



TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

The UN Report reverberations

The BBC's publication of the leaked UN report on its handling during the final stages of the Sri Lankan war has sent shock waves everywhere.

The governments of the US, UK and the EU must have soul searching questions as to why the plea from the civilians were not listened to and why the UN officials didn't raise the alarm on the severity of the destruction? The BBC also stated that the executive summary of stark conclusions and some photographs have been removed from the draft report. Why the cover up even at this stage?

The war was conducted without any witnesses. Why are the UN officials, having failed their obligations, afraid to face the true story which is the greatest tragedy of modern history.

The Prime Minister David Cameron has always said that there should be an independent inquiry into the final stages of the war, which seems to be the conclusion of the BBC news report.

During the final stages of the war, several hundreds of Tamils occupied Westminster Square and called on the politicians to intervene but to no avail. The BBC turned a blind eye, as in the case of Jimmy Savile and now it has belatedly woken up. In the meantime, Channel 4 has gone streets ahead with its investigative programmes.

The UN Secretary flew over the war raged shores of Mullivaikal a few days after the war ended. He commented that everything looked fine from above while a BBC reporter who travelled on the same plane described the scene below as hell on earth! Charles Haviland (BBC News Colombo) has since used the term 'unimaginable human catastrophe' to describe the situation on the ground.

When he touched down, Ban-Ki-moon praised the government for their handling of the situation and left Sri Lanka without any idea of the scale of destruction, loss of lives, the number of casualties or missing persons. One thing is for sure and that is that no one will ever know the numbers killed because in some cases the whole family had been wiped out.

Edward Mortimer, a former senior UN official who now chairs the Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice says UN staff left when the population needed them more than ever. "The north of Sri Lanka was destroyed field by field, street by street, hospital by hospital" He could have added churches and No Fire Zones. UN officials should have been the witnesses for the atrocities.

Frances Harrison, author of 'Still Counting the Dead' on the last months of the Sri Lankan war, told the BBC "the only way now for Ban Ki-moon to restore the UN's tattered credibility on Sri Lanka is to call an independent international investigation into the slaughter of tens of thousands of civilians in 2009".

In addition, the powers behind the UN could consider removing the culprits amongst their ranks lock stock and barrel if they have brought the once respected institution into disrepute.

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A Cogent and Effective Response from a Tamil Perspective