

## Anton Balasingham's Vision

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*14 December 2007 was the first anniversary of the death of Anton Balasingham. By coincidence, it was also the day on which the first reading was passed of one of the most threatening 'war budgets' in Sri Lanka's history. A near-bankrupt Government allocated a record 166 billion rupees (US \$1.5 billion) for military spending – a 20% increase over last year's record allocation to pay for the war. President Mahinda Rajapakse, who is also Minister of Defence and of Finance, has imposed several new indirect taxes and cut social spending, to finance the war against people who are citizens of the country – the Tamils in the North and East.*

*In the Sinhalese South, there is growing popular anger over deteriorating living standards. It is the working people and their sons and daughters who are forced to sacrifice their lives and living standards in this 24-year unwinnable war.*

*There is not the slightest doubt that the agenda of the Sinhalese Government is to wipe out the Tamils. It is therefore appropriate to re-visit the vision of Anton Balasingham.*

*What follows is an address I delivered in Melbourne in December 2006<sup>1</sup>. I did not intend to publish it but in view of Bala's 'vision' being delayed by the brutality and irresponsibility of the Rajapakse regime, I changed my mind. This is a critical time when Sri Lankan Tamils are facing the worst crisis in their recorded history, at the hands of the most of the most murderous regime ever to run Sri Lanka.*

*The International Community (IC) and their Governments are propping up a corrupt, irresponsible, and murderous regime in Sri Lanka, enabling it to implement its genocidal agenda. The IC is the only 'force' that can save the voiceless Tamil people in the North and East from annihilation at the hands of this tyrannical regime that has the temerity to call itself a 'Government'. It is to them that this detailed analysis, delivered in December 2006 and updated a year later, is addressed.*

Ladies, Gentlemen and Friends of the Tamil People. I have been asked to deal with Anton Balasingham's 'Vision'.

I met Bala many years ago when he was visiting Australia. He told me he wanted to express his appreciation that a Sinhalese was campaigning for the Tamil people. I told him that although his thanks were appreciated, this was not a Tamil or a Sinhalese issue but was about an injustice, in fact, a series of injustices, done to a people, the Tamil people, which should arouse the concerns of every decent person, of whatever nationality. It was a human problem involving an entire nation – the Tamil nation in Sri Lanka.

Bala told me that I had been called a "Sinhalese traitor". I refuse to accept that one's patriotism can be judged on how close one stands to the national flag, and national policy, however blood-stained the flag might be, and however unjust the policy. If others think differently, so be it. I went on to say that unless there is a genuine apology from the Sinhalese to the Tamils for what has been done to them for half a century, there would be no national reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

As I got up to leave, Bala clasped my hands, "*If all the Sinhalese had your views, we would not need a Separate Tamil State*". Bala's friend, Velupillai Pirabhakaran, the Tamil Tiger leader, said something similar, "*If (President) Jayawardene was a true Buddhist, I would not be carrying a gun*".

### Bala's 'Vision'

Bala's 'vision' was really no different from the 'vision' of the vast majority of Tamils in the North and East - their desire to live with equality, dignity, and safety, in the area of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking people. It is no different from the vision of a number of non-Tamils, such as myself, who support the 'Cause' of the Tamil people for justice in the country of their birth.

What was different with Bala was his appreciation of the international perspective - the *real politic* necessary to achieve this vision. It is this that will be most missed by his untimely death. This is where replacing him is going to be difficult. This international dimension must be appreciated by those fighting for the liberation of the Tamil people from an unjust, brutal, and ruthless regime which has not set any limits on the suffering of the Tamil people. Disturbingly, foreign governments continue to back this irresponsible regime – a problem we will have to address.

Three weeks before his death, Bala said,

*".....it is an unfortunate personal tragedy. However, when compared to the vast ocean of the collective tragedy faced by my people, my illness is a mere pebble. I am deeply sad that I am crippled by this illness, unable to contribute anything substantial towards the alleviation of the immense suffering and oppression of my people".*

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<sup>1</sup> An expanded version of my address in Melbourne, Australia, on 17.12. 2006, to commemorate the life of Anton Balasingham, theoretician and political advisor of the LTTE for more than 30 years. He was the chief negotiator for the LTTE in almost all political negotiations, beginning with the crucial Timpu Talks in 1985. He died on 14.12.2006, in London, where he had been resident for some years.

There you have it – his two main concerns – the Tamil people

- being subjected to “immense suffering” and,
- “oppression”

by the Sinhalese-dominated Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL).

I will dissect out Bala’s ‘vision’ into its component parts. Unless we do this, we will not be able to take forward his vision, the vision of the Tamil people, and of non-Tamils such as myself who support this entirely justifiable ‘vision’.

1. What were the bottom-line factors which made this vision necessary?
2. What was the result of these factors on the lives of the Tamil people (and for that matter, on the Sinhalese, the Muslims, and the economy and future of the country)?
3. What is necessary to take this vision forward – not only for the good of the Tamil people but for the Sinhalese and the Muslims, indeed for the entire country?

## 1. THE BOTTOM-LINE FACTORS

The three bottom-line factors are:-

- a. A centralisation of power in Colombo in the Sinhalese South and in Sinhalese hands.
- b. The Sinhala political agenda of excluding the Tamils from the decision-making process
- c. The determination of Sinhalese ethno-religious chauvinists and extremists to make multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multicultural Sri Lanka into a Sinhala-Buddhist nation. This ethno-religious chauvinism has been seized upon by unscrupulous Sinhalese politicians to advance their political careers by discriminating against the Tamils to win the electoral support of the Sinhalese majority (74% of the population).

If these bottom-line factors, and the consequent injustices done to the Tamil people, are not addressed, there will neither be peace nor prosperity in Sri Lanka. There cannot be Peace without Justice, there cannot be Justice unless the series of injustices done to the Tamil people in the past 50 years by a *succession* of Sinhalese-dominated Governments are addressed and rectified.

### a) The centralisation of power in the Sinhala South

What many in the International Community (IC) do not know is that for hundreds of years Sri Lanka has been a divided country - with a Tamil Kingdom (Sri Lankan Tamils) in the North, a Kandyan Kingdom (Kandyan Sinhalese) in the centre, and a Kotte Kingdom (Low-country Sinhalese) in the South.

It was the British Colebrooke - Cameron ‘Reforms’ (1833), which unified these three separate kingdoms (States), into one country, and centralised power, including developmental power, in Colombo in the Sinhalese South, and later in Sinhalese hands.

This British colonial construct was for administrative ease, and their ‘security’, *not* from the Tamils but from the rebellious Kandyan Sinhalese who were protesting about the conduct of the British. It may have made it easier for the British to govern Ceylon, as it then was, but resulted in a serious developmental neglect of the entire periphery, which included the whole of the North-East in the Tamil area, and the ‘deep South’ in the Sinhalese area. It is not a coincidence that the two major youth uprisings in Sri Lanka have arisen from these two developmentally neglected areas – the Tamil militants in the North and East and the Sinhalese militants (the JVP<sup>2</sup>) in the ‘deep South’ – both in the early 1970s, and both for similar reasons.

The Tamil uprising had the added factor of a series of discriminatory measures taken against the Tamils by a succession of Sinhalese political opportunists and extremists, to get the electoral support of the Sinhalese majority.

What is fundamental is that unless this centralisation of power in Colombo in Sinhalese hands is dismantled, and power to develop is handed over to the people of the neglected area, there will neither be peace nor prosperity in Sri Lanka. I would go further and say that unless this is done, Sri Lanka will be heading for a ‘Failed State’ – if it has not got there already.

What the Tamils are asking for is essentially a reversal of the Colebrooke – Cameron ‘Reforms’ where it affects the Tamil areas. Similar British colonial constructs have failed in several countries that have been under colonial rule (not necessarily British). These colonial constructs have been dismantled, with dramatic benefit to all concerned, or maintained with resultant chaos. The best (but by no means, only) example of the former is Malaya, which split a year after the British left, into Malaysia and Singapore. The result has been a spectacular development of both these countries – something that might well not have occurred had there been a determination to keep the British colonial construct (Malaya) together.

### b) Excluding the Tamils

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<sup>2</sup> Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People’s Liberation Front), originally a Marxist group, which drew its support from the rural Sinhalese youths in the South. Note – it too was a ‘liberation struggle’, to liberate the marginalized rural poor (Sinhalese) from the privileged classes, both Sinhalese and Tamils, in Colombo.

Bala referred to "Oppression" of the Tamil people. That was a later development. Before Bala's time it was 'exclusion' of the Tamils from governance. I reminded him of the Pan-Sinhala Board of Ministers, appointed by the State Council after the 1936 General Elections under the Donoughmore system of governance by executive committees. Not one single Ministry of the seven available was headed by a Tamil, at a time when there was so much Tamil talent and ability.

Tamils have had no more than a cosmetic involvement in the post-colonial decision-making process. They have not been allowed to play any significant role, even in the development of the much-neglected Tamil areas, which is why these developmentally neglected areas remained undeveloped. This exclusion of Tamils continues to this very day, much more than it ever was. This is why a restructuring of the administration, with a separate administration for the Tamil areas, and another for the Sinhalese areas, is so essential. It is this that the Sinhalese regime in Colombo totally rejects, and which the IC will have challenge.

c) A Sinhala - Buddhist country. Anti-Tamil discrimination

Although it was not recognised as such at the time, the agenda to make Sri Lanka into a Sinhala-Buddhist nation, dates back to Independence – if not earlier. I watched with disbelief when Ceylon was handed over by the British in 1948, to D.S.Senaniyake, a man I knew, and whose duplicitous career I had watched with dismay. Here was a man, one of the most politically dishonest politicians Ceylon has had, who had made some very racist comments about the Plantation Tamils, who had put in place a massive program to radically change the demography of the Tamil East in favour of the Sinhalese, and who bluffed the Tamils into supporting him, ".... I give the minority communities the sincere assurance that no harm need you fear at our hands in a free Lanka<sup>3</sup>".

What was urgently needed in Ceylon, as it then was, was land reform, to force members of my father's family (the Bandaranaiques and Obeysekeras), the Senaniyakes and their ilk, to part with the hundreds of thousands of acres of land (most of it given to them by the British for 'loyal service'), to enable the landless peasants to survive. Instead of this logical step, what was done was to take the land-hungry peasants from the Sinhala areas and translocate them in the Tamil areas, giving them land which belonged to the Tamils. This irresponsible agenda also changed the demographic composition of the Tamil areas, the electoral consequences being obvious. Two birds were killed with one stone, cast by unscrupulous politicians – D.S.Senaniyake, the so-called 'father of the nation', being one.

This started well before Independence. In the mid-1930s D.S.Senaniyake, then the Minister of Agriculture and Lands (when the British were in charge), under the guise of 'Agricultural Colonisation schemes', translocated hundreds of thousands of Sinhalese from the South to the (Tamil) East. Amparai, a Tamil area, was converted to a Sinhalese area, with Sinhalese hoodlums relocated from the Sinhala South to terrorise the local inhabitants, in addition to replacing them. Senaniyake's nephew, R.G.Senaniyake, did the same in Trincomalee. This attempt to make the Tamils a minority even in the area they are a majority, continues today. In January 2007, some 80 Sinhalese families were sent to Trincomalee under armed guard, to occupy an area recently 'cleared' of Tamils and Muslims. Thousands more Sinhalese are waiting to follow. This is 'ethnic cleansing', which continues today.

Anti-Tamil discrimination

Anti-Tamil discrimination started early. In his first act as Prime Minister, D.S.Senaniyake disenfranchised the Plantation ('Indian') Tamils<sup>4</sup>, in one of the most ruthless acts of political barbarism anywhere in the world. Some 900,000 Plantation Tamils, who had had a vote since 1931, and had just elected six MPs<sup>5</sup> lost their vote and their MPs, bringing down Tamil representation in parliament (1948) from 13 to 7 of the 95 elected members. With the loss of their citizenship, they became 'non-people', but continued to do slave labour on the tea estates to keep Sri Lanka on the map. It was a bad start for the newly Independent country.

I will not go into anti-Tamil discrimination in language, education, job opportunities, the deliberate developmental neglect of the Tamil areas and the continuing attempts to change the demography of the (Tamil) East in favour of the Sinhalese. I have spelt these out in numerous publications and in the DVDs I have just released.

My father's family, the Bandaranaiques, have been responsible for much of this. I can think of no other country whose entire future has been wrecked by a single family. Perhaps the Rajapakse family can outdo the Bandaranaiques.

Tamil protests

The Tamils protested at this blatant anti-Tamil discrimination. They were non-violent Gandhi-style protests, they did not pick up a gun. All they asked for was a degree of power sharing with the Sinhalese. They did not ask for a separate Tamil State, or even a Federal State. They sat cross-legged for years, in futile protests. The Sri Lankan Government's response was to unleash Sinhala hoodlum violence, backed by the overwhelmingly Sinhalese Police (95% Sinhalese) and later the Armed Forces, 99% Sinhalese, on the protesting Tamils.

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<sup>3</sup> In the debate on the Soulbury Constitution, 8-9 November 1945, D.S.Senaniyake, leader of the State Council, President of the Ceylon National Congress, and future Prime Minister, urging the Tamils and other minorities to accept the Constitution.

<sup>4</sup> The Ceylon Citizenship Act, No 18 of 1948

The Immigration and Emigrants Act, No 20 of 1948

Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act, No.3, 1949 – effectively decitizenised the Plantation Tamils

Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act, No 48 of 1949 – disenfranchised them (They, with the rest of the population had voted since 1931).

<sup>5</sup> in the 1947 General Election

The second strategy was to sign Pacts with the Tamil leaders that if they called off their protests there would be a devolution of power to the Tamil areas. Every one of these Pacts were unilaterally abrogated by the Sinhalese, under pressure from the Buddhist clergy who see any power sharing with the Tamils as “a sell-out of a Sinhala-Buddhist nation to the Tamils”. Jumping on the bandwagon were the Sinhalese politicians from the entire spectrum of the Sinhala polity who did so to get the electoral support of the Sinhalese. This is important information to get across to the IC, who are completely unaware to what lengths the Tamils have gone, to avoid an armed conflict.

Let alone the IC, even Karuna, the LTTE- breakaway who has got into bed with the Sinhala Government and has done so much damage to the Tamil struggle, said that the main problem faced by the Tamils was Velupillai Prabhakaran and Anton Balasingham, and that the way forward is to negotiate with the Sri Lankan Government.

Someone should whisper in Mr Karuna’s ear (and that of his successor), that the problem is not Prabhakaran or Balasingham, but the decision to make Sri Lanka into a Sinhala-Buddhist nation. As for ‘negotiating with the Government’, that is what the Tamils have done for five decades, during which the Tamils and their problems were treated like a joke by a succession of Sri Lankan Governments. To get into bed with this Government, rather than challenge an unjust and brutal regime, was a betrayal of the Tamil people.

Karuna, is now in a full-blown fight with his once trusted friend and disciple, Pillaiyaan – a split engineered by the “divide and rule” tactics of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and, by their own admission, Ranil Wickremasinghe’s United National Party, the darlings of some of the Tamils. Karuna is at last realising the danger of getting into bed with the Sri Lankan Government which many Tamils have done in the past., at such tremendous cost, not only to their credibility, but to the Tamil cause. Some Tamils never seem to learn.

A Sinhala-Buddhist country

The Sinhalese people have every right to have a Sinhalese-Buddhist nation. They are an ancient people, with a distinct culture, language, religion and a defined territory. By the same token, the Tamil people, who are also an ancient people with a distinct culture, language, and religion and a defined territory, have an equal right to have a Tamil nation.

If multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural Sri Lanka is to be a Sinhala-Buddhist nation (which is even enshrined in the Constitution since 1972), then there is no alternative to the establishment of a separate Tamil nation, Eelam. It is as simple as that.

As I have pointed out in numerous publications and addresses over the past two and a half decades, Tamil Eelam is not the creation of the Tamil people (or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, LTTE), but the result of Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-religious chauvinism, and the Sinhalese policy of excluding Tamils from the decision-making process, almost since the dawn of Independence in 1948 (and even before).

A succession of Sinhalese leaders have had more than half a century to decide whether they want a single united country where all ethnic and religious groups are treated equally. They decided, for no other reason than political opportunism, to go down the road of Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-religious chauvinism.

The price paid has been a failure to build a nation, a Sri Lankan nation, as envisaged by the departing British. It is now too late to keep the British construct together. No amount of glue, including the glue of international pressure, can prevent this construct falling apart. The greater the force applied to keep this failed construct together, the greater will be the destruction of the country and its people.

What the Sinhalese have lacked are *statesmen* and people of vision who could build a united country. What they have had are *politicians*, with neither vision nor integrity. There is a widespread belief that what exists in Sri Lanka is an ethnic crisis, a humanitarian crisis, an economic crisis etc. While all this is true, the fundamental problem, and one that has existed since Independence some 58 years ago, is a crisis in leadership.

## 2. THE RESULT

The result of the three ‘bottom-line’ factors I have set out – the centralisation of power in Colombo with the consequent developmental neglect of the periphery, the exclusion of the Tamils from the decision-making process, and the divisive concept of a Sinhala-Buddhist nation and discrimination against the Tamils, has been serious. It is basically the result of the short-sighted policy of a succession of Sinhalese Governments.

### 1. An internal migration of Tamils

Over 150 years of British rule, there was an internal migration of half a million Tamils from the developmentally-neglected North, to the Sinhalese South in general, Colombo, in particular, in search of employment and the furtherance of their careers. They competed successfully, indeed ‘too successfully’, for jobs in a shrinking job market. Although this posed no problem as long as the British were in charge, it was clear that there could be a problem when the country was handed over to the Sinhalese. These fears were fully ventilated by the Tamils before the British left. The British could not care less, as long as the country was in the hands of those who would ‘play the economic ball-game’ with them, ensure a ready supply of tea at absurdly low prices, and guarantee their naval bases in Trincomalee and Colombo.

Instead of incorporating the enormous (Tamil) talent and training which was readily available, the blatant anti-Tamil discrimination by the Sinhalese leadership resulted in the loss of this invaluable asset to other countries – the massive ‘brain drain’.

## 2. An Armed struggle

The resort to arms by the Tamil youths is the result of a failure of a succession of Sinhalese politicians to 'do the right thing' by the Tamils. They opted to do what was politically advantageous, and opted not to stand up to the destructive extremism of the Buddhist clergy and Sinhalese political opportunists.

What Bala supported was a liberation struggle to free the Tamil people from oppression by the Sinhalese. Self-determination for the Tamil people is not an option but mandatory, if there is ever going to be Peace with Justice in Sri Lanka. The *need to exert* the right to self-determination is, and has been, the short-sighted politics of Sinhalese politicians over the past 50 years (and more). The Sinhalese have quite literally brought it on themselves. However strong the Tamil Right to Self-determination, there would not have been the need to exert that right, had there been Sinhala leaders with a vision.

It is a fact, an unpalatable and unfortunate fact, that in dealing with repressive Governments, force is the only language that is understood. Even the UN recognised this. In what has been described as the greatest achievement in human history where Human Rights are concerned, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948, the Preamble states

*"Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law".*

In other words, if human rights are not protected (there is overwhelming evidence that basic human rights of the Tamil people have not been protected by the GOSL), man may "be compelled ..... to rebellion against tyranny and oppression.". Tyranny and oppression the Tamils have been subjected to by the GOSL for years. After years and years of putting up with this oppression and discrimination, in the mid-1970s, the Tamil youths decided to challenge the Sinhala government and embark on an armed struggle to free their people from the Sinhala regime.

### Terrorism

Bala's 'vision' did not include terrorism, nor does mine. In fact, Bala and his Australian-born wife, Adele, were the *recipients* of State terror. All this has been set out in Adele's *The Will to Freedom*. It was more than State terror, it was, what I can best describe as 'Medical terrorism', using the denial of treatment as a weapon of war. I refer to the outrageous refusal by the GOSL for a safe passage for Bala to transit Colombo to get a desperately needed kidney transplant in 1999 by the Kumaratunga regime, and again in 2002, by the Wickremesinghe regime from the other side of the Sinhala political divide, when Bala returned to Sri Lanka to prepare for the Peace Talks.. After the first of these outrages, the entirely justifiable feeling amongst the LTTE leadership was that if Kumaratunga (and by extension the Sinhala political leadership) could not favourably consider a humanitarian plea compassionately for the future prospect of peace, how would she be able to resolve the much more difficult and complex issues of the ethnic conflict.

The Tamil struggle to free themselves from a repressive regime, has been portrayed by the GOSL as nothing but "Tamil Terrorism". The perception of 'terrorism' is often in the eye of the beholder. If the beholder (an individual, population or country) supports the goals of the rebels, then those rebels are 'freedom fighters', if they do not then they are 'terrorists'.

A freedom struggle does not become 'terrorism' just because the GOSL decides that it is. Any government's condemnation of terror is credible only if it shows itself to be responsive to reasonable, closely argued, persistent, non-violent dissent. No Sinhala government since Independence in 1948 has been responsive to the reasonable demands of the Tamil minority.

A freedom struggle does not become 'terrorism' just because the Governments of Bush, Blair, Howard, and their ilk, declare that it is. The distinction between 'a liberation movement' and terrorism is set out by the United Nations, no less.

### *Terrorism or a Freedom Struggle? An Internal Armed Conflict*

The test that is used to determine whether a dissident armed force is an "armed group" as opposed to a "terrorist group" is set out in Article 1 of Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 1947. This states that in an "*armed conflict... which takes place in the territory of a High Contracting Party (the GoSL in this case)... between it's armed forces and dissident armed forces or other organised groups which, under responsible command, exercise such control over a part of it's territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concentrated military operations and to implement this Protocol*".<sup>6</sup>

In the armed conflict that has been occurring in Sri Lanka since at least 1983, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has met these requirements.

- 1 Military operations
- 2 Organised command
- 3 Organisational capacity
- 4 Control over territory

They openly carry arms and distinguish themselves from the civilian population and other requirements of combatant forces recognised by international law.

Even the United Nations has recognised that conditions have been met to invoke at least international armed conflict rules – the 1987 United Nations Commission on Human Rights Resolution. UN Human Rights Commission on Human Rights of 1987 dealt almost exclusively with humanitarian law applied to the conflict in Sri Lanka.

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<sup>6</sup> UN.Doc.a/32/44/annex 11, 1947, reprinted in 16 I.L.M.1442 (1977).

The LTTE has therefore fulfilled the requirements of an Armed Group (cf. a Terrorist Group).

There has been a failure of the international community to recognise the existence of an armed conflict in Sri Lanka which meets at least international standards for an internal armed conflict according to human rights law and humanitarian law principles. Increasingly this armed conflict is dismissed as an exercise in 'terrorism', especially after the '9/11' New York bombing. This is, of course, welcomed by the GOSL which is capitalising on the readily available funds and military hardware 'to fight terrorism'. In reality this is to fight its own civilian Tamil people.

*The future of 'terrorists'*

Archbishop Desmond Tutu deals with what happens to 'terrorists'

*"Sometimes when I have felt a little depressed I would go to Parliament to sit in the public gallery and look down at all those 'terrorists' now occupying the government benches. It is something to lift the heaviest heart to behold those who were regarded by the previous apartheid government as the most dangerous terrorists, and who now, in the new democratic dispensation, are the Hon. Minister of this or that. I would recall that some of them were fellow marchers in rallies against the awfulness of apartheid, and with some we were targets for tear gassing, and now here they are, members of a democratically elected National Assembly." (South African Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in A. Sachs. [The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter](#))*

### 3. Discrimination

Instead of addressing the fundamental problems of the developmental neglect of the Tamil areas, the Sinhalese 'leadership' which took over from the British, took the easier, but highly destructive, path of discriminating against the Tamils in language, education and employment, to get the electoral support of the majority Sinhalese.

Where the lives of ordinary people are concerned, the result has been a decimation of the lives and property of the Tamil people in the North and East.

### 4. Physical destruction of Tamil lives and property

The Sinhala State has decided to militarily crush the Tamil people in the North and East, and force them to accept Sri Lanka as a Sinhala- Buddhist nation. It is an attempt to achieve a military solution to a political problem - unleashing State terrorism on Tamil civilians to destroy their lives, property, education, economic activity, language, culture and their very existence.

This has raised the very real possibility that what is going on in Sri Lanka is not just murder of the Tamil people but Genocide.

### Genocide

Genocide is defined by the UN [Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#), as "... acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group." The Government of Sri Lanka is a signatory to this international Convention (Accession 12 October 1950). Genocide has nothing to do with numbers killed, it is the intention and the acts to achieve this intention.

There is mounting evidence since 1983 that the intention of the GOSL has been to eliminate the Tamil people in the North and East.

The 'acts' to achieve this 'intent' have been murder, starvation, the withholding of medical supplies, the blocking of NGO funds of those who look after hundreds of thousands of refugees (Internally Displaced People – IDP), and the prevention of essential activities eg agriculture and fishing, which enable the Tamil people in the North and East to survive.

In addition to conventional genocide, there is, what can best be described as, 'economic, educational and cultural genocide' – acts to destroy the economy, education and culture of an ethnic group.

In practical terms it means

1. Individual and mass murders of Tamil civilians
2. Measures to starve the Tamils in the North by
  - a) declaring the most fertile areas as 'High Security Zones' inaccessible to civilians
  - b) imposing a ban on fishing off the Tamil area
  - c) blocking the main highway, the A9 road, the only land access to the Jaffna Peninsula
3. Blocking the funds of those who render humanitarian assistance to the Tamil areas and murdering NGO's and others who work in the Tamil areas.
4. Blocking expatriate funds from concerned people from reaching this area and providing no local funds.
5. Destroying all economic activity in the Tamil areas.
6. Making it difficult, if not impossible, for any educational activity in the North and East.

The Tamils in the North and East are being bombed, shelled, gunned down, arrested and made to 'disappear', deprived of food, fuel and medicines, prevented from fishing and agriculture, and their businesses and homes are being destroyed. Education is being sabotaged by the military occupation of schools, the university in the North has had to close because of the lack of food and the inability of students to physically get to the university. Economic activity in the North and East has virtually ceased – ground

down to a halt by a (Sinhalese) 'Army of Occupation'<sup>7</sup> in the North and East implementing the murderous policy of the State. This murderous State has the support of Western Governments and Australia. It is this systematic and deliberate action to literally wipe out the Tamil people which Bala referred to as the "*immense suffering and oppression of my people*".

What we are seeing is a form of collective punishment aimed, not at an exclusively military objective, but at demoralising the civilian population. It is exactly the same that was done by Israel in the West Bank. In either case, it is a gross violation of international humanitarian law which will be dealt with in the next section.

If Genocide is what is taking place in Sri Lanka, then the international community must be made aware of this, and there are ways to do so which I will set out.

Attempts to wipe out the Tamils in the North and East have markedly increased since Mahinda Rajapakse became President in November 2005. It is no exaggeration to say that the Tamils in the NorthEast are facing the biggest crisis they have ever faced in their 2,500 years of recorded history, at the hands of one of the most brutal, barbaric and murderous regimes ever to govern Sri Lanka.

### Humanitarian Law

I do not want to get into legal problems in which I am no expert, but I am aware that much of what the GOSL is doing contravenes some of the fundamental principles of International Humanitarian Law.

For example, much of what is going on in the Jaffna Peninsula can, and should, be challenged. The distinction between military and civilian targets, and the requirement to avoid military operations that cause disproportionate harm to civilians, are fundamental principles embodied in Article 48 and 51 in the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention.

Deliberate damage to civilian and civic property without military justification is forbidden under the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, as well as Article 52 of the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention.

Whether the GOSL admits it or not, Jaffna is under an occupying Force. Under Article 55 and 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, an occupying power has the duty of ensuring adequate food and medical supplies and protecting public health in the area under occupation. The closure of the only road access to the Jaffna Peninsula by the GOSL on 11 August 2006, and the consequent deprivation of food and medicines to half a million civilians in Jaffna, does have legal implications. I am surprised that the array of Tamil legal experts have not challenged this in the international legal arena.

The current problems faced by the Tamil people go far beyond Bala being "*.. deeply sad....*" at "*... the immense suffering and oppression of my people*". It is a blatant violation of Humanitarian Law.

There is no point in having Laws that are flouted. One might as well return to the Laws of the Jungle. The least that the International Community can do is to insist on crippling sanctions being imposed on Sri Lanka qualifies as an irresponsible State where the treatment of the Tamil civilian population in the NorthEast is concerned. It is the responsibility of those outside to take the necessary action against this pariah State, not to prop it up.

### Letting the GOSL off the hook

One of the most serious mistakes made by the Tamils, both in the Tamil areas in Sri Lanka, and outside Sri Lanka, is to let President Rajapakse and his utterly racist supporters off the hook. Here was a man who campaigned for power on the backs of some of the most notorious ethno-religious chauvinists and extremists that Sri Lanka has ever had – the JVP<sup>8</sup> and the JHU<sup>9</sup>. Here was a man whose 'vision' for Sri Lanka, as set out in his November 2005 Presidential election manifesto, was that he will

- reject the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) and insist on a complete 'overhaul'
- reject the concept of power-sharing, federation and self-determination (for the Tamils),
- uphold the unitary structure of Sri Lanka,
- refuse to recognise the area of historical habitation of the Tamils
- completely reject the ISGA (Interim Self-governing Authority) proposed by the LTTE,
- abandon the P-TOMS (Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure)
- reject Norway's 'facilitation'.

Backed by self-styled Marxists (read political opportunists) and ethno-religious extremists among the Buddhist clergy, the international community could readily have been convinced that here was a President who had no vision for Sri Lanka and that his only 'vision' was war.

The complete failure to appreciate the vital importance of a massive international onslaught was probably one of the most serious mistakes the Tamils have made in recent times.

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<sup>7</sup> 99% of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces are Sinhalese. They are in an area where 99% are Tamils.

<sup>8</sup> Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna – supposed Marxists, who in reality are Sinhalese chauvinists who have long since abandoned Marxism for the more politically rewarding Sinhala extremism.

<sup>9</sup> Jathika Hela Urumaya – a political party of Buddhist monks, some of the most extreme Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinists in the country.

Let off the hook, Rajapakse not only survived, but enhanced his 'vision' to wipe out the Tamils. It is this that has resulted in "... *the immense suffering and oppression of my people*" which Bala referred to before he died. There might well be more to come. I will rephrase that more positively. There will be more to come at the hands of this murderous regime if we do not get our act together.

I might briefly comment on the possibility that things might have been better if Ranil Wickremesinghe was elected as President. As Bala knew full well, it was Wickremesinghe's failure to implement the terms of the CFA which resulted in the LTTE withdrawing from any further Peace Talks. To sign a CFA and not deliver on it, is as good as not signing anything.

We recently had Wickremesinghe and his UNP<sup>10</sup> sign a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MOU) with Rajapakse and his SLFP<sup>11</sup>. What exactly did that achieve? Nothing. The murder of Tamils went on 'full steam ahead', the blockade of the Jaffna Peninsula with half a million civilians facing starvation goes on, the bombing and decimation of the East, including refugee camps, goes on. What exactly has Wickremesinghe done to restrain this genocide? Nothing.

I do not believe for one moment (and have never believed), that any alliance of anti-Tamil forces, which is what the so-called 'Southern consensus' essentially is, will deliver anything by way of Peace with Justice. These are just catch words with no meaning. It is the International community, and the Sinhala people in the South who might have the answer. The collapsing economy might have done so too, but this can be, and is being, propped up by the West.

### Bala's contribution to Peace

After the LTTE's unilateral declaration of a Ceasefire in December 2001 after the UNP Government replaced the murderous Kumaratunga regime in Parliament, and the formal Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) which followed in February 2002, there was 'peace' of a sort. Under Bala's guidance the Tigers had entered several rounds of successful talks with the UNP Government, all brokered by Norway, watched suspiciously from the sidelines by President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who was excluded by the UNP. In the end she used her presidential powers to scuttle the deal.

In taking the Tigers to the brink of peace, Balasingham had steered the LTTE away from their earlier demand for a fully fledged independent state Eelam. What the Tamils wanted, he said, was "a homeland and self-determination". If that demand were rejected and the "oppression" continued, there would be no option but to fight for full statehood. Those words signalled the collapse of peace hopes.

The replacement of the murderous President Chandrika Kumaratunga regime by the far more murderous President Mahinda Rajapakse regime, has totally reversed any forward movement in achieving peace. Rajapakse's agenda and actions have been described earlier in this article. It has returned the conflict from the negotiating table to the battlefield in a big way.

### Tamils being pushed into a corner

With the departure of Bala, and the return of the conflict to the battlefield, there is a real fear that the Tamils civilians, now in the East, to be followed by those in the North, will be pushed into a corner by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. Sarath Fonseka, the Army Commander, has recently spelt out his intention - essentially to decimation of the Tamil areas, starting with the East and then moving to the North.. One must realise that this is about the most ruthless regime that the Tamils have ever faced. It is a regime (both Government and the Armed Forces), that will not hesitate to shed whatever blood is necessary, decimate whatever has to be decimated, to achieve their objective of wiping out Tamil resistance and even the Tamil people. It is a threat which cannot be ignored. If it is, it *may* be to the peril of the entire Tamil civilian population. in the North and East. I hope I am wrong, but the current events (up to January 2007) do not suggest that I am

To make matters worse, this murderous regime is backed by international war-mongers whose agenda has nothing to do with Peace in Sri Lanka. The mounting civilian casualties at the hands of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces, may result in the IC community mouthing platitudes about "an impending humanitarian crisis". Past experience has shown that the GOSL and its Armed Forces will simply ignore, if not laugh, at these concerns.

The IC has to do one of two things, probably both.

1. To get *physically* involved to stop the killing. This will almost certainly involve the immediate deployment of a 'Ceasefire-enforcing' Force', as was done belatedly done in East Timor.
2. To impose crippling sanctions. These cannot be mere threats but must be implemented.

### Negotiations

Having taken part in numerous Peace Talks with the Sinhalese, Bala learnt first hand, that the Sinhala leadership cannot be trusted. The historical facts of Pacts unilaterally abrogated by the Sinhalese make this untrustworthiness legendary. What the Tamils need to do is to take this damning evidence to the International Community. This cannot be done unless the importance of apprising the IC is appreciated.

Despite the abysmal record of the Sinhala leadership which Bala has amply documented in his *Politics of Duplicity*, there has been international pressure that the Tamils return to the negotiating table. In several previous articles, I have questioned the

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<sup>10</sup> United National Party – a right-wing capitalist party, predominantly Sinhalese.

<sup>11</sup> Sri Lanka Freedom Party – supposedly a more centralist party, predominantly Sinhalese.

validity of Talks - Talk to whom, Talk about what, Talk for what purpose? This scepticism might be unwarranted if the International Community puts the screws on the GOSL to come up with some realistic proposals to address some of the fundamental 'bottom-line' problems I have detailed earlier. For this to occur, there must be a massive international lobbying effort on behalf of the Tamils.

'Negotiations' have usually been just an excuse for the GOSL to get aid to prop-up an economically crumbling regime. This is precisely what happened at the last round of talks, with the GOSL coming up with an absurd agenda which was not going to address anything (nor was it designed to). The fault lies with those who sponsor such negotiations, deciding to accept a nonsense Agenda. A strong Chairperson, such as Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, and later, the distinguished Head of the UN Human Rights Council, now on the staff of Columbia University, would be such a person. She will need the total support of the IC and a decision by the IC that if there is either a stalling by either party, or a failure to deliver on the agreed undertakings, the collective international action will be devastating.

### The Sinhalese South

Bala did not refer to the Sinhalese South but I doubt if he was not concerned about what is going on, since chaos in the South will inevitably have an adverse effect on the North.

The situation in the South is serious with the virtual collapse of governance and its replacement by rampant corruption, spiralling inflation, grinding poverty, nepotism, incompetence, the breakdown of law and order, and bankruptcy. It is not only economic bankruptcy but political bankruptcy of a Government which has run out of political options and has only 'war' to offer.

The need to prosecute a 'war' supposedly a 'War against Terrorism' is being used as an excuse for the economic and human misery in the South.

### Sinhalese action in the South.

As I have said, one major 'force' which can halt the murderous agenda of the GOSL are the Sinhalese people in the Sri Lankan South. There have been some significant public rallies recently. On 17 August 2006, a Peace march in Colombo under the banner "War will not win Peace" organised by the Anti-War Front led by Dr Kumar Rupesinghe, a Sinhalese, Head of the Foundation for Coexistence, was attended by more than 5,000 people. This was physically attacked by 8 Buddhist monks who invaded the stage. This is something that should have been publicised all over the world to show the IC that extremist Buddhist monks are disrupting peace.

On 13 November 2006 another 'Peace procession' accompanying the body of the murdered Tamil MP Nadarajah Raviraj, organised by the National Anti-War Front led by Rupesinghe, and supported by more than 120 organisations which included political parties, civil organizations, drew thousands.

The most recent rally was on 9 January 2007. It was to launch a new political group, United People's Movement (UPM), for a Federal Constitution for Sri Lanka, and totally opposing the war. It is a political platform that seeks to establish consensus among especially the Southern polity on a Federal System of Governance, and against war and any other undemocratic, non-negotiable conclusion to the on going North - East conflict. UPM stands for dialogue in society and for the concept of "power sharing" as a system of governance. It was put together by Siritunge Jayasuriya, leader of the United Socialist Front, parliamentarians Mano Ganashan, Leader Western People Front, S.B.Dissanayake a senior UNP politician and former Minister, and Kusul Perera.

Several leading politicians including Dr Wickremabahu Karunaratne, Leader, New Left Front, MPs Suresh Premachandran from Tamil Arasu Kadchi, and Rauf Hakeem, Leader of Muslim Congress Party were scheduled to speak.

However, two hours before the Rally in Nugegoda, a suburb of Colombo, Deputy Minister Mervin Silva in President Rajapakse's Government, accompanied by some 200 Sinhalese hoodlums invaded the grounds and smashed everything, preventing the meeting from even taking place. Several reporters, including BBC Sinhala service information that the world must be made aware of, that in President Rajapakse's Democracy, there is no place for the dissenting voice, even in favour of Peace. It is no more than a fascist dictatorship, run by hoodlums, whose leaders are in Rajapakse's government, violent Buddhist monks and Sinhalese extremists.

What is clear is that there are Sinhalese in Colombo who are prepared to risk life and limb to champion the cause of the Tamil people and the need for justice. If the response of the GOSL is to unleash terror, or condone terror, on this voice of moderation, then the IC must be made aware of this.

There are Sinhalese abroad who are no less active. To name them would expose them to 'assault' by Sinhalese hoodlums in foreign countries who are even more virulent than their mates back home. All I can say is that these individuals do exist. To claim that with the death of Adrian Wijemanne I am the only Sinhalese outside Sri Lanka to espouse the cause of the Tamil people might boost my ego but is simply untrue. There are scores of Sinhalese, perhaps not as vocal as I am, who support the Tamil people. Some of them are doing so with a degree of courage which I simply do not have - in the middle of murderous Colombo, where to say the 'right thing' could be, and has proven to be, fatal. I have alluded to them in an earlier article and will do so again, in future articles. All I will say here is that they exist, they can play a major role in getting justice for the Tamil people and must be encouraged, recognised and supported.

Sinhalese activists both in and outside Sri Lanka cannot play the crucial role they can (and should) if there is absolute distrust by the Vanni leadership. This is where Bala will be most missed. He was someone who had the intellectual ability to appreciate the contribution that non-Tamils could make to advancing the cause of the Tamil people.

### 3 TAKING THE 'VISION' FORWARD

What is necessary to take the 'vision' forward and save the Tamil people from "*immense suffering and oppression*" (and the Sinhala South from economic decimation).

The International Community will have to be informed of the following:-

1. The magnitude of the violation of the basic human rights of the Tamil people in the North and East facing death from a military assault and from deprivation of their food, agricultural supplies and medical supplies blocked by the Armed Forces.
2. The absolute unwillingness of the Government of Sri Lanka to address the underlying problems by way of power sharing with the Tamils.
3. The determination of several countries (the GOSL boasts of 30), which militarily assist Sri Lanka and enables the prosecution of this war rather than the formulation of a just political settlement. What is being unleashed on the Tamil people is State terror, whatever the cost to Tamil civilians (and indeed the South and the economy).
4. The irresponsibility of the role of the IC, in particular the western communities which militarily assists the GOSL to prosecute this war. Instead of being part of the solution, the IC is becoming part of the problem.
5. That what is being prosecuted by the Tamil Tigers and supported by Bala is a liberation struggle of the Tamil people to free themselves from the Sinhala hegemonic State.
6. A liberation struggle is entirely different from terrorism. The differences are clearly laid down by the UN which I have already detailed.
7. The absolute impossibility of the GOSL being able to crush the Tamil people. The history of liberation struggles in the past 100 years points in the direction that this particular struggle will take – Ireland, Ethiopia, Chechnya, East Timor etc. However it is within the power of the Sinhala State to drag this out for a year, two, ten, a hundred or, as happened in Ireland, 300 years. It is an ironic fact in history that the stronger the State becomes *vis a vis* the liberation forces, the less the chance of the former crushing the latter, and the greater the chance of conflict being dragged out.
8. Against all odds, the State of Tamil Eelam is already established- as a de facto State- and functioning pretty well. Professor Kristian Stokke, University of Oslo, after a detailed study in the Vanni, wrote *Tamil Eelam - a De Facto State. Building the Tamil Eelam State: Emerging State Institutions and Forms of Governance in LTTE-controlled Areas in Sri Lanka*.

In contrast, the Sinhala State is in chaos with rampant corruption, a breakdown in the legal system, the police, armed forces and economy which is facing bankruptcy.

8. This State of Tamil Eelam has never been a threat to the Sinhalese South. The Tamils have not taken an inch of land outside their areas of historical habitation. People like Bala would not have permitted anything else. It is the Sinhala State, despite a CFA, that has taken land from the Tamil people in contravention of the CFA in which Bala played such a prominent role.

As I have repeatedly said, what is necessary is not just peace but peace with justice – a just peace. Peace without justice is no peace at all.

#### Our responsibility

We have a special responsibility – those of us living in countries that are supporting the GOSL in its determined attempt to crush the Tamil people- to use Bala's words again – cause "*immense suffering and oppression of my people*".

1. We will have to pressure foreign countries not to support the GOSL – aid or any other financial or military help – to crush its own people. For example, the Kfir bombers that bombed Tamil orphanages in Kilinochchi and the refugees in the East are Israeli-built, powered by US jet engines and paid for by foreign funds.
2. The non-Sri Lankan community of decent people will have to be informed of what is happening behind the censored doors in Sri Lanka.

It is time that Australia, New Zealand, and others sent a fact finding mission to Jaffna to see why half a million people are being starved to death,

3. Non-Sri Lankans will have to ask their media – TV , radio, and printed - why there is not a word on Sri Lanka despite an escalating violation of human rights and carnage.

This is the very least we can do to address the problems that Bala, despite a 30 year struggle was unable to do - *to alleviate the immense suffering and oppression* of his people- the Tamils in the North and East.

The deceit of the GOSL which claims that what is going on in Sri Lanka is 'Tamil terrorism' must be challenged. The agenda of the GOSL is abysmally clear - to jump on the post 9/11 band wagon and claim that it is fighting 'terrorism' and get the necessary military assistance to crush its own people.

To suggest that the countries which are playing a major role militarily equipping the GOSL (US, UK, Pakistan and Israel) do not know this, is absurd. They have very well informed Embassies in Colombo which know full well that the military assistance given to the GOSL is being used to crush citizens of that country. To lobby the war mongers in these countries whose only agenda is the political, military and economic gains for their countries (to hell with the suffering of the Tamil people) is an exercise in futility.

If these countries (and their media) are to be lobbied it will have to be done by non-Sri Lankan citizens of that country. There are ways in which this can be achieved, but simply to throw money and energy at politicians and bureaucrats who have an agenda of their own which has nothing to do with justice and peace in Sri Lanka, is a non-productive exercise. Two decades of lobbying politicians in the US and UK by Tamil activists, and non-Tamils such as myself, should have made this clear.

The same may not be true of the smaller countries. Even politicians, let alone inhabitants, in these countries may not be aware of what is happening in Sri Lanka and it might be a productive exercise to apprise them of the facts.

The international dimensions of domestic conflicts must be spelt out

#### The final result.

There is not the slightest doubt that a separate Tamil State, Eelam, will be the final result. History will not have it otherwise. The question is not the result but the cost in terms of human suffering (Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims), destruction of infrastructure (in the Tamil areas) and the economy of the country,

The Sinhalese Government cannot win this war, nor can the LTTE. Of this there is not the slightest doubt. The 'mismatch' of forces - in number, military equipment and finance, between the GOSL and LTTE is patently obvious. Ironically, the greater the mismatch, the *less* the chance of the GOSL crushing the LTTE.

The chance of crushing the will of the Tamil people is even less. In fact, the more this conflict drags on, the greater the brutality unleashed on the Tamil people, the less the chance of anything other than an absolute separation of the Tamil areas from the Sinhala South being demanded by the Tamils.

The Sinhala Government seems too stupid to realise that brutalising the Tamil people – which they are doing with increasing venom - is a certain way to antagonise the Tamil people, the consequences of which are obvious.

#### The options for the Tamils

The options for the Tamils are decreasing by the day.

1. To negotiate with an increasingly brutal and barbaric regime. This is an exercise in futility. To expect some solution that would address the problems faced by the Tamils from a brutal and repressive regime is simply unrealistic.
2. To watch the decimation of the Tamil civilian population in the North and East. That is to watch genocide.
3. To declare a Separate State – a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). It is the business of the expatriate Tamil community and those of us who support the Tamil struggle for justice, to see that the international community recognises that this is the only way out for the Tamils. The alternative is genocide of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

Is a UDI legal? This, and the associated problem of international recognition of such a declaration, will be detailed later. In general, if there is a case for self-determination (which Tamil people most certainly have), then there is legal justification for a UDI.

4. To launch a massive international campaign to save the Tamil people.

#### The international campaign

1. The international community, in particular countries which have banned one party to essential negotiations, the LTTE, do not seem to realise that they are opting out of the Peace process and giving the green light to a brutal Sinhala regime and Sinhalese ethno-religious extremists in Colombo, to adopt an even greater anti-Tamil hard-line stance. The IC instead of being part of the solution is now becoming a part, a major part, of the problem.
2. The GOSL has spent millions of dollars on a disinformation campaign to mislead the international community. It is to counter this massive disinformation campaign that I have produced five DVDs to show what is actually going on behind the closed doors of the 'Democratic Socialist Republic'. These will have to be circulated widely.
3. To set up an International Lobby Group – to do what the Sinhala government is doing with its Ministers and Ambassadors.

This international lobby will have to focus on several separate but interconnected activities.

1. Lobby every Government, big and small, of the absolute need for separate administrations in Sri Lanka.
2. Lobby the United Nations despite the overwhelming evidence that the UN is a 'talk shop'.

3. Lobby India. India, not the US or even the EU, is the key to a just solution in Sri Lanka.

The current central government in Delhi is there entirely because of the support of Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu, with 50,000,000 Tamils is emotionally linked with Tamils suffering in Sri Lanka. Emotions aside, there is a physical price to pay as thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils arrive on the shores of Tamil Nadu to escape the brutality of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. I cannot think of a better time to get the support of Tamil Nadu.

4. Lobby 'ordinary people', non-Sri Lankans in Western countries. This is crucial and urgent. These are the people who can generate the necessary pressure on their politicians, their governments, their media and their civic society to act.
5. The million strong expatriate Tamils-many of them in the developed world have a crucial role to play (which they are not doing). They will have to move from apathy, disinterest, selfishness and inactivity to getting involved in what is essentially the most serious crisis facing their people in Sri Lanka.

It is this 'waking up' of the sleeping 'Tamil' which I have tried to address in the past two decades (without success). I have been accused of 'preaching to the converted'. I would counter this by claiming that it is *necessary* to preach to the converted if only to wake them up.

6. Lobby the Sinhala South. There is not the slightest doubt that the most powerful force to control, or even reverse, the destructive agenda of a succession of Sinhala governments are the Sinhalese people.

To claim that they are unaware of the suffering of the Tamil people is probably untrue. What they are unaware of is that there are alternatives to a destructive military assault which has a human and economic cost to the Sinhala people – especially the rural poor.

As the situation deteriorates, just to find a replacement for Bala is insufficient. It will have to be much more than that if Bala's 'vision' for the Tamil people is to be achieved.

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