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பாராளுமன்றம்
PARLIAMENT

20th June 2007

Speech delivered by Hon.R.Sampanthan, Member of Parliament, Trincomalee District, Parliamentary Group Leader, Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (I.T.A.K) , (TNA) on the Adjournment Motion relating to the declaration of Muthur East – Sampoor as a High Security Zone.

Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would first like to read my adjournment motion.

Whereas the President has under Section 5 of the Public Security Ordinance promulgated certain regulations cited as the Emergency (Muthur – (East) / Sampoor High Security Zone) Regulations No. 2 of 2007, which regulations have been published in Government Gazette Extraordinary No : 1499/25 of Wednesday May 30th 2007.

And whereas, the said regulations state that there shall be declared a Zone to be called “ Muthur (East) / Sampoor High Security Zone” comprising the area, the limits of which are described in the schedule to the said regulations, and which are depicted in the map included in such schedule.

And whereas there is no such map included in such schedule, rendering such regulations invalid.

And whereas a great deal of uncertainty and confusion prevails in regard to the said regulations and the said lack of clarity renders the said regulations invalid.

And whereas the said regulations, in any event, constitute a blatant violation of the fundamental human rights of the Tamil people, who have historically

inhabited these areas, and are deliberately discriminatory against them on grounds of race.

And whereas the implementation of the said regulations could result in several thousands of Tamil families, who have been historical inhabitants of several ancient Tamil villages in the said areas, and who were displaced by the indiscriminate aerial bombardment and multi barrel rocket launcher fire in the course of military operations conducted in the said areas, by the Sri Lankan State; being denied their fundamental right to resettle on the lands owned and possessed by them in such villages, and to carry on their livelihood in the said villages, and pursue their economic social and cultural aspirations in the said villages. This is their birthright and cannot be denied to them.

And whereas this action has been capriciously taken by the Sri Lankan State without any form of consultation with the said Tamil people or their democratically elected representatives.

And whereas this action if pursued will inflict immeasurable and irreparable harm to the lives of these thousands of Tamil families and their descendants.

We therefore call upon the Government

- (I) to refrain from taking any steps to implement the said regulations. and
- (II) to take steps to rescind the said regulations.

So that these thousands of Tamil families can resettle on their lands possessed and owned by them in the said villages, and recommence their lives.

All I would say, Mr. Presiding Member, is that this Gazette notification seems quite vague and quite confusing in regard to several matters. Be that as it may Sir, it would appear that the area covered by the Gazette notification, which has been declared a high security zone, would cover approximately 50 percent of the present Muthur Divisional Secretary's Division. The present Muthur Divisional Secretary's Division is 179.4 square kilometers in territory, and if it would cover 50 percent of that territory, it would appear that this high security

zone would encompass about 90 square kilometers of territory, which is a very substantial extent of land. That is the extent of land which apparently is covered by these regulations and which has been declared a high security zone, if these regulations are implemented in the way in which it is proposed.

Sir, there are, within this territory 12 Grama Sevaka Divisions. There are 28 villages comprising of 4249 families and making a total population of 15648 people. I will not read out the names of the Grama Sevaka Divisions. Sir. nor the names of the villages. I am tabling a statement in regard to this matter and I would request Mr. Presiding Member. that this statement be included in the Hansard and that you direct accordingly. Sir, in this document that I have tabled, I have referred to 28 villages, in these villages there are 19 schools, and one of them is Chenaiyoor Central College which is the most leading educational institution in the entire Muthur area. In these 19 schools. several thousands of children, according to my information, approximately 5000 to 6000 children are being educated. Sir, in this area, which is supposed to be declared as a high security zone, 18 Hindu Temples and one Methodist Church are situated, and I am tabling, a statement giving the names of the 19 schools, and the 19 places of worship and I request that you kindly direct that the statement be included as a part of my speech in the Hansard.

This area, Sir, has 88 minor tanks under which people cultivate. It has grazing lands meant for the livestock owned by the people in the area, which is approximately 2000 hectares in extent. Farming, fishing and livestock breeding are the main occupation and source of income of these people.

There are several fishing villages in this area comprising of a large number of families who depend upon fishing.

There are two hospitals in the area. One is the Sampoor Hospital and the other one is the Paddalipuram Hospital.

If this high security zone concept or proposal is to be implemented in this area, I would earnestly request the House to visualize the havoc. the utter havoc, that would be created in the lives of these large number of people living in that area.

We are also Sir, very concerned because of the impression that is sought to be created by certain very highly placed Government persons that this Sampoor area was indeed a Sinhalese village in ancient times, in olden times. In fact I do not mind mentioning on the Floor of this House, that some diplomats have inquired from me, and asked me about the correct position; on the basis of some statements made to them by persons in high Government positions. This has become a matter of grave concern to us and I therefore want to put the record straight, and put the matter beyond doubt, for these are not matters which can be allowed to be left in the realm of doubt, and in the realm of myth, for people to play around with.

I have with me the Gazette of the Census of Ceylon 1881 where it is stated that there were in 1881 four Wannivar Divisions- Assistant Government Agent's Divisions in the Trincomalee District. The first was Trincomalee Town, the second is Kaddukulampattu the third is Kottiarpattu and the fourth is Thampalakamampattu, and this entire area Sampoor and Muthur East area comes within the Kottiarpattu Wannivar's Division or the Kottiarpattu AGA's Division.

According to the Census of 1881, I have with me in my hand, a copy of the gazette, the population breakdown ethnic-wise in the Kottiarpattu Division is as follows : Europeans – 01, Eurasians and Burghers – 13(Males – 07, Females – 06) Sinhalese -11(Males – 11, Females – none), Tamils – 3027, (Males – 1646, Females – 1381), Moormen Muslims 1673 (Males – 881, Females – 792), Veddas – 38, (Males – 21, Females – 17).

This is the reality. I would like the persons who hold the belief that there was - I am not for a moment saying anything against the Sinhala people, certainly not, But, if persons in high positions in Government have certain beliefs, in some myths, I think there is a need to dispel such beliefs. Therefore, it is my duty, to

refer to this matter on the floor of the House and put the record straight. I have with me Sir, the Census of 1827 based upon religion and according to that, the Hindus were 14,182, the Buddhists were 250, the Moors were 3245 and the Christians were 1481, in the whole of the Trincomalee District. Most of the Christians would have been Tamils. What is important is that the Hindus all of whom would have been Tamils were 14,182, and the Buddhists all of whom would have been Sinhalese were 250. I am only mentioning these figures Sir, because as I said before, there is the need for this confusion and these myths that were growing in the minds of these people to be dispelled, and they should realize that they have been seriously mistaken in expressing this point of view to some diplomats and others with whom they have discussed this matter.

We are concerned also because the Government thinks that there are certain security considerations which need to be addressed, It is our view Sir, that such Security considerations can be addressed without a severe and total denial of the fundamental human rights of the long standing Tamil Civilian residents of these areas.

The Government action is indicative of a total lack of sensitivity to the rights of the Tamil Civilian population and is strongly reflective of anti-Tamil racial discrimination. The Government is insensitive to such severe and total denial and deprivation of civilian rights, because the civilians are Tamils. The Government has not and will not on grounds of security, inflict such denial and deprivation on the Sinhala civilian population.

This leads me to the more fundamental question of why this distinction exists in the mind of the Government, between the Sinhalese and the Tamils relating to security. Is it not, for the simple reason, that you have not accommodated diversity, and pluralism, and recognised the most fundamental human right of the Tamil people, the right to internal self determination in the areas of their historical habitation. It is this failure on your part that compels the Tamil people to disaffect and rebel, more particularly the Tamil Youth to rebel. Have you honestly and meaningfully addressed the cause of such disaffection. Is not the solution, the granting of substantial self-rule to the Tamil speaking people, in the territories in which they have historically lived and are in a majority.

Your lack of will or ability to do the correct thing, drives you to confiscate and expropriate the land, the property, which belongs to these Tamil people and which they have historically inhabited. You will not stop at that, indeed with such thinking; you cannot stop at that. Your task, in accordance with your thinking, will be fully accomplished only when this land, this property, of the Tamil people, is occupied by Sinhala people of your choice, that is what you will try to proceed to do. The Tamil people see this move of your's as yet another step to spread your tentacles into the Tamil speaking historical habitation.

It is my duty to state, that such diabolical action on your part cannot and will not achieve either of your objectives; neither the security you seek, nor the Sinhalisation of Tamil speaking territory, both of which you believe can be achieved through military aggression. But in the process, the Tamil civilian population is being grievously victimised. Such action on the part of the State can only be described as heinous.

It is also my duty to state, that security can be achieved only through a just and honourable peace- and this is not achievable by mere words – by empty rhetoric, it is achievable only through action, primarily by the Sri Lankan State that demonstrates a strong commitment to a just and honourable peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We call upon the Government to facilitate the resettlement of the displaced Tamil civilians on the lands from which they were displaced. Nothing less would be acceptable.

Before I conclude, Sir. I consider it my duty to demonstrate to this House the political thinking of the people in this area, and for that purpose I am going to cite to you the result of an election that took place on 28th of June, 1962, after the death of the then sitting Member of Parliament, Mr.T.Ahambaram, who was the Member of Parliament for Muthur. After his death, there was a by-election, and Prof. C. Suntharalingam, who was a very renowned person in this country, contested the Muthur electorate on the platform of Tamil Eelam. He wanted Tamil Eelam to be the policy goal of the Tamil people and contested the

Muthur electorate on the platform of Tamil Eelam. He was opposed by the Federal Party candidate. The Federal Party candidate polled 14,215 votes and Prof. Suntharalingam polled 423 votes and forfeited his deposit. That was the position. So, this would demonstrate to you, that these people of Muthur have only been demanding autonomy; the right to internal self-determination in the area of their historical habitation. They did not demand separation and when a person so renowned as Prof. Suntharalingam was the candidate, they voted in such a manner, that he even lost his deposit. And these are the people, who have been evicted from their lands which they own, which belongs to them for generations, for centuries. They have been evicted as a result of military action, and now you are contemplating to keep them out completely, by declaring this area, 90 square kilometers of territory, 50 per cent of the Muthur AGA's Division, as a High Security Zone, so as to ensure that these people will not be able to return and live in those territories, and thus these people will be denied the right to lead a decent life as human beings, to carry on their livelihood, their farming- their fishing, their livestock breeding , have their children educated, and pursue their economic social and cultural aspirations in the area in which they and their ancestors have lived for generations and centuries - and in which their descendents, will continue to reside for many more centuries and generations to come.

If the Government persists in its proposal to retain this area as a high security zone, and to keep these people out of this area, it would mean that the Government is deliberately engaged in a policy of ethnic cleansing, of keeping Tamils out from areas, which they have historically inhabited and the Government would render itself liable to the charge of deliberate ethnic cleansing in these areas.

I thank you, Sir, This motion will be seconded by my Colleague the Hon.K.Thurairtnasingam also representing the people of Trincomalee who is a victim. His house is in Kaddaparichchan - in this area. The house belongs to his family, who have been historical inhabitants of this area. I have on my left hand side another friend of mine, the Hon. Mavai Senathirajah who has been evicted from Mavittapuram, Valigamam North. He is unable to return to his home, to his village, because it has been declared as a High Security Zone. Today my Friend the Hon.K.Thurairtnasingam, the Member of Parliament for

Trincomalee. who is a resident of Kaddaparichchan will second this Motion. He is also a victim along with several thousands of other people.

I would appeal to the Government to abandon this idea, to refrain from implementing this proposal, to discuss this matter with the democratically elected Members of this area and arrive at a solution which will not result in the people being harmed in this way. I am addressing you today, Sir, I am told today is the International Refugees Day and on such a day, I think the Government would take a good decision- not letting the people to continue to be refugees, The Government should reverse their decision and decide not to proceed with this proposal. I thank you, Sir.

R.Sampanthan