



TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

Rev Dr Rowan Williams
Archbishop of Canterbury
Lambeth Palace
London SE1 7JU

10th May 2007

Dear Archbishop Williams

Re: Your recent visit to Sri Lanka

We have known you as the spiritual leader of the Anglican Church throughout the world and a respected Christian prelate from whom much moral leadership is expected. You must have been well briefed before your visit about the ethnic war in Sri Lanka and the gross humanitarian violations by the state that have led to criticisms by the UN, NGOs and even the Western diplomats in the country.

Since the beginning of 2007, nearly 5000 Tamil civilians have been killed and 200,000 innocent Tamil civilians made homeless by the indiscriminate shelling and bombing of Tamil villages by a ruthless Sinhala Sri Lankan government and its armed forces. It is not terrorism in Sri Lanka but that the Tamils have been fighting for nearly 25 years for equality and their democratic rights against successive Sri Lankan governments that have militarily suppressed their just demands.

It is with profound shock that I read in the BBC news web site, a report covering your recent visit to Sri Lanka that "The head of the Anglican communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, meeting President Mahinda Rajapakse said surgical military action against terrorism "is inevitable" in Sri Lanka". Terrorism in Sinhala Sri Lankan parlance equates to Tamil civilians living in their traditional homeland, who must be eliminated in order to make Sri Lanka a Sinhala Buddhist country. To a Western liberal mind like yours, you cannot even conceive of such thinking.

Even the US, the world's super power was unable to achieve much surgical precision with its much wanted smart bombs in the recent two Gulf Wars and the anodyne term 'collateral damage' was coined by them to de-humanise the inevitable human casualties of their bombing campaigns. By your reckless statement made for short-term expediency, you have given a carte blanche to the racist Sri Lankan government to unleash its arsenal of modern weaponry on an already battered and brutalised Tamil population merely because they are Tamils. It is tantamount to your endorsing surgical military action by the Nazis against the Jews in the second World War. The gas chambers would have been quite surgical, come to think of it.

I am myself a Christian professional of long standing in this country and have not come across such blatant war-mongering by any other clergyman in my long years of living here. If you have been misreported, I am sorry that I have misunderstood you and I would thank you to issue a rebuttal.

However, if you did actually say these words however misconceived, I hope that you will now have the courage to call on the Sri Lankan government in public to abandon this evil war and to call for the resumption of peace talks. The lives of many innocent Tamils, eking out their desperate lives in their villages and placed in dire jeopardy by your statement, can be saved by a timely call from you to abandon the concept of a surgical military action.

With kind regards
Yours sincerely

Ivan Pedropillai
Chairman, Tamil Writers Guild