

Sri Lanka: A shocking analogy between female Chief Justice and vanni women

Saturday 15 December 2012, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 12 December 2012).

Chief Justice (CJ) Shirani Bandaranayake is not only fighting for the rule of law; she is also forced to fight for feminism. Ms. Bandaranayake is the first woman to have earned the post of CJ, which she achieved without exploiting the prestige of parents or any other high profile connection.

Previously, she had had a brilliant career in the faculty of law and had been appointed as its Dean for a certain period. The Mahinda Rajapaksa administration put all that into question by implying that she entered this highest post by improper means.

Some government members said she had come up through the backdoor. The men who made such comments were doing so to gain favouritism from the President. They deliberately used half filth to embarrass her during what was clearly a male dominated inquiry.

They wanted to humiliate her and get her to plead mercy. But her decision to leave this den of hypocrisy and fraud defeated their efforts. Hence they decided to come out with the final ruling. They found her guilty of three charges.

Now, the ball is in the court of the Opposition. Lawyers are prepared to take the next appropriate step if the Supreme Court overrules the PSC probe. If so what will the opposition do?

Ranil Wickremasinghe has said there is very little one could do if the government is not prepared to abide by the agreement he had signed with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Commission when he was prime minister,.

As things stand, President Rajapaksa should at least agree to abide by the promise he made to India and other Commonwealth countries. Then it will be a setback for the government which is eager to implement the Divi Neguma Bill.

Hence the 'wait and see' approach adopted by the Opposition could be seen as another international conspiracy to destroy the government

In this scenario, not much can be done within the parliamentary legal framework either. Hence, the conflict could grow to become a mass agitation outside the realm of the Opposition.

The first step was taken by several organizations committed to democracy. If these mass agitations can develop beyond the protests of lawyers and judges, then it could become a tremendous movement to seek radical changes to the existing system.

The anti feminist nature of the government campaign was exposed by several women's organizations. They see the erosion of the independence of the judiciary and the anti feminist nature of the campaign against the CJ, as a serious threat to freedom and democracy.

While the CJ's impeachment issue raised a fundamental problem in the domain of feminism, the government is accused of intimidation and harassment in the course of action taken to recruit Tamil women to the armed forces [[1](#)].

It was reported in recent weeks that Tamil women were recruited to the military claiming it was a step towards reconciliation by way of inclusion of minorities. However, a closer look at the appointment process shows a lack of transparency and coercion.

Military personnel of the Vanni area were involved in the recruitment process and had targeted poor families. In some villages the announcement had been made by loudspeakers. In some other places, they had visited houses and selected female members of poor families for this purpose. In a few places they had got the assistance of the Grama Niladhari of the area.

Young women living only with single mothers or families with a large number of members had been targeted in particular. Those recruited had been informed that they would be engaged in clerical work; or area social work with the Grama Niladhari of the village.

Also, they had been told that they would have to do only a few hours work for which they would be paid Rs.30, 000 monthly and that they could go home in the evening after work as they would be working in their own areas.

Around 109 women applied and appeared for these interviews. The information provided never conveyed that they would be working for the military and would have to join the military to perform their duties.

It was learnt that these women had been taken to the military camp in Bharathipuram in Kilinochchi District. At the camp, the candidates' personal information was recorded in Sinhala, except for their names and addresses.

It was only then these women had realized that they were to join the military. Some of them had panicked and called their families, and informed the military that they did not wish to join. Then the military had told them that they could leave only after a certain function which was to be held at the camp.

This function was held inside the army camp while family members of some of the young women participating in it protested outside the military camp.

Ironically, while the head of the judiciary who is a woman was subjected to humiliation by way of mental torture at one end, Tamil girls of the Vanni were attempted to be conscripted to the military without proper recruitment process or consent given by their adults.

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P.S.

* WEDNESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2012 01:12. Daily Mirror column.

Footnotes

[1] See on ESSF (article 27238), [Sri Lanka: Tamil women coerced into joining the military](#).