



TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

26th January 2009

Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP
The Foreign Secretary
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Dear Mr Miliband,

The response to the Ministerial Statement of 21 Jan 2009

A large number of Sri Lankan Tamils would have been very disappointed like myself to read your Ministerial Statement on Sri Lankan conflict.

If you claim that Her Majesty's government have long standing concern with the promotion of peace in Sri Lanka where the decades long conflict has claimed more than 70,000 lives, have you done anything constructively to bring these two warring factions to the negotiating table to find a political solution?

In January 2008, the Sri Lankan government abrogated the ceasefire agreement unilaterally as they did with Dudley-Chelva pact and Banda-Chelva pact before. You confirm that the Sri Lankan government has embarked on a policy of militarily defeating the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It has been concluded by many observers, including the IPKF generals that LTTE could not be defeated militarily and a negotiated political settlement is the way forward. In fact the Indian Foreign Secretary Mr. S. Menon confirmed it last week after visiting Colombo. If your assertion is correct ie the LTTE has no democratic mandate to represent the Tamil people, why did Ragiv Gandhi talk to the LTTE in Thimpu (1985), why did Chandrika Kumaratunge invite the Norwegians to work out the Peace Process with the LTTE? We can not undermine their efforts in trying to bring about peace or relegate those negotiations and ceasefire years to the backwoods just because of the Sri Lankan government's fortunes in Vanni. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA), which accepted the LTTE as the sole legitimate representatives of the Tamils won 22 seats out of 24 in the 2004 general elections.

You state your position that for peace to be sustainable, an inclusive political process that fully into account the legitimate concerns of all Sri Lankan communities is essential. There are 22 Tamil National Assembly members who are not even invited to take part in the All Party peace process initiated by the government. What is your comment on that?

As you correctly say there are nearly 300,000 IDP are suffering in the conflict area. The SL government evicted all foreign NGOs from the area and continue to bomb innocent civilians (including the use of cluster bombs) assuming all Tamils in Vanni are LTTE members. Reports are coming in every day about the civilian casualties. Even hospitals, school and churches have been damaged by indiscriminate bombing.



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If there is any one out there to help these hapless innocent people including the children and the elderly, this is the time of need.

It is a wise move to send an official to supervise the humanitarian efforts and funding. Sri Lanka hasn't got good track record for handling foreign donations satisfactorily especially after the tsunami fiasco.

The late Sunday Leader Editor Lasantha Wickrematunge, after few attempts on his life before, foresaw his own death, hinted at the identity of the killers from within the ranks of SL government and laid out detailed account of what he saw as Sri Lanka's descent into persecution of citizens and flouting democracy. In his final momentous editorial he wrote: "When finally I am killed, it will be the government that kills me". Addressing the president – close friend – he said: "In the wake of my death I know you will make all the usual sanctimonious noises and call upon the police to hold a swift and thorough inquiry. But like all the inquiries you have ordered in the past, nothing will come of this one too. For truth be told, we both know who will be behind my death". This editorial was published by the Sunday Leader after the editor's death. If this is the treatment for a Sinhalese, God help the Tamils!

We are all supporting your statement that those responsible must be held to account and the lack of progress in securing convictions for such cases indicates that urgent action is needed. When concern after concern after concern had been expressed nothing happens as a response from the government. It is worth asking about all those inquiries which started and went nowhere.

The whole world seem to be ignoring the plea from the Tamils who are driven from pillar to post. What is the response of the civilised world to the misery and death of indigenous Tamils? Those who escaped from Vanni to the government controlled areas are alleged to be kept in barbed wire fenced camps, reminiscent of Guantanamo.

You could use your good offices to halt this human catastrophe by calling a cease fire. Like the Prime Minister, the EU and the Vatican have expressed the need for an immediate cease fire. If the fighting stopped it will give time and space for talks. That is the way forward to approach this problem with sincerity.

"We should never negotiate out of fear, but we should never fear to negotiate" – JFK.

Yours sincerely

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Tamil Writers Guild