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Building a genuine pro-peace tendency in the 'international community' regarding Sri Lanka

I am sure many of the people attending this meeting are old enough to remember the words of the classic Reggae song by Peter Tosh:

'Everyone is crying out for peace – none is crying out for justice
I don't want no peace – I need equal rights and justice...'

This song came out in the late seventies, just about the same time period when the armed resistance of the LTTE began to emerge as a credible alternative to the previously purely peaceful methods adopted by the Tamil resistance to the racist terror imposed on them in Sri Lanka.

Who would have failed to understand the message in the song? - Or the problem?
– Whether it was in Palestine or Angola ... so the song continued. He could have added the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The moral or ethical issue was clear. Oppressed people, whether it was black people in South Africa or the Tamil people in Sri Lanka had a right to meet force with force – especially when non-violent protests failed to achieve any tangible results.

These days, to effectively transmit a message with such clarity is not possible. Now, before our very eyes, reality is turned on its head by sophisticated media spin doctors. So, when a decade ago, Chandrika launched the most destructive and murderous war ever faced by the Tamil people and called it a 'War for Peace' there was hardly a protest by the "international community". Vellupillai Prabhakaran, when deciding not to militarily confront the invasion of the Jaffna Peninsula ordered by Chandrika, had argued that if a massive destruction to Tamil life occurred – no one would bat an eyelid – because as he put it 'it is not human rights that makes the world go round'. As evidence to back his argument, he had pointed to the millions of people killed in different parts of Africa with hardly a murmur from the "international community".

The most powerful countries in the world, say they are for peace in Sri Lanka but take practical actions which clearly push the situation towards destabilisation and war. USA while mouthing that it is for peace ensured that it prevented the LTTE from attending a critical preparation meeting to discuss reconstruction aid which was to have brought the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government together. The USA did this by conniving with the Sri Lankan government to hold the meeting in Washington where because of the USA's insistence on keeping the LTTE on its Terrorism list will prevent it from attending. Just six months ago the British presidency of the EU imposed a travel ban on official delegations of the LTTE and, moreover, promised to actively consider their proscription as a 'terrorist organization'. As the US-British axis that invaded Iraq, and launched their project 'war against terrorism' are actively narrowing the space for a negotiated settlement and consciously and recklessly disturbing the equilibrium between the two parties that are on the negotiating table – the

situation could not be grimmer. Internationally the situation is so terrible that I found myself arguing the opposite of the Peter Tosh! In a debate about whether we call for a “negotiated peace” or for a “just peace”, I argued that the actions of the pre-eminent powers of the world are undermining the very possibility of negotiations. So I said forget justice! We have been pushed such a long way backwards internationally, that even to use the word justice seems to be too extreme!

It seems like to use the word justice seems to put in an extra condition, an extra issue, an extra concept, that can be used to leave a negotiated peace.

The fact is that ‘justice’ and ‘equal rights’ have been gradually pushed out of prominence from political terminology since the collapse of the Soviet Block and the emergence of the USA and the sole super-power.

Therefore we have to accept this reality and the conditions under which we have to politically engage ourselves. We cannot wish away this reality however unpleasant it is. Of course this does not mean that we are not fighting for justice! But the given frame on which we have to express it has changed – the goal posts have shifted. And in the domain that we have to engage ourselves – where the terms are “peace” and “human rights” are our terms of reference – we have to understand that “justice” and “equality” have been extracted from these words. While using the words “human rights” and “peace” we have to consciously re-insert the justice and equality content into these terms as we use them.

This is reality of the politics in the international frame. But, before we start on the international dimension, we should clarify the conditions under which the cease fire agreement in Sri Lanka took place.

Basis of the Cease-Fire and the Peace Process

It is clear to any serious analyst that the balance of military power or more precisely the asymmetric equilibrium of military capability is the basis of the initiation of the cease-fire and the continuation of it. The outgoing Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) chief said so himself in an interview with a Sri Lankan newspaper recently. The brilliant military analyst Sivaram emphasised that this point was fundamental to understand the recent political developments in Sri Lanka.

A brief examination of the pre-history of the cease-fire agreement will show how hard the Chandrika government tried to militarily weaken the LTTE. Due to the unbearable suffering that the Tamil people went through during this unprecedented military attack by the Sri Lankan (SL) armed forces the LTTE made several overtures for a cease-fire through the Norwegian facilitators. But despite several unilateral cease-fires initiated by the LTTE, Chandrika and her armed forces continued to escalate the armed offensive believing that military victory against the LTTE was possible while at the same time her foreign minister Kadirgamar went on a diplomatic mission to European countries misleading them to believe that it is the government which is for peace and not the LTTE.

It was only when the LTTE proved that it could rise up to every attack made by the SL military and prevail - that the basis was laid for a serious and long term cease fire. Certainly the extremely sophisticated Katunayake airport attack by the LTTE contributed to this situation by sending shock waves through the business community – demonstrating that they too will have to pay – that while the Tamil people suffered the Sinhala elite cannot live in the lap of luxury – and cannot carry on “business as usual”, because the Sri Lankan economy was about to collapse. This strengthened the forces of Ranil’s UNP, which was able to appear as the representative of pragmatic business interests’ wish for peace, and the UNF pushed Chandrika’s party out of power in the parliamentary elections.

The main objective of the Sri Lankan business community was to avoid the catastrophic disintegration of the Sri Lankan economy. This fear was able to be communicated to a wider section of the majority Sinhala electorate. The fact that peace would allow the southern business community some new avenues of expansion was a minor bonus which could add to the recovery of their economy, but this should not be confused with the strategic calculations of Ranil Wickremasinghe's allies in the West as the economic component of an 'engagement and containment' strategy. The aim of this strategy in my view was not so much driven by business interest for profits but for politically replacing the collective character of the LTTE's struggle with an individualistic ethos thus weakening the LTTE's power base.

So, even though Ranil Wikramasinghe's government made the important step of responding positively to the LTTE's overtures and implemented the cease-fire agreement in February 2002, as events show now he and his international allies had their own plans to undermine the LTTE militarily. As the 'engagement and containment strategy' that the USA had used so successfully to undermine the capability of liberation movements - especially in Latin America (example El Salvador) - was not yielding results with the LTTE the Wickramasinghe government began to resort to using the murderous 'deep penetration units' during the peace process, targeting and assassinating key LTTE members. During the run up to the last parliamentary elections leading members of the then UNP government boasted about these undercover operations, and 'dirty tricks' campaigns implying the Karuna's defection was a consequence of these UNP initiatives. So even as the talks were going on there was an attempt to change the military balance by weakening the LTTE structures – even though this risked undermining the good-will between the two parties engaged in the talks.

Strategic interests versus the Southern economy

But why should the Ranil's UNP government go against the interests of the business community on which it is supposed to be based on by risking a war which could land the Sri Lankan economy in the same disastrous state as before the cease fire agreement began? The fact is that the business class in the South of the island, who were benefiting most from the peace, had no interest in risking going back to war. Indeed, why should the Sinhala masses, who were getting a respite from war and a peace dividend – albeit small – wish to return to a terrible and destructive war?

The fact is that the destiny of this little island was rarely determined by internal forces. External powers always had a special interest in Sri Lanka. Further, historically, the primary reason for the interest in the island has not been for the economic exploitation of its people or the extraction of its resources – like with most colonies. Rather, it has been its strategic location - its proximity to India and its pivotal point in the critical 'sea-lanes' in the Indian Ocean - that has been its main drawing point to colonial powers. European colonial powers from the Portuguese onwards commented on this.

As William Pitt remarked in the British parliament on the acquisition of the island from the Dutch 1795 "It is to us the most valuable colonial possession on the globe as giving to our Indian empire a security which it had not enjoyed from its first establishment".

As the ground breaking series of articles in the Sinhala weekly 'Hiru' showed, even the anti-Tamil, Sinhala Buddhist ideology 'rose' under strict British tutelage and did not have any of the much proclaimed anti-colonial content that it is famous for (the series of articles appeared in the 'Hiru' newspaper during mid 2004 till early 2005). Politically and spiritually the Sinhala people were created somewhat like the loyalists in Ireland in an Asian setting. The Sinhala people were made to feel superior to Indians so that they can be made more loyal to the British. Mahatma Gandhi used to describe the Sinhalese as 'our westernised friends'. India was British colonialism's 'jewel in the crown', from which it extracted immense wealth

and it needed Lanka as a strategic base to keep control of India. The British could not trust the Tamils who inhabited the north and east of the island because of their connection to the Tamil speaking Indians in Tamil Nadu. The British assumed that sooner or later the fires of the Indian anti-colonial struggle would find a resonance among the Tamils inhabiting the north and east of the island and that it is important to ensure that the Tamils areas should be brought under the control of the Sinhala majority. What the British euphemistically called 'amalgamation' of the Sinhala and Tamil regions for their 'bureaucratic convenience' was in fact the genesis of the Sinhala supremacist 'unitary state'.

This way the deep sea natural harbour in the Tamil populated Trincomalee could be under Sinhala and therefore British control. The British did economically exploit the island, famously, with the coffee and later tea plantations – but for labour they were obliged to bring hundreds of thousand of Tamils from the India that British colonialism had so brutally impoverished. Not only did the British extract wealth from the blood and sweat of Lanka's 'hill country Tamils' working as near slaves but the Tea plantation economy provided the basis for the island to have a very good education system. Although there were some Sinhala revolts against the British – the colonisers very quickly arrived at the amicable settlement with the Sinhala elite because they did not want any disturbances in the military post.

This strategic post, the majority population of which were 'our westernised friends' was crucial for British strategic interests in colonial times with respect to its battle with the Indian independence movement and during the 2nd World War when it was the South East Asia headquarters for the British Royal Navy.

After the Second World War when British power diminished and the USA grew in importance – Sri Lanka and Trincomalee harbour remained important to the western alliance to project its power in the region in opposition to both India and the Soviet Union. These struggles between very big powers had repercussions in Sri Lanka's 'ethnic conflict'. If people thought that after the Soviet Union collapsed things would be different – not at all.

Trincomalee harbour gains a new importance as a strategic military point in the sea-lane for the conducting of the war in the Middle East. Although the US has managed with Diego Garcia as its critically important military base in the Indian Ocean for its war in Afghanistan and Iraq, as the war in Iraq and Afghanistan go on longer and another possible confrontation in Iran is coming to the horizon Diego Garcia is far too small to service these needs and the US/British axis needs to have access to Trincomalee harbour (please see www.humanrights.de/doc_en/swiss/ for the links to the relevant video interview with Sivaram we did in 2003 and a link to the last article that he was working on before he was murdered – on US's strategic interests in Sri Lanka. For the interested, please find also the link to the two part film about the bases in Diego Garcia by John Pilger to see the general importance of this part of the Indian Ocean and the lengths to which Britain and the USA will go to secure their interests).

It is in this context that we should look at the US position on the peace process in Sri Lanka. When the historic Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) was signed between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE in February 2002, the International community seemed to be united in its support for the peace process in Sri Lanka. But by 2003 as I have outlined above the 'engagement and containment' strategy to undermine the LTTE's politico-military power had failed.

At the same time in 2003 staggering events were taking place in the world with the coming invasion of Iraq. USA with its ally Britain used their statecraft to pressurise-cajole-threaten and successfully overpowered all international opposition to its planned invasion of Iraq. The US led 'War against terror' was in full flight bringing into sharp focus the military necessities to carry out this war. Tactical, Strategic military calculations were being made at the heat of

the moment – will Turkey allow the US to fly over it – if not what is an alternative route? All possible eventualities were being calculated. What are the potential ‘forward base’ potentialities for the US/British axis? Pressure was put on everyone. Everyone was forced to make a stand – ‘are you with us or against us?’ George Bush asked the world.

In this context it is not so hard to see why the LTTE was prevented from attending a critical preparation meeting to discuss reconstruction aid – in April 2003. It is clear the USA and Ranil’s government collaborated to hold the meeting in Washington which would exclude the LTTE from attending. In terms of this decision, it should be also clear, who was the horse and who was the rider in this alliance. The result is history – in April 2003 while world was treated to fireworks display on their TV screen as Baghdad was set alight by the US air force, the LTTE left the peace talks protesting of the ‘excessive internationalisation’ (must be the understatement of the decade) of the peace process in Sri Lanka.

The fact that the LTTE left the talks shows that the US intervention in the peace process undermined and destabilised it. I think from the evidence that is available it is clear that they tried to undermine the LTTE not just to show that it was on the side of the Sri Lankan state but also to show that the Sri Lankan state itself must be constrained by the needs of US interests when push comes to shove.

So the ‘international community’ far from being a neutral arbiter which is able to help solve problems, and de-escalate crises becomes not just part of the problem – but the biggest problem! It is also clear that the ‘international community’ has different trends within it and also that the balance of forces change with time and at certain times the dominant forces act decisively exerting immense pressure on the peace process in Sri Lanka. For more information about background to understand the conflicts please see the links page for this article mentioned above.

Tsunami

The ‘international community’ showed a new face after the Tsunami hit. Millions of ordinary people from all over the world showed massive spontaneous human solidarity far in excess the initial responses of the governments of their respective countries. For example, I remember, soon after the Tsunami struck the US embassy in Sri Lanka announcing that the USA will give US\$ 100,000 US to Sri Lanka! The Tamil refugees in Bremen - small city in Germany - collected over that amount during the first days after the Tsunami struck!

It was hoped by many that the terrible tragedy of the Tsunami, and the common sorrow felt by Sinhala, Tamil and Moslem people in Sri Lanka could open up the possibility to restart the stalled peace process. But the actions of the president (the UNP government had lost power and Chandrika with her ally the JVP was in control of the parliament as well as being the president) - Chandrika Kumaratunge – have had the opposite effect. When Koffi Anan wished to visit the worst hit areas - in the North and East of the island - the president stopped him because some of these areas are under the control of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Instead of taking actions that would increase trust between the Tamil and the Sinhala people she took actions which resulted in having the opposite effect. She continued the appeasement policy towards her government’s alliance partner the Sinhala extremist JVP, who had, much before the Tsunami, argued that a military defeat of the LTTE is possible and necessary. Earlier the JVP had launched a Sinhala supremacist campaign to convince the Sinhala majority that the desertion of a leading member of the LTTE (Karuna) has seriously weakened the LTTE’s military capability and the opportunity should be used to physically crush the Tamil movement.

The extremist Sinhala forces continued with the sentiment on this campaign that the Tamils - who were as a proportion of the population much harder hit by the Tsunami than the Sinhalese – are in a militarily weakened state and that this is the perfect opportunity to crush their spirit. The president, instead of opposing the racist politics responded by signing an overseas weapons contract worth US \$150 million – just a few weeks after the Tsunami!!

Breaking aid conditionality

During the 3 year peace process, there had been a strongly implied conditionality from the aid giving nations that the money that has been promised to rebuild the war ravaged island is dependent on there been realistic progress in the Norwegian brokered peace process. But, as the President is wedded to an alliance with a party (JVP) which promotes war and burns effigies of the Norwegians for their part in the peace process – progress has been virtually impossible. So, even though the president was very keen to get hold of the US \$ 4.5 Billion pledged by the donor nations – these nations were unwilling to give money which will go up in smoke when the war starts. However for the President, the Tsunami could break the deadlock – as the Tsunami aid could be seen as unconditional on the progress of the Peace Process. Such a lot of aid was flowing into the financial system in Sri Lanka, that just a few weeks after the Tsunami, the Sri Lankan Rupee appreciated by 10% against the Dollar and the Euro – an unprecedented occurrence.

But the unfair treatment of the Tamils with regard to the distribution of Tsunami aid was coming to light especially because of the unusual interest shown on this issue. Many ordinary people generously and they did not want this money to be misused or distributed unfairly. Many international NGO's also relayed the information that the Tamils were not getting their fair share. International pressure was building on the government to support a 'joint mechanism' eventually called P-TOMS where the aid can be shared between the Sinhala South and the Tamil North East with the participation of the Government and the LTTE. After delaying for six months Chandrika at last signed the P-TOMS. But soon after this was done the USA refused to support P-TOMS because of 'legal restrictions'. Barely a week after the US announcement, no doubt taking a leaf out of the US's legal book, the Sri Lankan supreme court that the blocks P-TOMS.

Interestingly it was the Sinhala chauvinist JVP that lodged the appeal to Sri Lankan Supreme Court to block the P-TOMS – showing the perfect synergy between the US intervention and the JVP's practice.

USA – Britain and Europe

Britain – the mother of all the problems in Sri Lanka – is not exactly sitting quietly by. On the contrary it has been working inside the EU to change its policy. Europe has been nominally pro-peace and has been unwilling to destabilise the peace process. But Britain's aim is to cause paradigmatic shift in the EU position bringing it in line to the position of the US (for material which gives wider background analysis on US positions – please see the links page mentioned above)

Last year, Britain used its spell of presiding over the EU to push this line. It succeeded in making the first step September last year. The British presidency of the EU implemented a travel ban on the LTTE members to enter EU countries. With this they have started to implement within the EU, US-British position of enveloping the peace process in Sri Lanka within the 'war against terror' politics. I say one step because the EU has not yet gone to the extent putting the LTTE in the 'terror list'. It is clear that there is still some resistance of some countries in Europe to join the 'coalition of the willing' – but the relentless pressure of Britain within the EU could result in the unwilling countries 'towing the line' without much kicking and screaming. No doubt, the British line of argument within Europe would be to say that

excluding the LTTE would in fact be helpful to the peace process. This is nonsensical at any level as the last time when the USA excluded the LTTE from the Washington aid meeting the LTTE withdrew from the peace process.

There are countries in Europe that have enlightened and pro-peace position on Sri Lanka. And even within the countries that are unwilling to resist the US-British juggernaut there are tendencies even in the establishment that opposes the positions adopted by their governments. For example Finland made a principled stand, stopping all Tsunami aid to Sri Lanka when it was clear that the aid given to the government did not reach the Tamils. But then there are the 'internal dynamics' of the EU. Finland will have to look a bit to Sweden for leadership and Sweden in turn has to look toward Germany. But I am sure in the people who are engaged in actually implementing development aid policy on the ground in many of the European countries are clear what is going on and they wish to resist the diplomats in their own countries who are more prone to succumb to British pressure.

The Southern business community

The business community played an important role in pushing the Southern politics forward to make a step towards the peace process in 2001/2002. They did so in order to prevent the destruction of the economy due to the war. If a war would start again it is widely accepted that it will be more intense than before. It is also widely accepted that the war will be brought to the South more than before.

We have outlined above that the interest of the US/British axis in the island is strategic rather than economic. They would recklessly destabilise the situation risking war, if they estimate that there is a good chance that a prolonged war will in the long term weaken the LTTE. The short and middle term destruction of the Southern economy, no to speak of the massive number of casualties both Sinhalese and Tamil, is unlikely to figure in their calculations, if their strategic interests are served.

The Southern business community again faces a challenge. In the same way it contributed to the peace process coming into life they have the opportunity to prevent its death. As we argued the significant threat to the collapse of the peace process comes from external forces the business community can counteract this using its extensive contacts. Like previously it contributed to overcome the prejudice against starting a dialog with the LTTE among the Sinhalese society now in this highly internationalised situation it has to make its international business partners aware of the consequences the drive to war will have on their shared interests.

There are many forces, for example in Europe, in the political and economic establishment who prefer peace in order to develop and expand the economic exchange between Sri Lanka and these countries. The Southern business community can connect with these forces to influence the policy makers in these countries to positively oppose the paradigmatic shift taking place in Europe and to roll back the reckless US policy gaining influence.

NGO's

Individuals within NGO's, in fact, can have a significant contribution towards the stability of the peace process at this time. The NGO's in Sri Lanka have had a controversial image in the media and in the consciousness of the ordinary people in the island. Many NGO's have opposed extreme Sinhala chauvinism but have been ineffective in having significant effect among the Sinhala masses as they have been popularly depicted as being run by opportunist individuals lacking backbone, and whose ideas mimic the western agencies which provide them with financial support. But now individuals in NGO's find themselves in a position where they can pressurise the contacts they have in the rich industrial countries to ensure that

they take practical action against the destabilising role that the US-British led coalition is having on the peace process. At this moment in time, in practice, a concerted campaign by individuals, Sinhala, Tamil, European etc., etc. in the manner I have outlined – upward through their connections in the rich countries can have much more effect than what they can have downwards with the Sinhala, Tamil and Moslem masses. Individuals within NGO's, whatever the history of these NGO's maybe, now, find themselves well positioned strategically for this task. Precisely their top heavy structure, their closeness to powerful industrialised countries can be turned around and transformed. During this crucial time they will achieve more by putting effort into understanding the conflicts between the big powers that will have a massive effect on destabilising the peace process in Sri Lanka, and doing something about this, rather than intervening in the conflict between the Sinhala and Tamil people.

The Tamil refugees

In the last two decades the Tamils have withstood a series of attempts to destroy their sovereignty and their very existence. The unprecedented military onslaught by Chandrikas government, which she promoted as “War for peace”, was not successful despite the economic embargo on the Tamils, the military occupation of the Jaffna peninsula and the resulting mass exodus. Despite the fact, that Chandrikas military campaign was underwritten by Western financial support, it did not reach its objective.

Although the peace process that followed raised many hopes, this was not to be as the dominant international players were more concerned with undermining the military power balance on which the peace process was based on by implementing a containment strategy to weaken the LTTE. Economic and political methods of containment to undermine the cohesiveness of the Tamil society and the base of the LTTE did not succeed. This resulted in the start of the process of internationally isolating the LTTE on the one hand and physical attacks on its cadres and on prominent supporters of the Tamil cause on the other hand.

The tragedy of the tsunami where the Tamils had disproportionately higher losses in terms life and property was also seen as an opportunity to undermine the military equilibrium by the Srilankan government and the dominant international powers.

Many of the Tamil refugees who fled Sri Lanka due to racist riots, war and persecution have not forgotten their brothers and sisters they have left behind and are supporting their struggle for their rights and their existence. When the tsunami hit it was them who broke the attempt to completely isolate the Tamil people from the international community. They were able to build a bridge between the host community and their brothers and sisters in their homeland. Despite the massive obstacles the tsunami relief in the Northeast was very effective because of the internationally acclaimed commitment and the efficiency of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation.

The post-tsunami period highlighted the role of the Diaspora in the collective strength of the Tamil struggle. It is clear, that breaking the link between the Tamil Diaspora and the Tamils in the Northeast of Sri Lanka becomes part of changing the politico-military balance in favour of the Srilankan government. It is in this context that we have to see the co-ordinated campaign conducted by Human Rights Watch (HRW).

In a report that was released in English and Tamil recently HRW argues: The LTTE and allied organisations are collecting money for the ‘final war’. To do so LTTE cadres in Canada and Europe are terrorising the Tamil Diaspora community who is living in fear of the LTTE. And in the introduction it says: “The LTTE’s dependence on the Tamil Diaspora for financial support, and the Diaspora’s substantial size and influence, give the Diaspora unique potential to influence the LTTE’s policies and behaviour, including its human rights practices” and

calls on the Canadian government and European governments to put pressure on the LTTE. A very short time later the LTTE was banned in Canada.

But there is one point that the Tamil Diaspora has to come to face to face with. HRW was only able to promote this idea of passive, frightened, mindless refugees in Western countries like Canada, who are terrorised and dominated by the LTTE, because the Tamils were not articulating their real motivation of supporting their brothers and sisters in their homeland in a politically effective way in their host communities.

How can this be corrected? It is not enough to refute these allegations by HRW and others like it in a factual way. As I said at the beginning of the text the meaning of words like “human rights” has to be substantiated for ourselves. Depending on who uses the term “human rights” there is a different meaning and ideological component to it. During the Cold War an individualised meaning to human rights was given by Western ideologues like Brzezinski in their battle against the Soviet Bloc. This was in counter-position to social and collective rights. Human Rights Watch in fact emerged out of Helsinki Watch, which represented the Western Cold War definition of individualised human rights. But at the same time people like Malcolm X used the term “human rights” to defend the collective rights of black people in the USA in an international domain.

Human Rights Watch uses a tiny minority of Tamils, who for one reason or another want to see the LTTE undermined and promote these individuals (many of them anonymous so that there can be no way to prove or disprove their allegations) elevate these individuals as epitomising human rights values. HRW also gives the impression that the LTTE are driving the Tamils towards war – when even a cursory examination will show that it is the LTTE that initiated the cease-fire and that it is the USA, the country that HRW is based in, is the main destabilising force. Human Rights Watch, in succeeding to get the LTTE banned in Canada will definitely undermine the collective human rights of the Tamils living in the North and East of the island.

HRW has brought the politics of the war in Sri Lanka to the Western countries. The Tamil refugees have no option but to rise to the challenge. They have to show the inherent justice of the collective struggle of the oppressed Tamil people. But they have to articulate this within a battle for the very meaning of human rights.