2. The Kandyan provinces
3. The Southern and Western provinces peopled mainly by low-country Sinhalese.

GRANTED

Each of these three communities would thus be granted a government of its own, the Kandyans would preserve their national identity and would no longer be in danger of being sacrificed to the pressure from the South and North. For purposes affecting the welfare of the entire island, these three governments would be united in a federal government, thus ensuring that no one section would be in a position to dominate the others.

It is our duty to mention at this moment, the names of the delegates who represented the Kandyan community at that time. They were: J.H. Meedeniya Adigar (Leader), B.B. Nugawela Dissawa, J.C. Ratwatte Dissawa, T.B. Panabokka, J.A. Halangoda, A. Godamunne, A.W. Mediwaka, U.B. Dolapihilla, N.B. Galagoda, L.B. Giritagama, W. Talgodapitiya, T.B.L. Moonemalle, G.E. Madawala, F.D. Dissanayake, K.B. Beddewala, Roland Tennekoon, A.T.W. Marambe, Dr. T.B. Kobbekaduwa, P.B. Dolapihilla and W. Gopallawa.

They suggested that a federal form of government should be formed in Sri Lanka with the centre holding such important issues like foreign policy, defence and other key issues that they feel should be kept with the centre. This point of view was strongly urged by the Kandyan leaders, but the Commissioners rejected the memorandum of the Kandyan leaders.

Just before independence in 1948, the Soulbury Commission came to Sri Lanka. The Kandyan leaders made a similar claim of the creation of three self-governing Federal Regional Councils, but this request too was turned down. In retrospect, if this was done and if devolution was granted at the point of independence, like in India, we would not face the present unfortunate situation in our country.

The Commissioners held "The arguments of the Kandyan leaders were compelling and historically accurate". However due to pressure from Western Educated Colombo leaders who did not want to share power the Commissioners rejected the memorandum of the Kandyan leaders.

PERIOD

The 1947-1948 period was the best hour for devolution as there was extreme cordiality between all communities in Sri Lanka and a strong mediator in Britain.

The representatives to the Soulbury Commission were: M.B. Panabokke, B.H. Aluwihare, P. Dolapihilla, H.K. Keerthiratne, V.C. Udalagama, H. Ratwatte, Halangoda, H.W. Mediwake, A.E. Illukkumbura, J.A. Dhanapala, G.C. Leelaratne, U.B. Kulatunga, H.B. Kirimetiya, Rajakaruna Vedamahathmaya, H. Sunderasekera.

Though the Kandyan demand for self-government has died down, the Tamil demand persisted, resulting in the unfortunate situation in our country.

If power was devolved like in India at the point of independence the situation in this country would have been totally different. The Kandyan leaders were called backward and living in the past, but in retrospect if the suggestions of the Kandyan leaders were accepted the unfortunate situation in this country would have been totally avoided. They were the first leaders in Sri Lanka to speak of devolution openly, keeping in mind the historical kingdoms that existed before the coming of the colonial rulers. They were futuristic and far ahead of their time in thinking.

INDIAN EXPERIENCE

After years of colonial rule, in 1947, when India was granted independence, a new constitution was drafted. The patriotic Indian rulers who were poised to be rulers of that country after independence were conscious of the historic diversity that existed before the coming of the British. They realised that once the British departed, unless power was shared by the centre with periphery, the old feuds, difference between the old kingdoms would once again surface. New Indian states were created more or less out of the ancient kingdoms and devolved a great deal of autonomy to these states. The centre keeping foreign affairs and defence brought policy and other key issues.

For example, though the national language of India is Hindi, the respective states were granted the liberty to use their own languages in the day-to-day affairs of the respective states. Imagine what would be the situation if Indian rulers tried to force Hindi on all the states of the Indian Union. The situation would have been chaotic. So today after 50 years of Indian independence we have a situation where persons from Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal are proud to call themselves Indian first with a strong sense of Indian identity. The cultural, religious and language rights are safeguarded in the respective states. At the same time they consider themselves a part of a great Indian nation.

Rulers at the point of independence were generous enough to share power with the respective states rather than attempt to keep all the power selfishly in Delhi. If this was not done, there would have been friction within a short time after independence which would have led to the disintegration of the Indian Union.

SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE

When the Portuguese came to Sri Lanka in 1505, the situation in Ceylon was very similar to the situation in India when the British arrived there. Just like India, in Sri Lanka too there were several kingdoms. Dr. (Mrs.) Lorna Devaraja who is a well-known historian, in her book "The Kandyan Kingdom", mentions that when the Portuguese first came to Sri Lanka in the beginning of the 16th century there were three kingdoms of varying politics and economic importance in the island. Foremost was the kingdom of Kotte occupying the west and the south west of the island, whose king claimed a nominal overlordship over the whole of Sri Lanka.

A separate dynasty was ruling in Kandy having broken away from the authority of the Kotte King. The founder of this dynasty was, according to tradition, Senasammata Vikramabahu who ruled from C. 1474-1511. ***Ever since the middle of the thirteenth century there had also been an independent Tamil king in Jaffna. This view was supported by all leading historians.***

So in Sri Lanka like in India there were basically three kingdoms when the Portuguese came. The Mahawamsa confirms this position by stating that from ancient times, Sri Lanka was divided into three kingdoms Ruhunu, Maya and Pihiti. Three treaties were signed by the respective rulers of these kingdoms with the foreign invaders. ***There was the Nallur convention by which King Sangili ceded the kingdom of Jaffna to the Portuguese.***

Then there was a Malwana convention whereby the low country were ceded to the Dutch. Then finally, the convention by which the Kandyan territory was ceded to the British. Further proof of the existence of the three kingdoms is again a system of laws prevailing in the three regions.

In Jaffna the Thesa Walamai Law operates. In the low country the Roman Dutch Law operates and in the Kandyan areas Kandyan Law operates. So it is well established that in Sri Lanka, there were three kingdoms for a very long period of time confirmed by the three treaties and also the three personal laws applicable to the respective areas. It is on this basis that the Kandyan leaders made their observations in 1928 and 1947.

If devolution of power was done at independence Sri Lanka would have been spared the present crisis.

Genuine devolution is 50 years late.

End

GRAVE THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

The Sunday Times, 28 June 2009 - In 1973 when the draconian Press Council Bill was passed in Parliament an independent English language newspaper headlined it—"Mephistopheles claims the soul"—referring to the evil spirit to whom Faust sold his soul in the 19th century German legend.

Last week this law was reactivated setting off alarm bells as to whether Sri Lanka was going back to the era of the infamous **D.E.M.O' CRACY. obituary**, and the cremation of the father of Truth and Liberty.

On this page today we spotlight the stinging protest by 8 media organizations including publishers and editors over the reactivation of the dreaded law, the continuing white van abduction and arrest of journalists.

Journalist was taken in van from Wattala to Kandy – ABDUCTION

Journalist and NGO employee Krishni Kandasamy, the most recent victim of media harassment, said she had worried about how her disappearance would affect her mother's health all the while she was being held by her abductors.

"My mother is in the habit of calling me at office several times a day," she said. "I knew how anxious she would be the moment she heard I had not turned up at the office. I begged my abductors to allow me to tell my mother that I was okay."

Ms. Kandasamy, a resident of Wattala, Colombo, was abducted last week by three men in civilian clothes who claimed to be policemen. She was driven to an unknown destination and questioned. When she was finally dropped off, she found herself in Kandy, from where she had to find her way back to Colombo.

She said she had stepped into the street to head to work when she was stopped by three men in a van who told her she was required to give a statement to the police. When she insisted that she had to inform her mother first, she was forced into the van and driven away.

"It was then around 8.30 am. It was around 2.45 in the afternoon when I was taken to a room for questioning. During the long drive, I had no idea where I was being taken," Ms. Kandasamy said. Because she kept saying she had to call her mother to say she was safe, she was finally allowed to make the call, just before she was led in for questioning.

"They let me make the call from my mobile phone. I told my mother I had been taken in by the police for questioning and that she need not worry. When she asked where the police station was, I said I did not know. I was about to tell her to inform my husband when the phone was taken away from me."

Her mother then called Mrs. Kandasamy's husband, Ifam Nisam, also a journalist, and a few others, who immediately started calling police stations in the Wattala area. None of the stations said that anyone by the name of Kandasamy was being detained.

After being questioned about her work, Ms. Kandasamy was led back to the van and driven for more than two hours before being finally dropped off in Kandy.

"I told the men I had no money to take a bus. They gave me Rs. 200 and asked me to go home. I got into a bus and called my husband and told him what had happened," she said.

The police have deployed two teams of investigators to follow up on the incident, according to police spokesman Ranjith Gunasekara.

90 day detention order for astrologer - ARREST

Police have obtained an order to detain for 90 days an astrologer who predicted bad times for President Mahinda Rajapaksa. Chandrasiri Bandara who contributes an astrological column to the Sinhala weekly Iriduna was apprehended after the prediction was published in the paper's June 18 edition.

He had stated that Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake would be made President of the country in September this year, while the Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe would become the Prime Minister of the country.

It is learnt that the police were keen to know how he had made such a prediction that slighted the head of state. The UNP has charged that the government was now attempting to control even astrologers while moving towards a dictatorship.

“We welcome the military successes but we do not approve the dictatorial acts committed on the strength of these successes,” UNP General Secretary Tisa Attanayake said.

Ultimatum for Jaffna newspaper

Newspaper agents in Jaffna received an unsigned letter yesterday demanding the closure of the Jaffna newspaper “Uthayan” at the end of the month.

The letter said the agents should not sell the newspaper and the Uthayan staff should not report to work after June 30.

The matter had been brought to the notice of the army and police in Jaffna. The threat comes less than three days after some 6,000 copies of Tamil language newspapers, including the Uthayan, were burnt in Jaffna town.

This is not the time to charge, fine and jail journalists – PROTEST

Eight media organisations in Sri Lanka have called on President Mahinda Rajapaksa to reconsider the re-activation of the Sri Lanka Press Council Law under which journalists could be fined or jailed. The organisations have sent a joint memorandum to President Rajapaksa about the Government’s move.

The full statement is as follows:

“It is with a sense of deep concern and disappointment that the media organisations herein under mentioned have learned of the re- activation of the Sri Lanka Press Council Law No 5 of 1973 which has the power to fine and/or sentence journalists and publishers to terms of imprisonment. A media culture cannot be based on slapping charges against journalists, fining them or sending them to jail. Instead the modern world has accepted a self-regulatory mechanism by media persons themselves as the way forward. The Sri Lanka Press Council Law has a controversial history. It was meant to have a ‘chilling effect’ on media freedom, which included the power, inter-alia, to send journalists and publishers to jail.

“ On October 13, 1994 by Cabinet Paper No. 94.11.009, Your Excellency gave your consent to establish a self regulatory mechanism in place of the Statutory Press Council. It is our understanding that this consent was given because Your Excellency believed the Press Council which could impose penal punishment on journalists was an archaic piece of legislation and self regulation was a more democratic means of regulating the press.

“Your Excellency will remember that as Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you spoke (Hansard 2002 June 18 Col 888) for an independent and responsible press in Sri Lanka when an amendment was brought to the said Law to repeal the laws relating to criminal defamation. Your Excellency is no doubt aware this amendment was passed unanimously by Parliament. Following the passage of the amendment the Sri Lanka Press Council Law was made inoperative in or about 2003.

“A series of consultations between media associations in Sri Lanka and leaders of all political parties represented in Parliament had culminated in broad, bi-partisan agreement being reached that the newspaper industry would appoint a self regulatory mechanism as a ‘fair exchange’ for the repeal of laws relating to criminal defamation that were used as an instrument of government repression on media practitioners at the time. Consequently, media organizations united, and together with the newspaper industry, established the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka, under the provisions of the Arbitration Act No. 11 of 1995, six years ago. Unlike the Press Council, the Press Complaints Commission is no financial burden to the State or the complainant.

“It is in these circumstances that the media organizations regret that the Government has reneged on its earlier commitment to support self-regulation. Furthermore, our disappointment stems from the fact that the Government did not consider it useful, or prudent, or both, to have any dialogue whatsoever with the under-mentioned media organisations, which represent the vast majority of publishers, editors, working journalists, media trade unionists and activists who overwhelmingly support the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka.

However, if any problem exists with respect to the system of self-regulation, such problem(s) should be discussed and resolved immediately. But it’s indeed disconcerting to note that instead of strengthening the systems of self-regulation, the Government has opted to re-activate the Sri Lanka Press Council law No 5 of 1973 which impedes media freedom in Sri Lanka.

“We, the under mentioned media organisations urge the Government to reconsider this ill advised decision and have a dialogue with us, the stake-holders to promote self-regulation as part of media culture in the interest of democracy and a responsible and free press in Sri Lanka.

In view of the public importance of this matter we will be releasing this letter to the media.”

***Sri Lanka Working Journalists’ Association, - Sri Lanka Tamil Media Alliance,
Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum, - Federation of Media Employees’ Trade Unions,
South Asian Free Media Association (Sri Lanka Chapter), - Free Media Movement,
Newspaper Society of Sri Lanka, - The Editors’ Guild of Sri Lanka,***

This must stop: SLPI

The Sri Lanka Press Institute yesterday said it was deeply disturbed about the re-appearance of the dreaded white van to abduct journalist Krishni Ifham (Kandasamy). She was bundled into the white van outside her mother’s Wattala home and driven apparently to Kandy by three people (the driver and two others) who she believed were policemen as they told her they wanted a statement from her.

This young mother of two who works for the Inter News, a media development institution, had at the end of her long ordeal been asked some questions about her previous employment in the Panos office in Colombo. She was then dropped off at the Kandy bus stand with Rs. 200 bus fare to get home to Wattala, a statement from the SLPI said.

She first lodged a complaint with the Wattala police and thereafter at the Kiribathgoda police station as requested by the police, as the area she lives in comes under the jurisdiction of the latter.

“The SLPI has no quarrel with the journalist, like any other citizen, being questioned by a legitimate law enforcement agency in connection with any investigation that is underway. If this was the case, she could have been requested to report to a specified police station or even taken there with a chaperone, and any questions that needed answers asked and a statement duly recorded, the SLPI said.

But why a white van and, presumably, a drive to Kandy? The victim does not know exactly where she was taken because there were curtains on the van and she could not see where it was heading. She presumes it was Kandy because she was eventually dropped off at the Kandy bus stand, the Institute said.

According to the SLPI statement Ms. Ifham says she was in no way harassed, was given a bun and a sachet of milk and questioned in a civilized manner. No statement, however, had been recorded. As this is being written, nothing further has been heard about this matter and there had been neither an admission nor denial of the suspicion that an agency of the state was involved.

Other more serious cases including the killing of Sunday Leader editor Lasantha Wickramatunga followed by an assault on Rivira editor Upali Tennakoon, and more recently, assaulting and breaking Lake House journalist Poddala Jayantha’s leg, remain unsolved. There is a strong perception both locally and overseas that the harassment of journalists bears a State imprimatur. Such will be the general belief until it is proved otherwise, the statement added.

“We stress with all the emphasis at our command that this must stop. If an agency of the State is in fact involved, those responsible must be brought to account. If not, whoever is engaging in such actions is clearly intent on falsely implicating the State and must be urgently brought to book,” the SLPI said.

“The war against terror is now thankfully over. But there have been too many incidents involving journalists to discount an attempt at creating a fear psychosis in the media and preventing the airing of subjects that may be unpalatable to some in authority. This must stop,” the SLPI said.

http://www.sundaytimes.lk/090628/News/sundaytimesnews_16.html

STOP ORDER TO PEACE SECRETARIAT

The Daily Mirror, 30 June 2009 - The presidential secretariat yesterday directed the closure of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) at the end of next month, Director General Rajiva Wijesinghe said.

“We have not been told of any specific reason for the decision although we have been discussing such a scenario since last week,” Prof. Wijesinghe said. “I don’t want to speculate on the decision neither comment on it or appeal for a reconsideration.”

Prof. Wijesinghe said SCOPP was going ahead with the process of closing down but the future of the SCOPP staff was uncertain since most of them were employed on a contract basis. He said about half of the operational staff had been laid off a few weeks ago and it was still not clear whether they would be absorbed into public service.

Prof. Wijesinghe said that despite his assurances two weeks ago that SCOPP would not close down the decision on the future of SCOPP was not in his hands but that of the presidential secretariat.

http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/firmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=53315

SCOPP DISBANDED

The Island, 30 June 2009 - The Presidential Secretariat yesterday despatched a directive winding up the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) by the end of July. SCOPP was established in 2002 after then UNF government entered a Cease Fire Agreement with the LTTE. The first Secretary General was Bernard Gunathilake, now the Chairman of Sri Lanka Tourist Board.

The Military staff of the SCOPP comprising 22 has already withdrawn and there are another 25 employees working on contractual basis. They had been informed of the termination. Some of them would be absorbed into the Ministries, sources said.

The present Secretary General of SCOPP Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha said that there was now no need for the institution.

Prof. Wijesinha will continue as the Secretary of the Ministry of Human Rights and Disaster Management.

<http://www.island.lk/2009/06/30/news13.html>

APRC GETS ONE MONTH

ALL PARTY COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT RECONCILIATION FORMED

Daily Mirror, 1 July 2009 - The All Party Representative Committee (APRC) set up to work out proposals to resolve the ethnic conflict now faces an uncertain future after the Peace Secretariat which functioned as the APRC secretariat was asked to wind up its affairs by the end of this month. However when contacted by Daily Mirror the chief of the government peace secretariat Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha said the APRC would be given one month’s time to complete its deliberations and submit a final document

but other alternatives would be looked at in case the APRC failed to complete its work within the stipulated deadline.

The Secretariat for Co-ordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) co-ordinated the APRC sessions while also providing translators and interpreters.

Nizam Kariapper who represents the SLMC at the APRC told Daily Mirror yesterday that in the absence of SCOPP the APRC too could no longer function. He said it was SCOPP Director General Rajiva Wijesinha or someone on his behalf who convened the APRC meetings.

JHU front-liner and Western Provincial Minister Udaya Gammanpila said the government had now realized the work of the APRC was a time-wasting exercise.

“Without SCOPP, the APRC is like a dancer without a stage,” he said and added that the APRC was created to function in tandem with the military operations against the LTTE.

“Even parties such as the UNP, the JVP, the JHU and the MEP are not represented in the All Party Representative Committee,” Mr. Gamanpila said.

The All Party Conference constituted by President Mahinda Rajapaksa formed the APRC in June 2006 with a mandate to evolve a consensus with all political parties in resolving the national question. But subsequently the main opposition UNP broke away from the Committee stating that the parties in the ruling coalition should first reach a consensus on how best to resolve the longstanding conflict prior to getting the other political parties to agree to a solution. The JVP too boycotted the APRC soon after participating in a few sessions.

Last year, the JHU and the MEP kept away from the APRC while at present the only opposition parties represented in the APRC are the SLMC and the Democratic People's Front.

The Committee has held 120 sessions so far, but has failed to work out a comprehensive power devolution formula.

APRC Chairman Tissa Vitharana could not be contacted for his comments.

Meanwhile, President Mahinda Rajapaksa has decided to appoint an all party committee to look into issues pertaining to development and reconciliation and to recommend measures to be taken to deal with them.

The Government Information Department said in a statement yesterday that this committee would meet for the first time tomorrow, in the Presidential Secretariat, with President Rajapaksa in the chair.

It added that all political parties would be invited for this meeting and issues pertaining to development and politics would be taken up.

MR wants consensus

President Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday emphasised the need for dialogue among the constituent parties of the government on post-war reconciliation, and asked government members to avoid making comments on other related issues till a consensus was reached.

The President met leaders of the political parties to discuss various issues pertaining to a political solution to the national question.

The meeting came a day after the JHU threatened to quit the government if it went ahead with the full implementation of the 13th Amendment including the devolution of police powers.

Meanwhile, Transport Minister Dullas Allahapperuma said that President Mahinda Rajapaksa was determined to implement a political solution as he had made a firm promise in Parliament recently.

Speaking at a press briefing at the Mahaweli Centre in Colombo yesterday, Mr. Allahapperuma said that, after the defeat of LTTE terrorism, the President had mentioned three important points in Parliament -- and one of these was the political solution. He said the President had said his solution would not be a "**carbon copy**" of any other country's solution.

Answering a question from a journalist, he said that it was a healthy sign that there were diverse views within the ruling coalition on the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. The minister urged the people to trust the President, who kept his promises without getting involved in unnecessary arguments.

http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/firmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=53447

SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT DISSOLVES HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

By Sarath Kumara

22 June 2009

www.wsws.org

On June 16, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse dissolved the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (CoI) that he appointed two years ago to investigate human rights violations. This move is another demonstration by the government of its contempt for legal and democratic rights and opposition to any probe of the abuses committed by its security forces and their associated paramilitaries.

The eight-member CoI, headed by a former Supreme Court judge Nissanka Udalagama, was appointed in November 2006 to head off international criticism over a series of killings that accompanied the government's resumption of military offensives against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

In particular, there was outrage over the execution-style killing of 17 aid workers from the French-based Action Contre la Faim (ACF) in eastern Muttur, on August 4, 2006.

To provide some window-dressing, the government listed this and 15 other cases for the inquiry and Rajapakse extended its term every six months as required by law. But no extension was granted this time, even though the Col had only investigated seven cases, and issued no reports, after two and a half years of foot-dragging, official obstruction and killing and intimidation of witnesses.

Udalagama told the Associated Press: "Extensions had been routinely granted in the past, but not this time. Instead, the commission was dissolved." Rajapakse provided no public explanation. Secretary of the human rights ministry Rajiva Wijesinha told the media: "I have no idea what the reasoning is."

The decision to shut down the Col is in line with the government's consistent refusal to allow any investigation into the abductions, killings and disappearances by paramilitaries and death squads associated with the security forces, which have become the order of the day since Rajapakse plunged the country back to war after taking office in 2005.

Similarly, the government has dismissed calls for an independent or internationally-monitored to probe into the military's brutal attacks in the final battles with the LTTE, which resulted in the deaths of thousands of Tamil civilians. The government and the military have forced nearly 300,000 civilians who fled the war zone into internment camps in northern Vavuniya.

The government has been emboldened by a May 27 vote in the UN Human Rights Council to commend the regime's "continued commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights". The resolution, backed by China and Russia, defeated a motion by European Union countries, supported by the US, for an international war crimes investigation.

The vote had nothing to do with defending human rights in Sri Lanka, but marked the intensifying rivalry between the major powers for influence in the strategically-located island and South Asia more broadly in the wake of the LTTE's defeat. The hypocrisy of the EU and US is demonstrated by their support for Rajapakse's war since 2006.

A brief review of some of the high profile cases listed to be dealt with by the Col indicates why the government shut down the investigations.

* The assassination of Joseph Pararajasingham, a member of parliament of the pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in December 2005 in the eastern city of Batticaloa. An eye-witness account suggested that paramilitary elements associated with the military were responsible. The murder was a calculated provocation aimed at fuelling communal tensions, goading the LTTE into responding and laying the basis for war.

* The cold-blooded murder of five students on January 2, 2006 in the eastern town of Trincomalee, close to the navy complex. They had been murdered at close range and eye-witnesses blamed the security forces. Many of the students' relatives fled the country and took part in the inquiry via video link, before the government stopped the Col taking video testimony. Col chairman Udalagama implicated the security forces in the killing, telling the Associated Press last week: "What we think is that someone in uniform did it."

* The slaying of the 17 ACF aid workers in August 2006, shortly after open warfare began. Fifteen of the bodies were found in a row, shot in the head, and two others who had tried to escape had been shot from the back. The international Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) that oversaw the 2002 ceasefire agreement between Colombo and the LTTE stated that the army was responsible for the killing. The SLMM formally ruled that the murders were "a gross violation of the ceasefire by the security forces of Sri Lanka" and described the murders as "one of the most serious recent crimes against humanitarian aid workers worldwide".

Among the cases that the Col could not complete were the assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, the bombing of a civilian bus at Kebithigollewa, the killings of TNA MP Nadarajah Raviraj and Peace Secretariat deputy director K.P. Loganathan, and the recovery of five headless bodies at Awissawella, south east of Colombo. The killing of Kadirgamar was particularly significant. While the government blamed the LTTE, the murder could well have been carried out by Sinhala extremists or even the military. The assassination immediately strengthened the hand of those in the Colombo establishment bitterly opposed to the 2002 ceasefire and pressing for a renewed war.

After international human rights bodies criticised the government's refusal to permit an independent investigation of these crimes, in 2007 Rajapakse appointed an International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP) headed by a former Indian supreme court chief justice to observe the Col's investigations. In April 2008, however, the IIGEP terminated its work, accusing the government of a "lack of political will" to ensure proper investigations, of failing to protect witnesses and of operating without transparency. In some cases, witnesses were murdered, fled the country or were subject to intimidation to prevent them giving evidence.

Foreign human rights organisations have condemned the closure of the Col, with Amnesty International demanding that the Col's concluded reports be "made public immediately." Amnesty declared that "not a single one [of the 17 cases] resulted in any justice" from the Colombo government, "either through the judicial system or through this Presidential Col."

The rampant violation of democratic rights is continuing on every front. Last week, the US-based Committee for Protection of Journalists (CPJ) issued a report noting that 11 Sri Lankan journalists had fled the country during the 12 months to the end of May. A total of 39 journalists across the globe were forced from their countries, but Sri Lanka had by far the highest number of fleeing reporters, the report said.

The Sri Lankan exodus came amid a series of killings and violent attacks designed to silence any criticism of the war or the government. Police officially drew a "blank" on the January 2009 murder of *Sunday Leader* editor Lasantha Wickrematunge, which followed the ransacking of the Sirasa/MTV private television station.

Without producing a shred of evidence, government leaders have declared that abductions, disappearances and extrajudicial killings were the work of political opponents seeking to tarnish the government's image.

Likewise, Rajapakse has declared in his public speeches since the defeat of the LTTE that the military did not kill a single civilian during the war, which he and his government dubbed a "humanitarian operation". Visiting the former LTTE stronghold in eastern Mullaithivu on Friday, army commander General Sarath Fonseka claimed that the Sri Lankan army was "one of the most disciplined armies in the world".

The dissolution of the Col marks a further strengthening of the hands of the military after the war. It is another message that the government will not hesitate to ride roughshod over the democratic rights of the working and rural masses. Instead, it will allow the military and associated paramilitary groups to act with immunity and above the law.

The End

SRI LANKA AND THE EU LOSING TOUCH WITH OLD FRIENDS

The Economist, 3 September 2009 - RARELY has a government soiled its reputation as dramatically as Sri Lanka's. In recent months President Mahinda Rajapaksa's regime has won a war and lost the love of many allies.

Its alleged wartime and other abuses make a grim catalogue: thousands of Tamil civilians allegedly killed by army shelling during the rebels' last stand; scores of Tamils disappeared; nearly 300,000 Tamil war-displaced callously interned; murder and intimidation of journalists—including J.S. Tissainayagam, sentenced to 20 years hard labour on August 31st for criticising the army's tactics .

There is not much high-minded western countries—to whom Sri Lanka once looked for aid money—can do about this. Mr Rajapaksa has found alternative friends, in China, Libya, Pakistan—and others, who recently scotched a European effort to launch a war-crimes investigation into Sri Lanka. But the Europeans do have one wrench on Mr Rajapaksa's government: a trade concession known as "GSP Plus". This boon, which has helped make exports to the EU the country's biggest source of foreign exchange, worth \$3.3 billion last year, is up for review. Judging by an EU-commissioned report on Sri Lanka's compliance with its terms, which include stipulations on human rights, it can kiss the concession goodbye.

The confidential 130-page report, which has been obtained by The Economist, concludes that Sri Lanka has failed to honour important human-rights commitments, and is ineligible for GSP Plus. Widespread police torture, abductions of journalists, politicised courts and uninvestigated disappearances have all played a part in creating a state of "complete or virtually complete impunity in Sri Lanka". The internment of the Tamil displaced, which the government claims is necessary to weed out the last Tamil Tiger rebels and to protect them from munitions left in their fields, is "a novel form of unacknowledged detention".

A final decision on GSP Plus is not due until October. The government, which barred the report's authors from visiting Sri Lanka, called the study "outrageous" but seems resigned to losing the trade preference: a senior official in the trade ministry, S. Ranugge, admitted: "GSP Plus is very unlikely."

Perhaps this does not bother Mr Rajapaksa: defying the West is part of his appeal. Anyway, his minions recently secured a \$2.6 billion loan from the IMF. But as an indicator of where one of Asia's oldest democracies may be headed, it should worry Sri Lankans, and all who wish their country well.

http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14384352

SRI LANKA EXPELS UNICEF OFFICIAL

BBC World News, 6 September 2009 - Sri Lankan authorities have ordered a senior United Nations official to leave the country over comments he made during the war with Tamil Tiger rebels. James Elder's visa has been cancelled over his "propaganda in support of the Tigers", a spokesman told the BBC.

Mr Elder, a spokesman for the UN children's agency, Unicef, regularly spoke to the media on the plight of children caught up in the conflict.

Sri Lanka declared victory in its war against Tamil Tigers in May. Mr Elder had raised UN concerns over the fate of children and civilians regularly during the final stages of the government assault in northern Sri Lanka. In February, he said he had seen injuries suffered by the children, including "babies with shrapnel wounds, gun shot injuries and blast wounds". He also condemned the recruitment of young children by the Tigers.

P.B. Abeykoon, an official at the department of immigration, said Mr Elder's visa had been cancelled as of 7 September and he had been ordered to leave immediately.

"But the UN appealed for more time and we extended until 21 September," Mr Abeykoon told AFP news agency. He said the government decision had been taken months earlier. *(Excerpt)*

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8240415.stm

UNICEF SAYS TMVP STILL HAS CHILD SOLDIERS

Daily Mirror, 17 July 2009 - The UN Children's agency UNICEF has informed the Thamil Makkal Viduthalai Pullikal (TMVP) that there are more than 100 child soldiers still believed to be with the party, a claim the TMVP firmly denies. UNICEF officials told Daily Mirror according to the latest UNICEF database as of May 31 there are 107 outstanding cases of child soldiers with the TMVP of which 30 are under the age of 18 and 77 were underage at the time they were recruited but are now adults.

The TMVP had announced a few months back that it had handed over the last of the remaining child soldiers to UNICEF who in turn placed them at rehabilitation camps where several child soldiers, mostly from the LTTE are being rehabilitated. When contacted TMVP spokesman Azad Maulana confirmed that UNICEF had in fact contacted them over an outstanding number of child soldiers but added that the children may have been recruited by "other groups" operating in the East.

"We don't have any child soldiers with us. We have been approached by UNICEF over some 30 outstanding cases. We feel there might be some other groups taking these children using our name. Our party leader Chief Minister Sivanesanathurai Chandrakanthan will meet UNICEF officials to discuss the issue," Maulana told Daily Mirror.

The TMVP is working closely with the Government and the UNICEF to rehabilitate the children. The Government has done much for the welfare of these children. In addition, UNICEF has also arranged a series of programs for the benefit of these children, a UNICEF official said.

UNICEF said the Government and the TMVP has made a firm commitment to put an end to the child soldier issue. Concrete action has been taken on this issue under the new agreement signed on December 7 last year. **(ER)**
http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=55035

DOUGLAS FEELS DEFEATED IN POLLS

10 August 2009, Daily Mirror - EPDP Leader Social Services and Social Welfare Minister Douglas Devananda said yesterday though he could get nine of his members elected to the Jaffna Municipal Council, he was not happy with the election results.

The EPDP fielded 20 candidates under the UPFA's betel symbol for the election, and nine of them have been returned. There were four other Muslims, three from the All Ceylon Muslim Congress and **one from the SLFP** were elected to the Municipal Council on the UPFA ticket. Mr. Devananda who spearheaded the campaign said that he could have won 17 slots easily, but did not achieve it due to various other reasons. **"So, I feel like being defeated at the election," he said.** He declined to comment and outline them when asked for the reasons.

http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=57494

".....THEY HAVE LOCKED THEM UP LIKE ANIMALS"

V. Anandasangaree

New York Times, 10 July 2009, CHEDDIKULAM, Sri Lanka — "The government told these people it would look after them," said Veerasingham Anandasangaree, a prominent Tamil politician who has been a staunch supporter of the government's fight against the Tamil Tigers. "But instead they have locked them up like animals with no date certain of when they will be released. This is simply asking for another conflict later on down the road." *(Excerpt)*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/11/world/asia/11lanka.html>