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For the information of Foreign Governments, the International Community and the Media

THE KILLING OF INNOCENTS IN SRI LANKA (April 2006)

This is not an Appeal, nor a Plea – humanitarian or otherwise. It is to apprise foreign Governments, the international media, religious leaders, NGOs, leaders of civic society and people outside Sri Lanka, of what is going on in that country. It is NOT a request for help or intervention. I am merely presenting the facts and my sympathy to a devastated people.

1. On 25 April 2006 a female suicide bomber dressed as a pregnant woman was ‘visiting’ the Sri Lankan Army hospital in the Army Headquarters in Colombo. This is in one of the heavily-guarded and most secured “High Security Zones” in the island. She could not have got to where she was (outside the Army hospital) without “inside help” ie from a member(s) of the Armed Forces (almost 100% Sinhalese).
2. She waited for the Army Commander, Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka, and threw herself in front of his limousine, detonating the explosives strapped on her. Five of his body guards on heavily armed motorcycles were killed, as were three others. Fonseka was injured but survived.
3. I am not going to speculate on the identity of the female suicide bomber. The claim, as always, is that she was from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). If she was, to get to where she stood, she would have needed to have some very ‘close connections’ with the Security Forces, a possible but unlikely scenario. The alternative possibility is that she could equally well have been from a Sinhalese extremist group that has been urging the President Mahinda Rajapakse to take a hard (or harder) line, abandon the Ceasefire, return to ‘war’ and ‘smash’ the LTTE.
4. I will not elaborate on the highly questionable human rights record of Fonseka when he was the Commander of the Sri Lankan ‘Security Forces’ in Jaffna in the Tamil North a decade ago. Hundreds of Tamil civilians held in custody without charge or trial ‘disappeared’ – their tortured bodies later found in mass graves. It was one of his own Army soldiers who, under oath, in the Supreme Court in Colombo, showed where the mass graves were located, adding that some were alive when buried. An exhumation with international observers, including Amnesty International, confirmed that the victims had been tortured and killed. I am not accusing Fonseka of killing anyone. However, the victims were in his custody and he is answerable. He could not have been unaware of what was going on.

That said, I condemn all killings or attempted killings – deserved or not.

5. Within **hours** of the explosion in Colombo, the Sri Lankan Armed Forces launched air and artillery attacks in Trincomalee in the East – some 150km away. The speed at which this occurred leaves not the slightest doubt that it was pre-planned.
6. Seven Tamil villages near Trincomalee were indiscriminately bombed and shelled. Israeli-built Kfir war planes made 5 ‘visits’ dropping scores of bombs on civilian targets while the Sri Lankan Navy shelled the area from gun boats which fortuitously ‘happened to be’ off the coast. Between 6.30pm and 8pm on 25 April 2006, some 96 naval shells landed in just one area alone. Air strikes continued the next day.

7. The civilian population were unable to run for safety as shells came in from sea and land, and bombs were dropped from the air. After the bombing, some 40,000 people fled the area dragging their elderly, the sick and children. The Santhosam Children's Home which cared for over 40 orphaned children (ex-Tsusami which devastated the area) suffered a direct hit by a Kfir bomb. The rationale is that small 'Tigers' become big ones. 'Take them out' early – 'preemptive action', if you like. The Transit Camp for Tsunami - affected refugees was repeatedly shelled. Perhaps the President could explain why. It was not 'collateral damage'. It was deliberate and calculated. The number of casualties is unknown at the time of writing but cannot be inconsiderable.
8. There are no hospitals in this area and the two medical centres are staffed only by visiting doctors and nurses. They have been unable to get to these centres because of road blocks set up by the Army.
9. The reaction of the Sri Lankan Government, the "Free World"(!), and even Amnesty International, is interesting.
10. Dr Palitha Kohonna, Director General of the Peace Secretariat, now turned War Secretariat of the GOSL, admitted using the Armed Forces against civilian Tamil villages, justifying it as a "*retaliatory measure*". He says that the air strikes and shelling should not be counted as a violation of the Cease-fire Agreement (signed by the GOSL and the Tamil Tigers) but a "*fair reply*" to the bomb blast in Colombo earlier in the day. Condoning the attacks on Sampur and adjoining villages, Kohonna called the attack by the State Forces as "*justifiable*".
11. President Mahinda Rajapakse, who on several occasions has declared himself a "man of peace", addressed the Nation on TV just 4 hours after the bombing. He praised the military for "*patience and restraint*". Not a word of sympathy for the Tamil civilians (whose President he is) whose lives have been shattered by the bombing and shelling.

His Defense spokesman Kaheliya Rambukwelle declared "*There is no duration or limits on defence matters*". It is unclear who the aggressor was to mount this 'defence'. Since the villages were attacked, one can only assume that unarmed villagers in Trincomalee were attacking Sri Lanka and the Government was taking "defensive action".

12. The Sinhalese political opportunists in the so-called 'Marxist' Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) – no strangers to terrorism, who support President Rajapakse and sustain his party in Parliament, called for all parties to support Rajapakse "*for the defense of the motherland against terrorism*".

These are the 'patriots' who brought the Sri Lankan government to its knees in 1971, and repeated it in 1988. They assassinated the charismatic husband of Chandrika Kumaratunga (later President) because he posed too great a political threat to them, President J.R. Jayawardene's sister-in-law, Dr Gladys Jayawardene (whose only 'crime' was that she, as Head of the Pharmaceutical Corporation, imported drugs at a reasonable price from India), Professor Stanley Wijesundera, the unassuming Vice Chancellor of Colombo University (because they did not believe in tertiary education), and scores of other academics and leading citizens, in addition to wrecking the agricultural infrastructure in Sri Lanka.

What is interesting is that despite these acts of frank terrorism, the Sri Lankan Government did not use Kfir bombers to bomb the Sinhalese villagers in the South from which the JVP came. *That* is the difference between being a Sinhalese and a Tamil in Sri Lanka.

13. If the devastated Tamil people were looking for sympathy from the main Sinhalese Opposition Party - the United National Party, they got none. After meeting with President Rajapakse (from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party), the UNP Deputy Secretary-General Tissa Atanayake warned, "*If*

the Peace Process is to be fruitful, the LTTE should take immediate action to control their violent actions” (emphasis mine).

14. The international response to the GOSL outrage in Trincomalee has been predictable. The US, EU, Japan and India have condemned the suicide bombing in Colombo and called on both sides to adhere to the ceasefire and return to negotiations! The Indian Government convened its Crisis Management Group on the second day of the bombing and sent additional warships to the Palk Straits between India and Sri Lanka - presumably to help the Sri Lankan Navy if they ran into problems shelling the unarmed Tamil villagers.

In Washington, the US assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Richard Boucher stated *“It is regrettable that the Tamil Tigers have decided to restart the war instead of restarting the peace process. We are in touch with Governments around the world to bring to bear whatever pressure we can on the Tamil Tigers to abandon this course of action and to look for ways that we can support the Government in coping with the threat”*. With unusual modesty, the US has played down the support already given to the GOSL by way of a massive supply of arms, some of which rained down on the people in Trincomalee.

There was no response from Israel nor a request for thanks for supplying the Kfir bombers or the Mossad agents who ‘helped’ to train the Sri Lankan Armed Forces.

The response of Amnesty International was pathetic - an appeal *“to the parties to take all possible measures to minimize harm to civilians and adhere to human rights and international humanitarian law, which prohibit murder or violence to those taking no active part in hostilities”*. The fact that the GOSL has openly flouted human rights and humanitarian law, apparently does not call for an outright condemnation. The recently deceased Peter Benenson, the visionary founder of AI whom I knew, must be turning in his grave.

15. The Sri Lankan government must be held accountable for this outrage, which is certainly not the first. So must those who supply weapons to this irresponsible regime who use these weapons against their own citizens. Sri Lanka does not make Kfir bombers, multi-barrel guns or rockets. Those who supply these have a case to answer.
16. A number of NGOs and others have appealed to the international community which has responded in the way I have indicated. It has been a slap in the face for these devastated people. I am not going to hurt these people again by appealing for help from an international community steeped in hypocrisy. The only ‘crime’ that these people have committed is to be born Tamil. They pay for a crime they did not commit in a world where no one cares. Presumably Tamil lives in Sri Lanka are not real lives, Tamil suffering not real suffering.
17. I have met some of the people in the villages that have now been flattened. It was in 1952 when as a young Zoology student, I was hiking in this area. Unable to find a place to sleep, we decided to sleep under a tree. Some young men woke us up at midnight and asked us what we were doing. We explained that we had decided to spend a few days there. They insisted that we move into their huts (they moved out) and then proceeded to feed us for the duration of our stay.

I hope that some of these young men were not among the disabled and old men who were dragged to safety from the bombing. All I want these kind and hospitable people to know is that the young Sinhalese boy whom they befriended and protected from snakes and the pouring rain 50 years ago, sheds his tears while they shed their blood at the hands of a brutal, barbaric and irresponsible regime which has the temerity to call itself their ‘Government’.

Brian Senewiratne

27 April 2006

I am attaching some photographs mailed from Trincomalee on 26 April 2006. If you find them shocking, I tender no apology. It is time the world was shocked by what is going on behind the closed doors of Sri Lanka.

THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT BOMBS ITS OWN PEOPLE
(Assisted by Israel, USA, UK, Pakistan, India, and China to name a few)

Tamil civilians pay a price for what they did not do



Tamil child injured in the bombing taken to a hospital - 25/04/2006



A Tamil victim of the Air force bombing - 24/04/06



Another victim of the Sri Lankan air force bombing - 25/04/06



Another young Tamil killed in the shelling - 25/04/06



A mother and a child killed in the air force bombing - 25/04/06



Inspecting LTTE officials and a damaged house in the background

