



## TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

09<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Stephen Pritchard  
The Observer  
5th Floor  
119 Farringdon Road  
London EC1R 3ER

Dear Sir,

### **Re: War without end - By Euan Ferguson**

The above article which appeared in The Observer on 29 June 2008, although well written with the facts that were available to your journalist, includes inaccuracies which need clarifications and correction. Euan Ferguson wrote:

*'Historically, Tamils were mainly brought over from India to help run the plantations...After independence, however, there was resentment from the Sinhalese majority. Tamils were effectively exiled to the north, around Jaffna.'*

This is absurd and most emphatically an untruth. What is described here is about the Plantation Tamils who were brought in by the British Raj as indentured labour from India in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the indigenous Tamils were in Ceylon for thousands of years. According to ancient history, there was a Tamil ruler during the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. From 1505 to 1796 the Tamil kings resisted the Portuguese and the Dutch occupiers. Even the former British High Commissioner for Sri Lanka, Mr Dominic Chillcott alluded to the existence of three kingdoms (Jaffna, Kotte and Kandy) when the British arrived, and later in 1833 these kingdoms were amalgamated for administrative purposes.

The different historical origins of the indigenous Tamils of Ceylon and the Plantation Tamils should be fully understood. Otherwise, your readers, especially in the west, might mistakenly gain the impression that LTTE is fighting for land which doesn't historically belong to the Tamils. This is malicious and calculated propaganda by the government of Sri Lanka. Even the history books in Sri Lanka after independence relating to the history of over 2200 years of Tamil civilization and culture in Sri Lanka have been distorted to pervert the truth and to indoctrinate school children. Your journalist has fallen victim to this blatant falsehood. As this is a fundamental issue and a detraction of the claims for statehood of the Tamils, a correction to inform your readers and an apology to the Tamils must be published in The Observer.

By the way, LTTE have declared that they do not want any land which does not belong to them. Refer to any Sri Lanka / Ceylon map (pre 1950 or pre British era) that shows the ethnic demography of that country for the extent of the traditional Tamil homeland. On the other hand, the Plantation Tamils brought over from India by the British and who have lived in the central hill country (upcountry) and not in the north or east of Sri Lanka, have not laid any claims to self government.



## TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

Incidentally, after the above article appeared, the Sri Lankan Army Chief has gone on record saying that SL is not fighting for territory but just want to kill the Tamil fighters (for freedom). Journalists should identify easily the blood thirsty warmongers!

The fact all foreign journalists are still missing out is the politics of subjugation experienced by the native Tamils, deprivation at the lack of access to justice, education, employment and most importantly not being able to use their own (ancient) language to conduct their own affairs.

The article quoted Jane's Information Group for the number of attacks allegedly by the Black Tigers. What about the indiscriminate aerial bombing of innocent Tamil civilians and places of worship brazenly by SL govt forces? Are they recorded by Jane's as well? When hospitals were bombed mothers and babies were killed and others fled with their newly born babies. Where in this day and age in a civilised world do government forces go and bulldoze the cemeteries? Tamils have no peace from cradle to grave, literally

It is wrong to say that journalists and aid workers have been targeted and disappeared by both sides in the conflict. Not a single journalist or aid worker was killed by the LTTE. When you have to deplore the horrendous murders of the 17 aid workers etc. attributed to the SL government forces, you also drag in the LTTE as well? Even international organisations have started to castigate the Sri Lankan government for the way journalists are threatened in Sri Lanka.- ie. Disappearance, detention for more than hundred days, intimidation, warning the journalists not to criticise the government, ransacking and burning of presses and similar harassment.

Sri Lankan President made the preposterous allegation recently about money being collected by the Tamil Diaspora in support of terrorism. He even talked about the double standards in allowing this to happen in the country where LTTE is banned.

Tamils in the UK are generally upstanding and loyal citizens who would not have any truck with banned organisations. These expatriate Tamils had to flee Sri Lanka from racist pogroms. They value the sanctuary and opportunity given to them in this country and would not like to place it in jeopardy. The Sri Lankan President has had no compunction in attacking these Tamils even when they are pursuing their own and peaceful lives in the UK. He attempted to sow mistrust of the Tamils and proceeded to traduce the hard won reputation of expatriate Tamils, who are held in high esteem by the British political establishment.

In order to get a more balanced picture of the situation in Sri Lanka as opposed to a blinkered vision, the writer should have insisted on travelling the length and breadth of the island. For example, if he was heading north he would have found out that the only life line to the Tamil people is the A9 road, which is closed by the callous government. The elderly and the children experience acute shortage of food and vital medicine. Malnutrition, starvation even resulting in death were reported in the north.



## TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

In the northwest he would have found out that a four hundred year old catholic shrine, Our Lady of Madhu, has been converted into a battlefield by a callous Sinhala army occupation. This shrine was a famous religious sanctuary for both Sinhalese and Tamils for centuries. In the northeast, he would have visited a Catholic cathedral where few years ago a TNA MP and a humanitarian activist, Mr Joseph Pararajasingham was shot and killed during the Christmas Mass by government paramilitaries. The men who carried out this killing, escaped after leaving their government army uniforms in the churchyard. Even after nearly two and a half years, no inquiry has been conducted by the government for this dastardly act. Your journalist would have also found had he made this tour, how paramilitary groups are allowed to erect their camps next to the government camps and wear Sri Lanka army uniforms. It is indeed a severe indictment of the government that these armed groups are allowed to roam the public roads to threaten and kill the Tamils of the East and the North, while the mighty government with the enormous military aid at its disposal from most of the leading countries still has to collaborate with these illegal paramilitary gangs to keep at bay the Tamil freedom fighters who fight for a just cause.

The Sri Lankan government has poured vast sums of money into spreading unscrupulous and false propaganda about the Tamil struggle, and all Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates have been tarnished with the label of terrorism. Contrary to the view expressed by your journalist, support for the LTTE among even moderate Tamils is seen to be increasing as a result of the ruthless mass attacks by government forces on the civilian Tamil population in their traditional homelands. The Tamils of Sri Lanka are left with the Hobson's choice of either life as slaves under the Sinhalese or death in a genocidal war waged by the Sinhala government of Sri Lanka.

In closing, let me make the crucial point that is often not understood. There is no reason to brand the LTTE as terrorists by the countries of the West and to ban them at the instance of the Sri Lankan government, as they have never conducted any act of terror in these countries and have always expressed their appreciation and regard for the democratic leadership of the West. The only crime they may have committed in the eyes of the Sinhalese oppressors was to resist cruel Sinhala hegemony in their own land and have been forced to fight for their right of self-determination in the land of their forefathers. This is a right conferred on them under the United Nations Charter of Human Rights.

Yours sincerely

J Anand  
Tamil Writers Guild