



HOUSE FALLING APART

*"As it is written in Mahinda Chinthanaya, so it shall be done on the island of Sri Lanka."
- The death-knell for the House of Cards falling apart, rings, out and loud!*

Denial Of Safe Transport To LTTE Leaders: A Tactical Ploy - Silent IC - Cluster Killing - Mahinda Chinthana and Parting of Ways

Even before he was elected to the Presidency, Mahinda Rajapakse was advocating the abrogation of the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA), which was the cornerstone of the entire peace process and recommending the structuring of a new order under a unitary system. If at all he relented at first, it was because of the diplomatic and most importantly the economic pressure exerted by the International Community (IC). Mahinda was biding for his time. Now he is sparing his fangs!



13.05.06 at Jaffna: A Family of 8 massacred by the Mahinda Regime at midnight /Tamilnet



A Tamil City bombed by Sri Lankan Air Force In April 2006
/ New York Times

Geneva 1 was not for his liking. He wanted to amend the CFA at Geneva. But the IC, through its facilitator Norway, would not let him have his way. At Geneva 1, it was agreed that:

- i. The Armed Tamil Groups should be disarmed; and
- ii. The Parties should refrain from attacking each other.

What was agreed was to be honoured before the next agreed meeting at Geneva on April 19. At least genuine attempts should be made towards it. But, Mahinda flouted both requirements the very next day itself when a paramilitary Tamil group, with the help of the Sri Lanka Armed Forces, trespassed the border divide, attacked an LTTE checkpoint in its area and killed an LTTE cadre in the east.

Denial Of Safe Transport To LTTE Leaders: A Tactical Ploy

As soon as the Peace Talks Team of the government returned from Geneva, the President, very rightly, convened an All Party Conference to apprise the Sinhala polity of whatever transpired at the Talks. In fact another was convened subsequently to map out topics for the impending Talks in April, an indication of Mahinda's correct realisation of the importance and necessity of an all-embracing consultation.



The LTTE wanted to do the same, not imitating Mahinda, but continuing what they had been doing immediately after each Peace Talk held with the previous government earlier. They reminded the Rajapakse government to arrange for the usual provision of transport by government helicopters to bring down to Kilinochchi, the LTTE leaders of the Eastern Command. Mahinda Chintanaya, which ordered a distinct departure from the methods of the previous government in the peace process, used this opportunity to provoke confusion and gain political mileage.

The head of the Political Wing of the LTTE, insisted at meetings with the visiting Norwegian Facilitators, the EU Representatives and the Co-Chair leaders who visited him one after the other, that a demo-

cratic discussion among the politburo and a democratic consensus in their assembly was essential for the LTTE before the next round of peace talks. With each of the visiting dignitary, Tamil Selvan emphasised only on two things: i. Safe helicopter transport for the generals; and ii. Implementation of the decisions made at Geneva 1 Talks. He made them all see sense that in fulfilment of these alone a genial and uninterrupted environment for future talks would evolve to make it uninterrupted and lasting.

President Rajapakse took the opportunity to expose this as LTTE obstinacy and win for himself a ban on LTTE in all major countries. It was only when date drew near for the next parley at Geneva and the IC pressed for a breakthrough that the government offered alternative transport arrangements, as it felt providing earlier facilities would tantamount to a psychological defeat for Mahinda Chintanaya. This was a ploy to miss the deadline and to blame the LTTE for the delay. The flight arrangements, ie., the private helicopters and the sea-planes offered, were attack-prone, flying at low level and with inadequate capacity to carry all cadres, a risk the LTTE did not wish to take. The obtuse intervention by the Sri Lanka navy just before the ferry arrangement agreed by the SLMM was to kick-off, pointed towards isolation and attack, making the LTTE opt out of the journey.

It was during a land-journey, with army escort that Kowshalyan, an important member of the LTTE Peace-Team, was murdered. On another such occasion, the ingenuity of the LTTE driver had saved the lives of 30 cadres, both incidents within close vicinity of SL Army bases. The LTTE had explained to the IC Facilitators all these for its insistence on foul-proof travel arrangements, such as the earlier one they had with the previous government. They saw no reason for a change on the earlier-agreed pattern. Unfortunately, when the date drew near, the IC, ignoring the ground realities and explanations given, commenced exerting pressure on the LTTE. As for the IC, the government appeared willing to attend Talks whereas the LTTE, not. The IC did not care or rationalise why. It did not realise it was walking into a government-trap wishing to abrogate the CFA as dictated by Mahinda Chintanaya.

Silent IC

It has now become the habit of the IC to raise its voice of condemnation when either the SL military or the Sinhalese people are murdered but



remain silent on murders of Tamil civilians or Tamil politicians in the North-East. The murder of Joseph Pararajasingham is an example. Joseph, a long standing Member of Parliament and an important leader in the TNA, was gunned down in the presence of hundreds of devotees attending midnight Christmas Service, the IC did not reprimand the government although there were witnesses willing to identify the army and paramilitary culprits at the scene. Neither did the IC say a word when, either Vigneswaran, a Member of Parliament-in-waiting, or Senthil Kumar, a TNA candidate at the last Parliamentary elections was shot and killed by the paramilitaries, with protection provided by the state military. Worst, when the Trincomalee Urban Council election ending in the routing of Sinhala parties prompted a pogrom in which more than 20 Tamils lost their lives and over 30 Tamil business establishments reduced to ashes in a night of rage lashed out by Sinhala thugs imported from distant districts in SL army trucks, except for neighbouring India, the Western Sector of the IC, turned a blind eye, much to the encouragement of the extremist nationalistic government and its armed forces.

As the extra-judicial killings and the involuntary disappearances perpetrated in the North-East by the paramilitaries and the state armed forces were reaching pandemic proportions, people in those areas were pleading for protection, and still, the IC continued to turn a deaf ear. But the moment there was a bomb-blast at the Army Headquarters in Colombo, the IC started wailing even louder than the local media, condemning the LTTE and echoing an imbecile government that lacked capacity to organise proper protection around its symbol of military power. All hue and cry became subject to ridicule within days when it was proved that the suicide-bomber who was alleged to be a pregnant Tamil woman

from Vavuniya, was proved neither Tamil nor pregnant, but was still alive and kicking at home in her village. An inflammatory piece of conflagration, concocted by the extremist, Chauvinist government Press to whip up emotion among Sinhala masses, was swallowed hook, line and sink by the IC which was quick on its Press-Release gun, with threats and warning to the LTTE, and vicariously to the Tamil people. While the government of Sri Lanka was only suspecting the LTTE to be behind it, the IC in its statement went a step ahead and concluded it was the LTTE, thus becoming subject to ridicule, even in Sri Lanka standard.

Hot on heels of the bombing at Army Headquarters in Colombo, the state Army, Navy and Air Force combined in Trincomalee to conduct carpet-bombing and propel distant artillery shelling from land and sea on Tamil villages for two days, killing people, destroying properties and making thousands of Tamils and Muslims refugees, and yet, the IC, quick to rush to the side of the government at the news of the bomb-blast in Colombo, was maintaining a stony silence, knowing well the "retaliatory limited action," as expressed by a Cabinet Minister, was a violation of the Cease Fire Agreement to which it was patron, and a violation of the UN charter stipulating against civilian targets even during a war situation.

The SLMM that could visit the hit area in Trincomalee after two days issued a statement pointing out to the "extra-judicial killings" and referring to "rough elements in the army and paramilitary forces," as culprits. The IC did not care to condemn immediately the "Extra-judicial Killings" the State was responsible for, and did not even cry halt to the government exerting pressure on the SLMM to issue a toned-down statement subsequently.

The massacre in Trincomalee going unrebuked by the IC, has given Sri Lanka the encouragement to go gun-spree in the other parts of the Tamil areas as well. The massacre of a number of students on January 2, in which 5 youths under 20, were pinned to the ground and shot behind their ear at close range, amounting to an extra-judicial killing went unrebuked by the IC. The Tamil journalist who exposed the incident, with unrefutable photographs to support, was gunned down in broad daylight by the paramilitaries.

The leader of the Tamil Resurgence Forum who led an unrelenting crusade against the assassins received continued threats and finally was shot dead, in the middle of two army checkpoints on either side of the Main Road in Trincomalee. The IC did not care even to take note of it.

Cluster Killing

Since the bomb-blast at the Army Headquarters in Colombo, more than 180 Tamil civilians have been killed in the North-East by the Armed forces and the paramilitaries, most of them classifiable under extra-judicial killing. The novel feature is the "Cluster Killing," claiming a minimum of 5 lives together perhaps receiving its inspiration from the 5 extra-judicial killings of students at Trincomalee which went unchecked.

Lifeless bodies of five youths were found gunned and butchered outside the army base at Puthur, april 19, in Jaffna. They were men returning home after escorting a sick friend to his house. The sin committed by these good Samaritans perhaps was in preventing the rape of a local Tamil girl by army men a few days earlier.



In another "Cluster Killing" case, there were seven Port Authority workers from Point Pedro who, on their way to a nuptial party were blasted off the road in two auto-rickshaws by an army missile on may 4, The massacred seven were made scapegoats paying with their lives for the eluded-attackers on a paramilitary camp 30 minutes earlier down the same street.

In the "Cluster Killing" case of the eight Hindu devotees who were massacred in the Temple of a Saiva Goddess at Manthuvil, on may 7, one was a temple-trustee, other a

teacher and the rest, students who stayed overnight to make preparations for an oncoming festival. What were left behind the following morning in the temple were their torn and bloodstained garments, abandoned national identity cards and pools of blood. There were also army boot-marks, sign of having desecrated the sanctity of a temple precinct in which footwear is taboo and empty shells. The neighbours vouched for seeing parked army armoured vehicles and hearing gunshots at night. When rumour about sighting of the bodies in a secluded area miles away from the temple, spread, people started rushing to the spot only to be prevented by the state troops who cordoned off the area, kept the onlookers at bay and quickly declared a curfew till following afternoon. By the time the curfew was lifted, the bodies had vanished and the SLMM officials who arrived 30 hours after the murder was reported, declared they could not see the bodies but could vouch only for the blood-stains.

As for the six youths arrested in a cafeteria at Kaladdy Junction, on april 26, near the University of Jaffna by those on military motorbikes, they were manacled, blindfolded and marched into an army camp in the presence of civilians. Their fate is still not known. When the SLMM went to inquire the following morning, those at the army camp, declared there was no arrest or detention of any one.

The revulsion that sent the Tamil homeland reeling with a shock wave and the Sinhala Sri Lanka with shame is the Mandaitivu-Velanai massacre on May 13, in which Sri Lanka navy would not spare even a 4 month-old baby or a 4 year-old kid and had a score of 13 dead and some wounded in three separate incidents at almost the same time.

In a high security zone where a daily night curfew is clamped for the protection of the navy base, black-shirted navy men and their EPDP paramilitary acolytes cordoned off the area, and marched into a two-storey house at Allaipitty-Mandaitivu and when their machine guns stopped spattering bullets, eight, including those kids were dead with one to follow later at the hospital. They might still be alive today had they listened to the commanding officer of the navy who had been harassing them often in the recent past, to vacate this well equipped luxury house for him to occupy.

The other incidents in the same area on the same night were at Velanai and Vangalavadi. At Velanai, the owner of a telecom centre, his young son and the son's wife were killed by the paramilitaries. Ten shops close-by were also destroyed, one of them a tea boutique, the owner of which also was killed.

These apart, the mortuary officials attached to the Teaching Hospital in Jaffna commented there were 15 dead bodies awaiting collection by relatives. The 15 had been killed in different parts of Jaffna, either by the SL armed forces or the EPDP paramilitaries, they pointed out.

This report does not include the alarming rate of involuntary disappearances, or a list of tortures and incarcerations or the details of the attack on the Tamil newspaper office and the twin murder there, within the last three weeks. However, the case of the decapitated needs mentioning, not because they were also killings but because they were indicative of the scant respect the Sinhala people have for Tamils even in their dead state. This is a reminder of an incident in the 1983 Black July pogrom in which a group of Sinhalese thugs stripped naked a Tamil youth, gloated over his naked dance in their jeering midst and then threw him into a burning fire, the picture of which when flashed across the world, hardened the resolute of the Tamil nation. In the present case, five bodies were found, naked and decapitated, thrown carelessly among shrubs in an Avissawela estate. Later they were identified as those of five Tamil youths arrested by the armed forces in Colombo during a night raid on Tamil homes, immediately after the Army Headquarters bomb blast in the capital. Severing a human being's head on mere suspicion, and exposing a dead person's body in its naked form for others to deride at, is nothing but the reflection of the hatred, a sick nation could possess towards another!

Attack at Sea

To break the camel's back, the recent Sea Attack at Vettilaikerny has come as the last straw. A flotilla of SL navy gunboats according protection to a ship carrying 700 army men had come too close prying into a sea-drill the Sea Tigers were exercising. In a confrontation that ensued, while two Dvora gunboats were sunk, the other three beat a quick retreat, abandoning the ship that could

also have easily been rammed and sunk, but spared because there were SLMM officials on board. Fairly speaking, the SLMM should have avoided travelling in SL navy vessels as they had been adequately warned by LTTE not to. They were there, at their own risk. Still, out of respect for the IC, the LTTE allowed the ship to drift, to be joined later by the Dvora escorts waiting at a distance.

As expected the IC was quick with its stinger Press Release, criticising and warning the LTTE. This, in fact, is a revelation of the duplicity of the IC. The recent massacres through, and recent cluster-killings through, there was never a word of sympathy from the IC to the Tamils. Come the death of 20 marines in the sea battle and the IC lurches, daggers drawn.

Mahinda Chinthana and Parting of Ways

The IC needs to realise that the mood of the Tamil nation is gradually changing. It is growing into a hardening of will and resolute. The Tamil nation expects the IC to treat both parties to the CFA equally. When they signed the Agreement the parties were identified merely as GoSL and LTTE and not as State Actor and Non-State Actor according difference in treatment.

The Tamils have their aspirations. They wish to attain them through peaceful means. Peace Talks should not be held merely for Talks' sake. Decisions at one should be implemented before convening the next. Otherwise it will end in disappointment and disillusionment as has been in the past. If the IC fails to take cognisance of this realisation and determination of the Tamils, then it will have to blame itself for its insensitiveness and failure. Let us hope it does not go that far!

The Gospel according to Mahinda Chintanaya appears adamant to preach rewriting of whatever has been evolved during the last three or four years. It is rejecting the aspirations of the Tamil people. It is ignoring the suggestions of the International Community. It is expecting others to toe its line. This might mean the parting of ways!