

Genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka

Respected organisers of this significant hearing,
Respected Members of the European Parliament,
Respected human rights activists,

Vanakkam. I extend my heartiest thanks to Mr.Paul Murphy and the organisers for the opportunity and privilege given to me to participate in this purposeful hearing on the Tamil ethnic crisis in the island of Sri Lanka.

I have come from TamilNadu, the southernmost state of India, the homeland of 70 million Tamils, who have got umbilical relationship with Eelam Tamils of SriLanka for thousands of years.

When the Tamils of Sri Lanka were subjected to gruesome massacre and persecution, it was the European Union Parliament which adopted the resolution on 12th March 2009, at Brussels, calling for immediate ceasefire in the island of Sri Lanka, for which I express my profound thanks from the core of my heart on behalf of Tamils all over the world.

I do hope that the anguished cry, the wailing and weeping of our mothers and sisters, elders and children will knock at the doors of conscience of humanity to come to the rescue which could be the only silver lining in an otherwise dark horizon of Eelam Tamils. Yes. Darkness always precedes the dawn. If winter comes, can spring be far behind? Friends from Europe have enjoyed the spring. Let spring of peaceful life be ushered for our Tamil race. As the time at my disposal is very short, at the very outset, I would draw the kind attention of all of you to the shocking revelations of the three member panel of Marzuki Darusman, Steven Ratner, and Yasmin Sooka appointed by Mr.Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary General of UN which was published on 25 th April 2011. The panel has found credible allegations that the Sri Lankan Government launched its armed forces to annihilate large number of Tamil civilian population who were brought into no-fire zones. It shelled the United Nations hub, food distribution lines and near the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ships that were coming to pick up the wounded and their relatives from the beaches. I shudder to read pages -28 to 50 of the panel report. According to this report, more than 130,000 Tamils are feared to have been mercilessly massacred by the Sri Lankan Army.

I am quoting a few lines: Page 30, paragraph 103, 7th line from bottom:

As the Government did not allow basic medical supplies into the Vanni, conditions in Putumattalan Hospital were so poor that a large number of amputations were performed without anaesthetic, using intravenous drips, which were hung from the trees, with the severely injured patients lying on the ground under them. In spite of the significant efforts of the few available

doctors, many patients died due to lack of access to proper medical care, and scores of bodies were deposited in front of the hospital each day.

Page 31, paragraph 105, last four lines

On 8th April, 2009, a large group of women and children who were queued up at a milk powder distribution line organized by the RDHS were shelled at Ambalavanpokkanai. Some of the dead mothers still clutched cards which entitled them to milk powder for their children. On 12th May, a second hospital at Vella Mullivaikkal was shelled by the army, killing many civilians.

Page 36, Paragraph 122, last four lines:

The dead were strewn everywhere; the wounded lay along the roadsides, begging for help from those still able to walk, but often not receiving it. Some had to be torn away from the bodies of their loved ones left behind. The smell of the dead and dying was overwhelming.

Page 42, Paragraph 146:

Although men and women were screened separately, as part of the screening process, people were generally forced to strip naked causing humiliation and increased vulnerability, particularly among women and girls.

Page 43, Paragraph 149, from line 3:

On 25th August, 2009, the UK-based Channel 4 News released video footage which showed the summary execution by Sri Lankan soldiers of several prisoners with their hands tied behind their backs. The prisoners in the footage are naked and blindfolded. They are kicked and forced to cower in the mud before being shot in the head at close range. The film shows several other prisoners who appear to have been killed earlier.

A second film of the same scene, also released by Channel 4, on 2nd December, 2010, pans out over the landscape, showing the bodies of a number of other naked and executed prisoners, male and female. Among them are a young boy and a woman; the woman has been identified as a well-known LTTE media anchor known as 'Isaipriya'.

Isaipriya was a Tamil celebrity, a popular singer known for expertly playing the Veena, a South Indian string instrument. She was gang raped by the Sinhalese soldiers. After that the despicable incident, her naked body was dragged through the mud. The soldiers, acting worse than beasts, made vulgar comments about how they raped Isaipriya.

Agal, the four month-old daughter of Isaipriya, was killed in the aerial bombing. Yesterday, i.e., on 31st may 2011, Mr. Christopher Heyns, the UN special rapporteur on extra judicial summary or arbitrary executions had said in his report to the UN Human Rights Council that these executions really took place and also he had stated that what is reflected in the extended video are crimes of the highest order- definitive war crimes.

White flag incident

Page 47, paragraph 170, line 2:

In the final days of the war, the head of the LTTE political wing Nadesan, and the head of the Tiger peace secretariat, Pulidevan and Colnel Ramesh who had already announced that the LTTE silenced their weapons were prepared to surrender unconditionally. This intention was communicated to officials of United Nations and of the Government of Norway, the United Kingdom and United states as well as to representatives of ICRC and others. It was also conveyed through the intermediaries to Mahinda Rajapakshe, Gotabaya and Basil.

Around 6:30 am on 18 May 2009, Nadesan and Pulidevan left their hide-out to walk towards the area held by the 58th division, accompanied by a large group, including their families. Colonel Ramesh followed behind them, with another group. Shortly afterwards, the BBC and other television stations reported that Nadesan and Pulidevan had been shot dead.

To hoodwink the international community and bury the truth fathoms deep, the Sri Lankan Government appointed a commission in the name of Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), which does not hold any credibility.

The three member panel has pointed out that the commission appointed by the Sri Lanka Government will not serve any justice. I crave your indulgence to enable me to present the origin of the conflict.

The island of Sri Lanka consists of two nations: the Tamil nation and the Sinhala nation. From the dawn of history, the Tamils in Ceylon had their own kingdom and unique civilisation. The Tamils were the original inhabitants of the land.

The independent sovereign state of Tamils lost its freedom in 1619, when they were conquered by the Portuguese. Then the Dutch army took over the reins from the Portuguese in 1638. Then the British came. The entire island of Sri Lanka was brought under the rule of the British in 1796.

On 4th February 1948, the British gave independence to Sri Lanka. But, the authority to rule was vested with the Sinhalese, which ultimately resulted in subjugating the Tamil people as second class citizens.

The most obnoxious legislation ever enacted in any democracy was made by the Sinhalese Government to disenfranchise one million of Tamils of Indian origin as stateless people.

In 1956, the Sri Lanka Government made Sinhala as the only official language throughout the island. Buddhism was made the state religion, pushing the Hindus, Christians and Muslims to second class status.

Due to this systematic discrimination, the Tamils started peaceful agitation under the dynamic leadership of the great Tamil leader S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, who was also called Thanthai Selva as well as 'Eelam Gandhi'.

But, the Sri Lankan racist government unleashed violent oppression by the police and the military against the peaceful demonstrators. Many Tamils lost their lives.

In 1957, a pact was entered between Bandaranaike, the head of the Sri Lankan Government, and the Tamil leader Chelvanayagam to address the genuine demands of Tamils. But, it was unilaterally abrogated by the Sri Lankan Government.

In 1965, Senanayake, the head of Sri Lanka Government entered into another agreement with Chelvanayagam, which was later torn to pieces and thrown into the dustbin of history, due to die hard racism.

Tamils lost their basic rights. Cultural genocide against Tamils started. Places of worship of Tamils, temples and churches were desecrated and ruined by the Sinhalese thugs with the help of the police and the army.

State-aided colonisation took place. The Sinhala government forcefully appropriated lands in the Tamil homeland, driving out the Tamils from the villages and these lands were then given to Sinhala settlers.

Extra judicial killings, plunder, rape and disappearance of Tamils by the Sri Lankan police and army, became the order of the day. Due to these atrocities, Tamils determined to have their separate nation.

All the Tamil front organisations participated in the most historic national convention of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in Pannakam, Vattukkottai on the 14th day of May 1976.

The convention declared that the Tamils of Ceylon were a nation distinct and apart from the Sinhalese and decided to the setting up of a free sovereign, secular and socialist state of Tamil Eelam. This resolution became the magna carta of Tamil Eelam nation.

In 1977, General Elections to the Sri Lankan Parliament became more or less a referendum for the Tamil people, in which they gave their verdict in total for a separate sovereign Tamil Eelam Nation.

The Sri Lankan Government intensified its brutal military attacks. The famous Jaffna library which contained the invaluable treasures of Tamil literature and culture were burnt to ashes in 1981.

Two years later, in a 1983 pogrom, thousands of Tamils were killed. The most gruesome killing took place in Velikadai Prison, where 58 Tamils were slaughtered.

In this background the younger generation of Tamils resorted to armed struggle in the 70's, spearheaded by LTTE under the dedicated leadership of Prabhakaran.

1985: Thimphu Talks:

In the month of July 1985, talks were held between the Sri Lankan Government and Tamil groups, mediated by the Indian Government.

The Tamil groups emphasised that any meaningful solution to the Tamil national question must be based on the following four cardinal principles:

1. Recognition of Tamils as a distinct nation.
2. Recognition of Tamil homeland and its territorial integrity
3. Recognition of the right of Tamil National Self Determination
4. Recognition of the right to citizenship of all Tamils.

The Sri Lankan Government did not agree to these cardinal principles of the Tamil groups. So the talks failed.

The Sri Lankan government launched its brutal offensive against Tamils in 1995.

A shocking tragedy took place. 168 innocent Tamils including women and children who took shelter inside St.Peters church at Navaly were mercilessly killed in cold blood by the bombardment of Sri Lankan air force.

Five hundred thousand Tamils from Jaffna were uprooted from their traditional homes. They had to flee to the jungles and other areas. The then Pope John

Paul II appealed to the international community to provide solace to erase the tears of the Tamils. The then Secretary General of UN Boutros-Ghali made a similar appeal.

To protect the honour and dignity of Tamils, the LTTE fought the battles with such a valour, courage and determination; the world ever witnessed and defeated the numerically superior armed forces of Sri Lanka.

The defence lines and army camps of Sinhalese did fall one after another. As a war miracle, the LTTE defeated the Sinhalese army and captured the Elephant Pass in 2001.

From the position of strength, the LTTE unilaterally declared ceasefire on the eve of Christmas, i.e. 24th December 2001, for 30 days and which was extended for another 30 days on 24th January 2002.

Due to the intervention of European countries, the Sri Lankan Government had to respond and declare ceasefire on their part.

Two rounds of peace talks in Thailand and the third round in Norway were held in 2002.

The President of Sri Lanka Madam Chandrika Kumaratunge sabotaged the peace process in 2003.

On 8th August 2006, 17 Tamil youths who worked as volunteers in the Tsunami Rehabilitation Centre of a French NGO, were shot dead by the Sri Lankan army. The crime was exposed by the Australian Government to the world.

The most gruesome, cruel massacre which shocked the hearts and minds of the international community was the dastardly bombing of the Chencholai orphanage on 14.08.2006 in which 61 girl children were brutally killed and about 170 children were grievously wounded.

Freedom of expression was totally curtailed. Media persons, particularly foreign media, the international NGOs, even the ICRC were not at all permitted to visit any conflict areas. The renowned journalist Taraki Sivaram, was shot dead in broad day light on 28 April 2005, in a busy street of Colombo by Sri Lankan Army intelligence.

The editor of Sunday Leader, Lasantha Wickramatunge, a renowned Sinhalese journalist who exposed the genocide of Tamils, was murdered by Government forces.

Four Members of Parliament (Sri Lanka), the Tamil representatives democratically elected, were shot dead at point blank range by the Sri Lankan Army in broad day light.

The Sri Lankan government engineered its armed forces to commit all atrocious crimes, particularly against women folk. Gang rapes and killings were routine for them. Furthermore, the Sri Lankan Air Force dropped chemical bombs and bombs banned by UN Geneva Convention. Yes; the ceasefire agreement was deliberately thrown to the winds by the Sri Lankan government with a sinister diabolical design to decimate the Tamil race.

What sin had they committed for such a plight? The only sin was being born as Tamils. Without an iota of mercy, the Sri Lankan Air Force attacked them by strafing. The wounded Tamil women, children and men were lying under the trees. They slowly perished without medical help.

The Chairman of the Human Rights Council, Madam Louise Arbour was not permitted by the SL Government to visit the affected Tamil areas.

Many democratic countries appealed to the Sri Lankan Government to stop the war and bring about a ceasefire. All these appeals fell on deaf ears.

The Tamils in Tamilnadu were terribly agitated and shocked over the holocaust of Tamils in Sri Lanka. A brave Tamil youth, Muthukumar committed self-immolation on 29 January 2009. 17 other dedicated Tamils ended their lives by self-immolation for the noble cause of Eelam Tamils.

The Sri Lankan Government has committed unpardonable war crimes on Tamils.

I am pained to recall the evil that was perpetrated on pregnant Tamil women. The Sri Lankan soldiers dastardly ripped open the abdomen of pregnant women with bayonets. They did not stop there, they went on to sever the foetus in the abdomen and trashed them in mud.

More than 330,000 Tamils were locked in the so called no-fire zones, where they did not receive adequate food and essentials. The Tamil men and youths were tortured and shot dead by the Sri Lankan army. Tamil girls and women were separated from their families, raped and killed.

When all the human right activists and freedom loving people all over the world were shocked about the terrible massacre of Tamils in that island. Germany and sixteen other countries sent a letter on 19th May 2009 to the Human Rights Council to convene an immediate meeting to investigate Human Rights violation by the Sri Lankan Government. To add insult to the injury the Sri Lankan Government prepared a resolution commending its role

in the war operations and managed to adopt the resolution in the Human Rights Council with unjustifiable assistance of countries like Cuba, Bolivia, India, Pakistan and other 25 countries. 29 countries supported the resolution in favour of Sri Lanka. 12 countries opposed.

The three member panel of the UNO has recommended that the Human Rights Council should be invited to reconsider its May 2009 Special Session Resolution (A/HRC/S-11/L.1/Rev.2) regarding Sri Lanka, in light of this Report.

Already the Dublin Tribunal at the initiative of left democratic forces, in January 2010 has recommended to investigate the war crimes of the Sri Lankan government against Tamils.

I draw the kind attention of the people assembled here to the historic Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1948 to declare clearly: "Persons committing genocide or any of the acts enumerated in Article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals."

May I recall that Al Bashir, the sitting president of Sudan was tried in International Criminal Court under Statute of Rome for war crimes and crimes against humanity on the south Sudanese population and a warrant of arrest also has been issued against him. I would point out that a 97 year old Hungarian by name Sandor Kepiro is being tried in war crimes trial in Budapest for his role in allegedly killing four people during an army raid on January 23 rd, 1942. I would also point out that former Bosnia Serbian General Ratko Mladic has been arrested last week for his culpability in killing 8,000 Serbian Muslims in 1995 and he is going to be tried in the war crimes tribunal at Hague. The former Serbian president Radovan Karadzic was already arrested in 2008 for war crimes. The Nazi Generals were tried in Nuremberg and punished. The former general Khamer Rouge is put on trial for the crimes he involved.

Why not Mahindha Rajapakse? Why not his brothers and his henchmen who have committed the most barbarous genocide against Tamils, who have caused human catastrophe to be tried in International Criminal Court? They should be tried. Human Rights activists, freedom loving democracies who cherish Human Rights should take earnest steps to see the United Nations establishes international Criminal Court to try the head of state of Sri Lanka, for the crime of genocide against Tamils. What could be lasting solution to this Tamil national ethnic problem in Sri Lanka? The only solution is the formation of a separate nation, the cause for which hundreds of thousands of Tamils have laid down their lives and have shed their blood. Why should the Tamils live as a subjugated race under the cruel, racial yoke of Sinhalese. When

referendum was taken to make East Timor a separate nation. When referendum was carried out to make South Sudan a sovereign nation, when Kosovo was allowed to emerge as a separate nation why not Tamil Eelam. I would appeal to all of you to take all possible efforts through the democratic nations to conduct a referendum under the supervision of international observers, for Tamils of Sri Lanka to have a separate nation.

I would submit before this hearing that the European Union parliament may be pleased to take appropriate steps to implement the following measures.

1. The armed forces of Government of Srilanka should be withdrawn from Tamil areas.
2. Immediate measures needed to prevent further torture and harassment, rape and killings.
3. The internally displaced persons who are still kept in captivity in Government run camps should be sent to their native places and homes in an rehabilitated environment.
4. International aid agencies, NGOs, International Committee of Red Cross should be given free access to go into the affected Tamil areas and provide solace.
5. Settlement of Sinhalese in the traditional Tamil areas, i.e. the state aided colonisation should be stopped forthwith.
6. The Tamil youths who are detained in prison camps should be released.
7. The President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapakse and all others responsible for the genocide of Tamils should be tried in a War Crimes Tribunal, which has to be set up by the UNO.
8. A referendum for a separate nation of Eelam Tamils in Sri Lanka should be conducted under the supervision of International observers allowing the Tamil Diaspora also to participate.

`` The tombs are uncovered, the dead come from far
The Ghosts of our martyrs have risen to war!
With swords in their hands and with laurels of fame
And dead hearts are still glowing with Eelam's name
Come join them! come follow, O youth of Eelam!
Come fling out our banner and marshall our band
Come all with cold steel and come all with hot fire!
Come all with the flame of Eelams desire!
Begone from Eelam, begone from our home!
Begone from Eelam, O aggressor begone
Let Eelam usher, Let the flag of Eelam flutter ``

This heroic song of Karibalti of Italy is very much applied to Eelam Tamils.

Once again I express my sincere thanks and conclude.

Vaiko