

Press Statement of
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The killing of four more Indian fishermen during the last month by the Sri Lankan Navy is yet another gory reminder that things have not changed in Sri Lanka. In fact the evidence of torture on the decomposed bodies of the dead fishermen provides further proof, if proof was indeed necessary, of the sadistic attitude of the Sri Lankan authorities to Tamils in particular and Indians in general. If this type of viciousness is a reflection of the feelings nursed by the Lankan authorities to Tamils from India, then one can well imagine the plight of the hapless Tamil population of the island republic at the hands of a repressive regime that is guilty of every type of human rights violation one can think of!

It was on the 27th of April, 2009, when the war between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE was at its peak that Chief Minister Karunanidhi staged an obnoxious drama. After finishing his breakfast, he claimed that he was commencing a fast unto death to bring the war in Sri Lanka to an end. Within three hours Union Minister P. Chidambaram claimed that he had been informed by the Sri Lankan Government that it had ceased armed offensive against the Tamils. And Karunanidhi returned home for lunch.

On the 25th of August, 2009, a British TV channel shocked the world with a 40 seconds footage of a young Tamil, stripped naked, blind-folded and bound hands and feet, being kicked about by exulting army men in Sri Lankan military fatigues, before being shot point blank. The body of the young man was rolled over to where nine other similarly trussed dead bodies were lying. These gruesome visuals were carried by several Indian TV channels as well.

There was an international outcry and demand that the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakshe should be brought before the International Court and tried for war crimes. Significantly, neither the Indian Government nor the Tamil Nadu Government raised even a whimper of protest or anguish.

On the contrary, in October, 2009, Karunanidhi sent a delegation of MPs from the DMK, Congress and Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi, including his daughter Kanimozhi to Sri Lanka to wine and dine with the Sri Lankan President.

They returned laden with gifts and claimed that all was well in Sri Lanka and that the Tamils there had nothing to really complain about.

Karunanidhi's certificate notwithstanding, the heart-rending condition of the Tamils raised the hackles of human rights activists, the governments of progressive nations and even the United Nations. Now the Report by a panel sent by the United Nation's Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon is in the public domain.

I quote from the report: "The Panel found credible allegations, which if proven, indicate that a wide range of serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law were committed by the Government of Sri Lanka, some of which would amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Between September 2008 and 19 May, 2009, the Sri Lanka Army advanced its military campaign into the Vanni using large-scale and widespread shelling causing large numbers of civilian deaths. This campaign constituted persecution of the population of the Vanni. Around 3,30,000 civilians were trapped into an ever decreasing area, fleeing the shelling... The Government sought to intimidate and silence the media and other critics of the war through a variety of threats and actions, including the use of white vans to abduct and to make people disappear.

"The Government shelled on a large scale in three consecutive No Fire Zones, where it had encouraged the civilian population to concentrate... The Government systematically shelled hospitals on the frontlines. All hospitals in the Vanni were hit by mortars and artillery, some of them were hit repeatedly, despite the fact that their locations were well-known to the Government. The Government also systematically deprived people in the conflict zone of humanitarian aid, in the form of food and medical supplies, particularly surgical supplies, adding to their suffering. To this end, it purposely underestimated the number of civilians who remained in the conflict zone. Tens of thousands lost their lives from January to May, 2009, many of whom died anonymously in the carnage of the final few days..."

The UN Panel report is very clear. Not only does it list out the war crimes of the Sri Lankan government, it also clearly holds that the carnage lasted till May 2009, well after Karunanidhi had made his dubious claim that hostilities had ended following his 3-hour long fast on April 27th!

Karunanidhi's self-proclaimed image of the saviour of the Tamil race lies in tatters. The Tamil people expect nothing short of a public apology from him for his treacherously traitorous acts aiding, abetting and condoning one of the worst genocides in human history, directed against the Tamil people. The Indian Government, for its part, should initiate immediate steps to make Rajapakshe and his cronies stand trial in the International Court of Justice for his war crimes. Otherwise, Sonia Gandhi's platitudinous assertions on Sri Lanka before the Tamil

Nadu electorate recently would ring resoundingly hollow. And it would lend credence to the oft-repeated charge that the Indian Government was party to the carnage against the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

J JAYALALITHAA