

Indian Government : Stop Supporting the Genocidal War Against Tamils in Sri Lanka !

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A shameful spectacle of opportunism is being played out in Indian politics even as Sri Lanka is waging a chilling 'final solution' to its Tamil national question. In the name of a war to eliminate the LTTE, Mahinda Rajapakse's regime in Sri Lanka is waging war on the Tamil people. Independent observers, international rights groups and even journalists have been prohibited from covering the reality of the war. Conservative estimates, trickling through, put civilian deaths at a minimum of 5000, including at least 500 children, since January. At least 10000 civilians are estimated wounded. The Lankan army is using cluster bombs and chemical warfare in blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions. Tens of thousands of innocent Tamils are caught up in the war zone, starved of food, water and medicine. Some 100,000 others, fleeing in desperation are being rounded up behind barbed wire fences in 'camps', where by all accounts they will be kept under detention for three years. Sri Lankan journalists questioning their Government's brutal policy have been silenced by assassination and arrest. International journalists reporting on the detention camps for Tamil civilians have been detained and deported.

Herding the Tamil population into detention camps after slaughtering thousands cannot end the question of Tamil nationality in Sri Lanka. It cannot wipe out the fact that it was bloody pogroms in the 1980s that catapulted the Tamil protests against systematic discrimination into a full-blown insurgency. The Sri Lankan Government is trying to justify its massacre in the name of fighting the LTTE. But there can be no getting away from the fact that it is the Sri Lankan Government's brutal suppression of the right to self-determination of its Tamil population that is the biggest obstacle to peace.

The SLA's gains are largely due to aid from imperialist powers. Israel has supplied Kfir jets to the Sri Lankan air force, which has used them to bomb Tamil areas. India's role is the most dubious. The UPA Government and its constituents like the DMK, under pressure from emotions running high in Tamil Nadu, have taken the posture of pressurizing the Sri Lankan Government to call a ceasefire. Opposition parties like the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, seeking to reap a rich harvest of votes from the resentment, have suddenly woken to the need for a 'Tamil Eelam' or separate Tamil state for Sri Lankan Tamils. DMK leader and TN Chief Minister Karunanidhi went on a 'fast' for a few hours, and claimed that Sri Lanka had in fact called a ceasefire as a result. The facts are otherwise : Sri Lanka, far from calling a ceasefire, has merely promised to avoid the use of 'heavy artillery' as far as possible - but has made it clear that the war will continue. The promise, in any case, carries little weight - coming as it does from a regime that has had no compunctions about using even chemical weapons against civilians, and that is in any case planning to treat all surviving Tamil civilians as potential terrorists.

The reality behind the Indian Government's rhetoric of concern for Tamil civilians is exposed when one looks at a shockingly candid statement by the Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee in the Parliament on 23 October 2008 : "We have a very comprehensive relationship with Sri Lanka. In our anxiety to protect the civilians, we should not forget the strategic importance of this island to India's interests... especially in view of attempts by countries like Pakistan and China to gain a strategic foothold in the island nation...Colombo had been told that India would 'look after

your security requirements, provided you do not look around'. We cannot have a playground of international players in our backyard..." While the Indian Government has consistently denied providing military support to the Sri Lankan Army, one wonders what shape the promise of "looking after security requirements" of Sri Lanka has actually taken.

The Congress party and UPA Government has also been suggesting that the ongoing war on Tamils is just punishment for Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. How can Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka be held responsible for that assassination ? The Congress party and the Indian State cannot deny the fact that the assassination was a fallout of the disastrously opportunist Indian policy of first extending support to the Tamil insurgency, and then sending in Indian 'peace-keeping' forces to help crush the militancy. J N Dixit, who was National Security Adviser to the Indian Prime Minister in 2004-05, and was Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka between 1985-89, has candidly admitted that "Tamil militancy received (India's) support...as a response to (Sri Lanka's)...concrete and expanded military and intelligence cooperation with the United States, Israel and Pakistan," justifying this and the volte face of sending in the IPKF on the grounds that "Inter-state relations are not governed by the logic of morality. They were and they remain an amoral phenomenon..." It is shameful that a Government and a party that has in such an 'amoral' way played with the lives of millions of Tamil people, is today trying to offer the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi as 'moral' justification for the bloody end-game being played out against innocent civilians in Sri Lanka today.

The silence of the international community and the complicity of India on the ongoing slaughter and repression in Sri Lanka deserves the highest condemnation. It is urgent that democratic forces in India and the international community demand prosecution of the highest functionaries of the Sri Lankan state and the Government of the countries that supplied these bombs for commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

P.S.

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