



TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

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Co-Chairs' call for Tigers' surrender is an act of perfidy, hard on the heels of their callous disregard for equality and justice

The reported call by Sri Lanka's Co-Chairs to the Peace talks (USA, EU, Japan and Norway) to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to lay down their arms to ostensibly avoid more civilian casualties and leaving the much superior government forces intact and in a vice-like grip of occupation of the Tamil homeland is derisory if not perverse, and is consonant with their previous form of unquestioning support for the government. It is a remarkable affront to the families of the over 80,000 Tamils killed, 20,000 dedicated fighting cadres martyred, 500,000 Tamils displaced and over a million Tamils who have been driven out from that wretched state.

Their diplomatic missions in that country would not have failed to keep them advised of the plight of the Tamils and their recourse to arms is nothing but a last resort to defend against a marauding Sri Lankan army bent on conquest. It is obvious that the Palestinian cause will not be decided in a single battle no matter how superior Israel military is, and so is the sacred cause of the Tamils never to be assigned to the Sinhalese racists even when prompted by the Co-chairs. It would be tantamount even hypothetically to calling on Churchill to surrender had the Nazis managed to land in the UK in superior numbers in the 1940s. The French resistance in the second world war would have been aghast if they were required to surrender to the occupying German forces. The cause for freedom is inalienable and should not be compromised.

If it were a truly equitable and neutral role, the Co-Chairs should have also told the Sinhala forces to withdraw under their monitoring from the Tamil homeland, and an international Peacekeeping force sent in to demilitarise and then under their auspices to promote political negotiations and an eventual political settlement. Their mealy-mouthed call to disarm the Tigers is to place a whole Tamil nation weakened by a ruthless military assault aided and abetted by them, even further at the mercy of a xenophobic Sinhala people and their government that have pursued a campaign for sixty years to subjugate the Tamils.

The Co-Chairs have always had the formidable power to apply sanctions to a recalcitrant government but have not had the moral courage to do so. On the contrary, despite the outcry from the Tamils and the international NGOs, they have distinguished themselves up to now by their unwillingness to rein in the worst human rights excesses and rampant war cries of a racist Sinhala government and by their aid and military assistance have supported this genocidal war under the pretext of fighting terror in Sri Lanka. As David Miliband, the UK Foreign Secretary, stated recently this is no war on terror; it is a desperate fight for fundamental rights and equal opportunities.

The action of the Co-chairs is consistent with their partisan support over recent years for the racist and chauvinist Sinhala state (Government of Sri Lanka, GOSL) – from their immediate intervention at a time when the Sri Lankan armed forces were being routinely routed to secure the 2002 Cease Fire Agreement, through to their



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subsequent refusal to consider the LTTE as an equal partner in the ensuing discussions and physically preventing them from attending related talks.

Their refusal to intervene in the GOSL's continued and murderous treatment of Tamils in the areas it controlled, their acquiescence in the dismemberment of the merged Tamil Northern and Eastern Provinces which had been secured under the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord in 1987 and the government's repudiation of the Post Tsunami Operational Management System (P-TOMS) to rehabilitate the worst affected Tamil areas, all evidenced the Co-chairs jaundiced and biased outlook on a peaceful transition to the over 60 year conflict.

More remarkable was that these same states provided considerable military and economic support to the GOSL, aided and abetted by other nations, such as India, Pakistan, China, Israel and Iran.

Their end game is now clear – re-equip and re-train the GOSL armed forces in order that they can inflict a military defeat on the LTTE, which is synonymous with defeating the Tamils. Please do not be fooled by the GOSL's recent claims of having dealt a terminal blow to the Tamils' 30 year plus quest for their own homeland of Tamil Eelam. It would be very short-sighted to view the GOSL's recent territorial 'gains' as a major defeat for the Tigers; the truth is it is only a symbolic defeat, and certainly of immense propaganda value to the government. The real significance of these developments may convince the Tigers it's time to shelve temporarily the demand for a mini-state and resume guerrilla war.

If this ends up as the GOSL's long-term military occupation of the Tamil homelands, surrounded by a sophisticated guerrilla force nurtured by the Tamil community, the implications would be ominous both for Sri Lanka and the world. The cancer of the struggle for a free Palestine and Kashmir will be augmented on the world stage by an unrequited demand for a free Eelam that the world tried to abort. The GOSL is keen to keep the delusion intact, particularly at a time when their army is bogged down in the Tamil-dominated war zone. The potentially catastrophic consequences for the GOSL are only too clear, even though they prefer to disregard the lessons of the massive military reverses they suffered just ten years previously. The lessons of a well motivated and small guerrilla force in Vietnam, Cuba, Cyprus, Kenya and a whole host of countries that overthrew the yoke of occupation by seemingly superior forces should be heeded by a power-drunk Government of Sri Lanka.

What is needed now is for a major and concerted international political intervention, backed by an international peace keeping force. The donor states' recent pronouncement has not assisted this process and its recent actions are not a harbinger of good sense or impartiality.

Today is a black letter day in the lives of the Tamils of Eelam when sixty one years ago our freedom was bartered away at independence by the UK, our colonial governors. We should not and can not remain on our knees forever and pledge to fight the enemy from the beaches, our fields, our villages and towns until they have departed. Then we can co-exist in peace and good neighbourliness as equal nations on the land mass that is currently called Sri Lanka.



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Perhaps we could leave you with one final thought from Lasantha Wickrematunge's (the recently murdered Sinhala editor) speech 'from beyond the grave' - "A military occupation of the country's north and east will require the Tamil people to live eternally as second class citizens, deprived of all self respect.

Do not imagine that you can placate them by showering 'development' and 'reconstruction' on them in the post-war era. The wounds of war will scar them forever, and you will have an even more bitter and hateful diaspora to contend with."

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