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பாராளுமன்றம்
PARLIAMENT

24 May 2009

PRESS RELEASE

Further to a request made by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to the Office of the Resident Co-ordinator for the United Nations (UN) in Sri Lanka, to meet with His Excellency Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary General of the UN, a meeting was arranged for 11.30 p.m. on 23 May 2009 at the VVIP Lounge of the Bandaranayake International Airport (BIA). The Foreign Ministry of Sri Lanka was informed of the meeting and was requested to make all arrangements to facilitate the same. The Foreign Ministry of Sri Lanka confirmed to the UN Office that all arrangements had been made.

The TNA delegation was to comprise of: -

- 1) Hon. R. Sampanthan M.P. (TNA Parliamentary Group Leader)
- 2) Hon. Mavai Senathirajah M.P. (ITAK, General Secretary)
- 3) Hon. Suresh Premachandran M.P. (EPRLF, Secretary General)
- 4) Hon. G. G. Ponnambalam M.P. (ACTC, General Secretary)

After the confirmation of the meeting by the Office of the Resident Co-ordinator of the UN, the TNA delegation arrived at the BIA at about 10.30 p.m., but was informed at the military check point on way to the VVIP Lounge, that the Ministry of Defence had instructed that the TNA delegation not be allowed entry. The TNA delegation informed the UN representatives at the VVIP Lounge of the developments. The Ministry of Defence was unwilling to reconsider its decision.

The above action constitutes a deliberate denial of the right of democratically elected representatives of the Tamil people to convey information in their possession and their views to the Secretary General of the UN on the grave humanitarian crisis pertaining to over 300,000 Tamil civilians in the Vanni, the ascertainment of the fullest information in regard to the said crisis, being the sole purpose of the visit of the UN Secretary General to Sri Lanka.

The Secretary General of the UN has himself been deprived of the opportunity of meeting with democratically elected representatives of the Tamil people. The fact that such a meeting was fixed clearly indicates that the Secretary General of the UN desired to be fully informed.

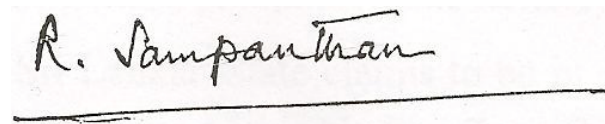
The fact that the TNA delegation was prevented from meeting with the Secretary General is an insult inflicted by the Sri Lankan Government on the institution of the Secretary General of the UN.

It is pertinent to ask why the Sri Lankan Government prevented a meeting between the Secretary General of the UN and a delegation of the TNA?

The whole world is aware that the entire military operation in the Vanni was conducted in the utmost secrecy and without any transparency and without any access being granted to UN agencies, the ICRC, international NGOs and even Members of Parliament. This culture of secrecy and lack of transparency continues in regard to all activities pertaining to the Tamil IDPs.

It was in the pursuit of this culture of secrecy and lack of transparency that the Sri Lankan Government prevented this meeting. The Sri Lankan Government has obviously a great deal to conceal. This attitude of the Sri Lankan Government should not deter the pursuit of the truth.

We also condemn the Sri Lankan Government deliberately treating the democratically elected representatives of the Tamil people as second-class representatives representing a second-class people. That is the only inference that can be drawn from such unbecoming conduct by the Sri Lankan Government.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Sampanthan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

R. SAMPANTHAN M.P.
(TNA Parliamentary Group Leader)