

THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT - ALREADY IN MORIBUND STATE -

The Tamil people take strong exception to the unfair charges and veiled threats issued in the Tokyo-donor-Co-Chairs' Statement of 19 December 2005 against the LTTE, the representatives of the Tamil people in the peace talks. These were manifestations of complete ignorance of dangerous ground realities developed recently as a result of the Rajapakse Presidency that rode into power on the twin-crest wave of extreme nationalism and Buddhist chauvinism, vowing to throttle the aspirations of the Tamil people. The Co-Chairs' needs to play fair and square and abandon its parochial partisanship towards the government of Sri Lanka. It needs to accept the fact that with the signing of the CFA, the LTTE has become an equal partner in the peace talks; therefore, its position as a de facto state needs to be accepted. The International Community's adoption of different yardsticks between the government and the non-state actor on common issues, leads to mistrust and misunderstanding, and a final settlement delayed and difficult, perhaps a warning to any non-state actor in any part of the world in IC's future involvement at peace brokerage.

It is a pity the Co-Chairs rushed to conclusions as regards Tamil voting in the Presidential election. Exposure of the duplicitous qualities of the leading Presidential candidates by the LTTE, had perhaps been misconstrued by the advisors to the Co-Chairs as "enforced boycott," whereas, the Commissioner for Elections, Sri Lanka, had subsequently ruled that there were no reporting of any "enforced boycott" by the election officials. He also quoted previous instances in which Sri Lanka political parties had called for boycotting elections and these had not been considered violation of the country's election laws. The forced "enforced boycott" theory can find some justification, as has been pointed out widely in Sri Lanka nationalist press, only if it was reflecting the disappointment of the Co-Chairs at the defeat of a particular candidate they had expected to win, the success of whom the LTTE could have made possible with coaxing Tamil people to vote.

International Community's Silence:



Does it condone terrorist killing by the state?

The Tamil Diaspora, through the International Federation of Tamils (IFT) expresses its shock and revulsion at the International Community's (IC) failure to condemn the murder of Joseph Pararajasingham, a member of Parliament and peace activist, during the midnight Christmas service, in the provincial cathedral of Batticaloa. The stony silence maintained by world democracies gives room for interpretation as IC's condoning of the assassination, an act of terrorism. In the new environment where extreme nationalists and Buddhist chauvinists are on the upswing in Sri Lanka, the continued silence of the IC may encourage culprits to go on an unbridled rampage comparable to the Black July of 1983.

Double standard on violence

The Co-Chairs "...condemn in the strongest terms the recent escalation of violence in the North and East." Tamil people welcome this observation but expect Co-Chairs to take cognisance of the fact that violence in the North-East is perpetrated by the Sri Lanka armed forces and the paramilitary cadres attached to them. Study of violence in the North-East during a week to Christmas, shockingly reveals a long list of army atrocities; on 17 December, the body of 20 year old Tharshini, was recovered from a well outside the navy camp in Pungudutivu, in islet off Jaffna. She was raped, allegedly by military personnel, an obvious war crime; on 18 December, scores of auto rickshaw drivers were assaulted; on 18, civilians outside Jaffna university were attacked; on 19, University staff and students on a march were attacked; on 20, army entered the university campus, opened fire and tear-gassed students; on 22, Jaffna District Organiser of Tamil Resurgence Convention organiser was shot dead; On 22, seven fishermen in Mannar were assaulted; on 23, charred bodies of four, including that of a 4 year old boy earlier arrested by the military were recovered from huts set on fire; on 23, nine civilians attacked by the military were admitted to the hospital; on 23, twenty eight were injured and 13 hospitalised when navy went on rampage; and on top of all, on 24 December, Joseph Pararajasingham, a Tamil MP since 1990 and a peace activist was murdered during midnight Christmas service. All these incidents happened in government controlled areas of the North-East, Tamils being victim.

There were incidents in which army personnel were also killed or injured in claymore or gun attacks by a group called Roaring People's Force. Sarath Fonseka, the present army commander himself has stated that those who made the claymore attack on the military recently, belonged to a third force and he is going to deal with it. Though a warmonger, he has not blamed the LTTE for the attack. Notorious for holding a long list of missing Tamil persons finally ending in abandoned wells and Chemmani mass graves during his last command in Jaffna around 1996, Sarath Fonseka's new tenure as Sri Lanka's Military Commander, is now wit-

nessing another list of missing persons, swelling by day. The national human rights commission (Jaffna office) has admitted reporting of at least 35 people missing in Jaffna, most arrested at home during the last two weeks.

Escalation of violence is not confined to North-East alone. Hundreds of Tamils, many still languishing in jails without trial, are continuing to be arrested in night raids by the Sri Lanka Forces in Colombo and other cities outside North-East. The Co-Chairs tended to ignore this human rights violation by the state in their Statement, perhaps because they had made a forgone conclusion to condemn the LTTE alone.

Tamil Diaspora is perplexed at the inherent intention of the Co-Chairs as they, in their statement, "... call on the LTTE to put an immediate end to their on-going campaign of violence and again urge the LTTE to demonstrate their commitment to the Ceasefire Agreement and the peace process." The Co-Chairs have singled out only the LTTE for stricture, while on the other hand, with the new President in power, the State Intelligence and the paramilitary cadres are on the rampage in the north-east. The Statement did not make any mention of the recent killings of Tamil Resurgence leaders, daily assaults on civilians, increase in the number of army rapes, army abduction of school children, etc.

Joseph Pararajasingham's brutal murder

As we have learnt in the past, every time the IC turned its head the other way when state forces perpetrated atrocities on the Tamil people or tended to criticise the LTTE alone unfairly, the state forces took courage to do more harm. Every Tamil the SL army kills, it labels him an LTTE cadre, the case of five killed on 29 December in jaffna, being the recent one. The state forces called them Liberation tigers killed during confrontation, to be proved later, four were arrested at different checkpoints. Of the four, one was a young woman returning home after her routine treatment for heart disease, one a vendor, the other, a student and yet another a technical apprentice. The fifth was a night watchman in a leading school, leaving blood mark at his watch post

from where his body was dragged to the isolated spot chosen for the so-called "confrontation." Perhaps Joseph Pararajasingham's brutal murder could be attributed to the boldness the state army drew from Co-Chairs' prejudiced attack on, and the threat it issued to, the LTTE, letting the State Forces go blameless.

Co-Chairs' delegation to Vanni

Still, Tamil Diaspora congratulates the International Community's success in sending a Co-Chairs delegation to Vanni on 23.12.2005. It shows IC's concern and interest. We believe it a breakthrough when the Co-Chairs' team was allowed to visit Kilinochchi, at a time the Sri Lanka government maintains a strict ban on visits of international dignitaries to Vanni. Kofi Annan, Bill Clinton and Yashushi Akashi were some who could not find their way to the Vanni.

The gleam of hope the visit of the Co-Chairs' delegation brought to Sri Lanka, has turned into despair with the murder of the Tamil Parliamentarian in the church. The writing on the wall does not auger well for sustenance of peace.

Tamil Community feels it a duty to point out a change in the behaviour of the SLMM as well. In a recent statement issued by the SLMM following the disrupted march by university staff and students in Jaffna, the behaviour of the students was described as unruly, while opening fire by state forces on unarmed students was neither mentioned nor criticised. The SLMM has, on a number of occasions, expressed reluctance to receive complaints against State Armed Forces, as is pointed out by many, including Mr.Kajendran, the Member of Parliament, Jaffna.

Tamil Resurgence

The IFT, on behalf of the Tamil diaspora, has been continually pointing out IC's failure to recognise the growing impatience of the Tamil people at the failure to implement the CFA for over three years. Continued army occupation of traditional homeland of the Tamils was another sore point. Resolutions at series of Tamil Resurgence Conventions, being ignored by the IC was another cause for brooding

among Tamils. The demand for their right to self-determination, recognition of Tamil nationhood and traditional homeland and insistence on withdrawal of the occupying Forces has irked the government. The need to meet the state army retaliation against Tamil civilians and students has given rise to the People's Roaring Army which during its campaign of attacks on state forces and the paramilitary, went openly to submit a petition to the SLMM, declaring its existence and operation.

On behalf of the Tamil Diaspora, the IFT asks the International Community to take into consideration the aspirations the Tamils at home have repeatedly expressed at the Resurgence Conventions. We are asking for the full implementation of the CFA before the next move towards peace talks is made. We claim recognition of our nationhood and our traditional homeland.

We declare our right to self-determination and nationhood, inviolable.

We wish to reiterate that the IFT will continue to serve as the voice of the Tamil Diaspora and that it will remain totally committed to a peaceful and lasting resolution to our national problem. We are always ready to rally our people and be partners in quest for peace and equality. Although the end of the year 2005 appears slipping into war overtones, we are positively hopeful we will emerge successful in marching towards lasting peace, with the help and effort of nations of goodwill in the coming year.

To every nation of Goodwill, IFT expresses its thanks for the yeomen service rendered in the past and wishes success in its endeavours in 2006.

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