



TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

John Solomon
Executive Editor
The Washington Times
3600 New York Ave NE
Washington, DC 20002

1 November 2009

Dear Sir,

How the great have fallen

In your editorial 'Undermining Sri Lanka' (28 October 2009), you urge the American administration to turn a blind eye to the well documented and continued atrocities perpetrated by the Sri Lankan government and you vaingloriously take to task those eminent human rights agencies and commentators who have valiantly raised concerns about the on-going incarceration of over 280,000 Tamil civilians in the barbed wire camps of northern Sri Lanka – see <http://www.srilankacampaign.org/home.htm> .

At least, you are consistent, for in your earlier editorial 'Tigers at Bay', you were at least honest about your desire to have the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam killed ("The Sri Lankans are winning; we should let them finish the job" – 26 April 2009). You could not be clearer: America and the western powers should be "providing military and intelligence support for pinpoint strikes against the terrorist leadership. Failing that, the Obama administration should mind its own business."

You made no condemnation, not a solitary word in your 500 word diatribe masquerading as an editorial, against the increasingly genocidal actions of the Sinhalese Government. There are many who have criticized the LTTE – Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, prominent Sinhalese commentators including the journalist Lasantha Wickrematunge (who predicted his assassination by the Government and whose posthumously published editorial is one you could learn much from). But unlike these more balanced commentators, you proudly flaunt your profound and inhumane disrespect for Tamil civilian casualties.

Across centuries, liberation struggles for national freedom – *including your own* – have resulted in those who are brave enough to stand up against the seemingly over-whelming military, political and economic forces of the oppressive nation being labelled as terrorists, murderers and much else. Nelson Mandela, Gerry Adams and in an earlier period, Subash Chandra Bose (India), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Ben Gurion (Israel) were all so described. Indeed, Frantz Fanon said 'independence won without bloodshed is not real independence.'

What has caused you to produce this ill-informed and deeply partisan invective? We know, as Samantha Powers describes in her award winning book "A Problem from Hell", "The United States has never in its history intervened to stop genocide and has in fact rarely even made a point of condemning it as it occurred." Amazingly you are brazen about wanting to take this a step further and be active participants in the genocidal activities! Bringing US foreign policy closely into line with the Chinese and Russians should, if your paper was still true to its founding values, be a mark of shame. But clearly much has changed with the once respected Washington Times.



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At least your warped view of the world is a consistent feature. On Jan 8th you concluded that "There is a mountain of evidence from Israeli and Palestinian sources suggesting that Hamas deserves overwhelming blame for the mounting civilian death toll." That you should be consistent on this is not surprising. As Martin Shaw the respected historian notes with Israel and Sri Lanka ".although the ostensible target of the assault is a defined enemy rather than a population, a latent goal is indeed to punish an entire people for their assumed sympathies.... These consequences underline the fact that wars like Israel's and Sri Lanka's can simultaneously be not in themselves genocidal yet still have disturbing commonalities with genocide. To *punish* a people for perceived support of an insurgent group, or in order to prevent them from supporting it, is not the same as to *destroy* a people; but it still makes a civilian population the target of armed aggression.

If you are able to step back from your blinkered ideological positions, another US expert you should consult is Robert Pape, Director, Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism. As Dr Pape has said: "...Before the Sri Lankan military began moving into the Tamil homelands of the island in 1987, the Tamil Tigers did not use suicide attacks" and "No matter how you slice it, it's American policy that's underneath this [suicide bombing], not Islamic fundamentalism."

The rejection of Bush dogma by American voters gives us hope that you are an evolutionary left-over. Hopefully you and others who hanker after the the neo-Con Imperial Project will find a more useful role in life. But for now, Sir, you are a disgrace not only to your country but also to your profession. An honourable Editor would resign and if not, an honourable Board would have you sacked. We are not hopeful of either but as Tamils we understand the value of patience – we have been persecuted, tortured, and killed for over 60 years – but our international solidarity is stronger than ever and we will work for as long as needed to make sure your genocidal fantasies and that of the Sri Lankan government fail as they surely deserve to do.

Yours sincerely,

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Media

Appendix:
'Undermining Sri Lanka' (28 October 2009)
http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/oct/28/undermining-sri-lanka/?feat=home_editorials