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5 May 2014

His Holiness Pope Francis PP,
Suite 201
The Domus Sanctae Marthae
Vatican City

cc. (post to:)
His Holiness Pope Francis PP.
00120 Via del Pellegrino
Citta del Vaticano

Dear Holy Father

Greetings from an elderly experienced Catholic layman from England who has lived through seven pontificates and is thankful that the Holy Spirit has presently endowed us with a Holy Father who has infused our church with new energy and whose love is obviously focused on obtaining justice for the poor and the downtrodden. Although I am aware of the higher realms of Theology and Philosophy of the Catholic church, if one were to distill the message of Jesus Christ to its simplest form, I would say that it is:

- i). To love God in everything we do,
- ii). to love your neighbour as yourself, and
- iii). that God in his love sent his only begotten Son to redeem us.

It is 'love' that is common to these Truths and everything else seems to flow from these truths.

Holy Father, you have been demonstrating how to live these truths to the church and the world with your simplicity and humility. The poor, the downtrodden and the marginalised are feeling God's love through your ministry and I wish to bring the fate of the downtrodden Tamils in Sri Lanka to your kind notice. I have attached eight documents to this letter that should provide an honest historical background to this international scourge.

The Roman Catholic Bishops Conference of Sri Lanka is headed by Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, the Archbishop of Colombo (a Sinhalese) with a predominant majority of Sinhalese Bishops and a minority of Tamil Bishops. There is a form of insidious structural Sinhala racism in the country that is supported by the government which has even pervaded the Catholic church. I should tell you that I am a senior Tamil finance professional who had to leave Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1967 to go to live in the UK because of discrimination and violence in the country.

I joined the international head office of the Royal Dutch Shell Oil group and eventually rose to become a senior finance management executive in the group. I could not have attained a similar position in Sri Lanka because I was a Tamil and there were Sinhala Language tests foisted on Tamils in order to obstruct their careers. The Sinhala government did what Hitler did to the

Jews. I am also a Eucharist minister and a reader in our local Catholic parish church. You have recently met with the Bishops of Sri Lanka on their Ad Limina visit to the Vatican. In so far as the Christians are concerned, the Island nation of Sri Lanka is divided between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils. Unfortunately, it is a country that has experienced over 60 years of injustice for the Tamils ever since obtaining independence from the British. It resulted in twenty years of a vicious government war waged on the Tamils to oppress them, where hundreds of thousands of Tamils died, and almost a million Tamils were expelled to recommence their lives in hardship as refugees in foreign countries. Tamil Catholic priests and some Tamil Catholic Bishops were driven to protecting their flock from the savage bombings and strafing by Sri Lankan government military artillery and airforce planes, and some were killed and others forever exiled.

It is difficult to get the truth in the midst of so much false government propaganda. But the majority Sinhalese Catholic establishment remained solidly behind the President and his brother in pursuing this rapacious war against the Tamils. We were particularly disappointed that Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith chose to become an active backer of the murderous war launched by President Rajapakse under the guise of a war against terrorism. It was a war against Tamil youth fighting for liberation from racist oppression. He even came to the Vatican with a well known racist Buddhist monk to influence Pope John Paul II in favour of the Sri Lankan President and his evil war against the Tamils. He has even arranged private papal audiences for this notorious President and his wife, much to the chagrin of the Tamil Catholics and the Western world.

There is talk that you are proposing to make a visit to that accursed island. It might be the handiwork of Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith to get the ultimate approval from the Holy Father, while Rajapakse is accused of being a State Terrorist by the United Nations Human Rights Council. Please do not get dragged into the spider's web that is woven by Cardinal Ranjith who is only seeking to restore President Rajapakse's damaged credibility. If you have to go, please do what Prime Minister David Cameron of the UK did; also go to Jaffna accompanied only by the Tamil Bishops and certainly not with Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, who is anti-Tamil in his inner soul. I would suggest in confidence that Bishop Rayappu Joseph is someone loved by the Tamils and you could have a quiet word with him.

He is also the Bishop who was in charge of the miraculous shrine of Our Lady of Madhu close to his seat in Mannar, where tens of thousands pilgrims go every year to pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The historic statue of Our Lady of Madhu was found in the woods around Madhu under miraculous circumstances during Portuguese colonial times some 350 years ago and a church was built around it. Centuries of devotion have made it a national shrine to Our Lady. Madhu is our local 'Fatima'. It would be a great gesture of solidarity with all the pilgrims (and all Catholics) if you could visit the national shrine of Our Lady of Madhu with the Bishop of Mannar and seek her blessings for peace on all the different communities in Sri Lanka.

Suffice it to say that despite the desperate attempts of the Sri Lanka government to cover up its serious human rights abuses of murder, rape, abduction and mass killings, on the basis of evidence submitted to it by its Human Rights Commissioner, the UN Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva earlier this year resolved to set up an independent International Tribunal to investigate mainly these war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against the Tamil

civilians. The chief accused are Mr Mahinda Rajapakse, the President of Sri Lanka and his brother, Gotabaya Rajapakse, the Defence Minister. I am certain that their fate will eventually be to be brought for trial before the International Criminal Court on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Justice will prevail after that is done.

We pray for your prayers and blessings for the oppressed Tamil people. Please, dear Holy Father, I most gratefully request you to send me, my wife and our two married son and daughter, their spouses and children, your apostolic blessings.

May God bless and protect you.
Yours truly in Christ Jesus

Ivan Pedropillai
Ivan Pedropillai

Encl: Letter from UNP to the Secretary General of the Commonwealth - 30 April 2014
SLMC's damning report on religious violence leaked
My letter to Pope John Paul II in December 1998

Letter from the Secretary General of the United National Party in Sri Lanka to the Secretary General of the Commonwealth - 30 April 2014

<http://www.lankasrinews.com/view.php?224YY5n2202emBBd4eeoOOIdcca0C6AAedddA4MWeaacallOU3e44ZBmm3003c55YO23>

His Excellency Secretary General of the Commonwealth
Marlborough House
Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom

Your Excellency,

It is as a matter of great urgency that we are compelled to bring to your attention the continuous violation of Commonwealth values by the current Chair of your esteemed organisation and the failure of the Commonwealth to take meaningful steps to rectify this dire situation.

The most recent incident of State-orchestrated violence occurred in the home district of the Commonwealth's present Chairman in office Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, when five parliamentarians of the main opposition, United National Party (UNP) were brutally assaulted by goons affiliated with the regime.

These elected representatives were on a fact finding visit to the controversial Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA) and the Magampura Mahinda Rajapaksa Port, both pet projects of the ruling regime, both costing at least US \$ 1.5 billion, both

shrouded in allegations of corruption and wastage and by all indications sprawling white elephants that have gobbled colossal sums of Sri Lankan tax payer money.

According to independent media reports, the five MPs were first harassed and intimidated when they were coming out of the MRJA. Live television pictures showed the Mayor of President Rajapaksa's hometown carrying a pistol while a large crowd manhandled the MPs. The Mayor has claimed he was acting on the direction of the President's powerful son and Hambantota District Parliamentarian Namal Rajapaksa. As has become the norm, Police personnel watched while the regime backed goons assaulted the MPs and attacked the vehicle they were travelling in. Complaints have been lodged with the police officially, yet the opposition does not dare hope for justice from a judiciary that has been beaten into submission after the Government illegally sacked the country's most senior judge and appointed an administration puppet in her place.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa not only failed to condemn this attack on elected representatives of the country's national legislature, he defended the actions of the mob, claiming 'the people' of the area had been 'angered' by the Opposition's denouncing of development projects in the region. President Rajapaksa's state controlled press, defended the attack on the Parliamentarians, claiming that Sri Lankan protestors pelting rotten eggs at Opposition legislators and vandalising their vehicle in the South were merely exercising the same right of democratic dissent as Britons who threw pies at UK MPs to signal their displeasure over policy.

The Opposition fact-finding mission provided the Government with a golden opportunity to showcase its commitment to the much touted Commonwealth values. The MPs committed no crime. They were democratically elected people's representatives seeking to uphold the rule of law, good governance, transparency and the people's right to information. As an organisation that holds democratic principles and tradition close to its heart, the Commonwealth must believe in the importance of democratic opposition and its role in maintaining checks and balances within a democracy. In fact, Sri Lanka is not only Chair in Office of the Commonwealth, but also recently held the Chair of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, an auxiliary arm that is concerned specifically with strengthening parliamentary democracy.

Tragically it now appears that there is no greater illustration of the disdain of the Chair of the Commonwealth for all these values.

Your Chairman has blatantly disregarded all assurances provided to you personally and to the greater Commonwealth to change his Government's brutish ways after assuming office last November.

The truth is Mr Secretary General, Sri Lanka's democracy, once vibrant and proud is under siege.

Your Excellency, for Sri Lankans opposed to the autocratic rule of President Rajapaksa

and his Government, these are daily challenges. This Government that hosted Commonwealth Heads of Government in a reiteration of organisational values has shot and killed civilians engaged in lawful, democratic protest against state policy and injustice in cold blood over the past three years. Democratic challenges to the excesses of President Rajapaksa's regime are met with increasingly brutal force. On several tragic occasions they have even been met with live ammunition fired upon unsuspecting, unarmed men, women and children. The most recent of these tragedies, you will recall, took place mere months before the Commonwealth summit unfolded in Colombo, when the military opened fire on a civilian protest demanding clean drinking water, killing three young men, two of them just schoolboys.

This now is the example that is set by the Chair of the Commonwealth.

Your Excellency, you may recall that the first female Chief Justice in our 200 year old judiciary was impeached in 2013 through a process that was deemed illegal at that time. It is a process deemed flawed and illegal by independent legal experts commissioned by your own office immediately after the impeachment took place.

As glaringly evident during the illegal impeachment process, the present Chairman in office of the Commonwealth, President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his Government have gone to great lengths to systematically undermine every democratic institution in Sri Lanka.

President Rajapaksa repealed the 17th Amendment to the Constitution that ensured the functioning of an independent judiciary, police and a public service. The draconian 18th Amendment that replaced it, took away the term limits of the Presidency, paving the way for an incumbent to rule for life. Journalists have been killed, exiled, bought or intimidated in to silence and the people have been denied their right to information. Over the past 18 months, under the watch of President Rajapaksa's administration, ethnic and religious minorities have been continuously persecuted through hate speech and violence by regime backed extremist elements. There has hardly been any measure to address the serious violations of human rights during the last phase of the conflict.

In fact the methods deployed in the North during the conflict have now been brought to the South, as witnessed in Weliveriya where the army was ordered to shoot and massacre innocent civilians who just demanded safe drinking water.

As Chair in Office, the Sri Lankan Government is expected to affirm, adhere to and implement the Commonwealth Charter ratified by all 54 member states in Perth in 2011. Sri Lanka has amply demonstrated its failure to live up to this Charter, repeatedly and consistently. We urge Your Excellency, to summon an emergency meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group to discuss this grievous state of affairs. If this is impossible, as Sri Lanka's main opposition we urge that the matter be given due consideration at the next CMAG meeting, in order to preserve the dignity and the credibility of the Commonwealth.

We recall your enthusiastic support of the Sri Lankan government in its bid to host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) last year. Despite the serious breaches of democratic practices and Commonwealth values as witnessed in the two week long, highly flawed impeachment process of the Chief Justice and the numerous violations of human rights, impunity over cases of violence against religious and ethnic minorities, journalists and dissidents, we in the opposition were encouraged by your assurances that you have managed to garner assurances from the ruling regime that it would uphold Commonwealth principles and values, specifically regarding the judiciary and the rule of law.

We recall that you promised Sri Lanka would put plans in place to change its legislative procedures to remove senior judges within weeks of a key meeting of a Commonwealth Ministers Grouping (CMAG) in April last year. We were further encouraged by your announcement that the Commonwealth Secretariat will assist Sri Lanka in setting up a National Inquiry on Torture on the eve of CHOGM. Repeatedly we have been told that the Commonwealth Secretariat had in fact initiated a process that would bring the issue of national reconciliation under Commonwealth scrutiny and compliance.

In June last year, you appealed to the world to wait before they judge Sri Lanka. Your confidence in the bona fides of President Rajapaksa's Government has been unshakable.

Yet all of those promises made to you, personally by the Sri Lankan Government have been shamelessly, unrepentantly broken.

The Torture Commission has been delayed indefinitely based on pretentious excuses. The Government has not only failed to put in place a lawful system to discipline top judges in the country, it has wilfully defeated attempts by the opposition, our own party, to table draft legislation that would streamline those processes in accordance with the Commonwealth's own Latimer House Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary.

Rather than embracing Commonwealth values, its current Chair has launched a determined campaign to flaunt them. The judiciary and the law enforcement arms of the State are selectively used against opponents while it blindly looks the other way as was witnessed in the recent incident in Hambantota.

Your Excellency, we have no alternative but to believe that you and the Commonwealth Secretariat are as much victims of President Rajapaksa's machinations as we are.

Today, under President Rajapaksa's stewardship, Sri Lanka's democracy hangs by the barest of threads. It is both tragic and farcical that these events unfold while the country holds the Chair of your esteemed organisation. Will he manage in this two year tenure to do to the Commonwealth what he has done to Sri Lanka's proud democratic traditions? Already Sri Lanka's leadership is costing the Commonwealth dearly in monetary terms. But our fear, Your Excellency, is that at the conclusion of Sri Lanka's term in 2015, the Commonwealth would have lost much more in terms of credibility, relevance and moral authority because of the Sri Lankan Government's actions.

Not only as a member of the Sri Lanka's main opposition but also as a former Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, I implore you to act. This erosion of democracy and fundamental freedoms is no longer only Sri Lanka's crisis. The fate and future credibility of the Commonwealth is inextricably bound to the actions of its Chair in office and his commitment to protect and uphold the Commonwealth Charter during his tenure.

It is your crisis too.

With best wishes,

Yours truly,

Mangala Samaraweera M.P.

Article about the UN HRC probe on Sri Lankan war crimes by Ron Ridenour - 27 March 2014

<http://www.therepublicsquare.com/politics/2014/03/17/slmcs-damning-report-on-religious-violence-leaked/>

SLMC's damning report on religious violence leaked

The SLMC's report on religious violence in Sri Lanka, which has caused much controversy for the party since they submitted it to UN Human Rights chief Navi Pillay, [has been leaked to the media.](#)



The document, seen by Ceylon Today, is described by as “an update of Muslims’ concerns by the SLMC to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.” When it was revealed that the SLMC had submitted it to Pillay, President Rajapaksa is said to have told SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem to either get in line, or get out of the government.

Meanwhile, [Mervyn Silva gave Hakeem a much more sinister warning – saying that “the fate of Prabhakaran” awaited “traitors”](#). The government is clearly incensed that a report which could be used against them at the current UNHRC session was handed over by an ally.

The report states that there were 241 anti-Muslim attacks in 2013, and 61 anti-Christian attacks. 51 of the incidents against Muslims were violent, with 15 of the anti-Christian incidents violent.

118 attacks are attributed to politicians or socio-political movements, and the report criticises law enforcement agencies and officials for their alleged dormancy by stating that in almost all incidents they had failed to protect the fundamental and constitutional rights of the respective victims or organizations.

The highest number of recorded incidents is in Kegalle, with 31 noted.

The report includes a full chronological account of all the incidents, which includes the attack on a mosque in Grandpass, and the BBS making statements such as ‘Sri Lanka belongs to Buddhists. Other religious people should not have any rights.’

The BBS also reacted angrily last week to former President CBK’s attempt to promote religious harmony, [declaring her an enemy of Buddhism, and threatening to become an armed force](#).

Personal and Confidential

Ivan Pedopillai BSc., MSc., FCCA, FCMA
Chartered Certified Accountant
Chartered Management Accountant
United Kingdom

22nd December 1998

His Holiness Pope John Paul II
The Vatican
Rome
Italy

Your Holiness,

I am writing to you as a Roman Catholic and a Tamil professional who has lived in the UK for over thirty years and also as one involved in both my church and community activities. Your moral leadership, Christian commitment, personal courage and human concern have shone like a beacon light in the world apparently transfixed by greed and materialism. The emancipation of your own Polish people, and in fact the whole of Eastern Europe from the yoke of communism is a high water mark in the development of democracy and Christian values in modern times.

I would have preferred to have written the attached article just as a short appeal but it would have lacked essential background information. I feel that I have to appeal with reason to the consciences of world leaders to turn their minds and hearts to the killing fields of Sri Lanka. In that fair island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in the Indian Ocean, there has been an ethnic war conducted by the Sri Lankan government over a period of some 15 years against the nation of Tamils who have historically lived in their own homeland in that country. It is unfortunate that this struggle for liberation has been egregiously depicted by the Sri Lankan government as "terrorism". Even Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Makarios and Imre Nagy, to name but a few, were tarred with the same brush. The brutality of the repression by the Sri Lankan government has been the cause of the fierce resistance by the Tamil freedom fighters (LTTE). The futility of war is now clear for all the combatants to see. But the government seems determined to continue with its 'war for peace' strategy.

The western world has not been touched by either the intensity of the war itself or by the immense scale of deaths and sufferings of the Tamil people, who have been living as a separate nation in that island from time immemorial. Your call for peace will be heard above the strident voices for war and subjugation. We have seen the West act with alacrity and also use overwhelming force in Bosnia and recently in Iraq, but as there appears to be no strategic interests for the West in Sri Lanka, there has been no initiative nor ostensibly any moral imperative for the Western powers to prevail on the Sri Lankan government to bring the evil war against the Tamils civilian population to an end.

There have been nearly 70,000 Tamil civilians killed in this war and some 500,000 Tamil people have been compelled to flee from their homes and to live in the jungles of the Vanni deprived of food, medicine, and all the basic necessities of life. Churches, temples, schools, houses, hospitals have been callously destroyed by the Sri Lankan army and airforce and the ancient Tamil homeland has been laid waste. You must be aware of the nearly one million Tamil refugees who have had to flee from their country and have sought refuge in a number of countries outside Sri Lanka. They continue to live in

abject misery in refugee camps in India and others are treated harshly with suspicion by host countries in Europe and North America. The parable of the good Samaritan is only observed in the breach in these countries.

The Sri Lankan government has built up its armed forces from 10,000 to over 100,000 troops in the last 15 years. The government has had to station troops in the ratio of 1 Sinhala soldier to 10 Tamil civilians in order to repress the legitimate cry of the Tamil people for freedom and justice. An impoverished country like Sri Lanka, with a population of nearly 20 million, just cannot afford to spend Rupees 50 billion (US dollars 1 billion), which is nearly 40% of its GDP, annually on its war expenditure. Our hapless people are crying out for international humanitarian fellowship. We should not let another Holocaust occur in our own lifetime.

I trust that as a man of your wisdom and eminence, you will understand the thoughts and feelings behind this letter written personally to you. I hope, I shall have the honour and support of your own personal acknowledgement of my appeal and a public exhortation to the Sri Lankan government and LTTE to stop this miserable war and to enter into peace negotiations urgently. Quiet diplomacy, if initiated by the Vatican to bring on board the US, the UK, and India, while involving the local churches, will lead to the establishment of the right conditions for political negotiations. On our part, there are some right minded Tamil intellectuals and community leaders who are prepared to work assiduously and in confidence towards preparing for a just and peaceful settlement.

May I wish you the blessings of the Infant Jesus for Christmas and my prayers for your health and your sacred mission.

With regards and asking for your blessing

Yours truly in Jesus Christ

(Ivan Pedropillai)