



TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

15th June 2009

Rt. Hon. David Miliband M.P
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
King Charles Street
London SW1 2AH

Dear Mr Miliband,

Meeting with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister

It was with sadness and disappointment I read your interview with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama, in the Daily Mirror of 8 June 2009. Meeting a minister from the government that has carried out so much atrocities, is like adding insult to injury. Sri Lanka must have the audacity to send a minister to diffuse burning issues after killing over 30,000 civilians in Vanni from January to 18 May and keeping over 300,000 innocent people behind barbed wire in military controlled internment camps.

You may not know the conditions in which these civilians are kept. The Sinhalese Chief Justice Sarath de Silva criticised the conditions in these camps, commenting that his country is doing a serious injustice to these people. He also said that the government's claim to call all citizens equal is a lie. Yet Mr Bogollagama claims there are 52 agencies to help! The Sri Lankan government forbids access to international aid agencies, turns away a charity aid ship called Mercy Mission and introduces new visa laws to further hamper the relief effort. Having tried to kill as many civilians as possible with indiscriminate artillery shelling, the Sri Lankan government is now starving another 300,000 to slow death. You raised the issue as a possible genocide and told the media that you had evidence to substantiate firing into the Safety Zone by the SL Army. To cap it all, SL is trying to stop anyone investigating war crimes? Did you ask the minister these questions? Nothing is reported on this.

Memories are short for politicians. Although it looks like ages, only last month, the UK government along with the U.S. and E.U tried hard to call for a ceasefire to assist the civilians. The callous SL government ignored the west totally, carried on their incessant bombing within the No Fire Zone, assuming all those innocent people were terrorists. Despite the assurance given by the President, heavy weapons were used. A report published by the Government Agent in Mullaitivu said there were 81,000 families, making a total of 330,000 people in the IDP camps. The SL government insisted there were only 70,000 people and sent provisions for the same, thus adopting a policy to starve the rest of the civilians.

Now the government eats its own words by telling us that they have to look after 300,000 civilians, including 10,000 suspected terrorists. What happened to the missing 40,000 civilians? Were any questions asked? SL politicians have mastered the art of conning people with lies, damn lies and statistics. They survive daily by their wits. You are aware of their killings within the No Fire Zone. But SL government wants us to believe that they didn't kill a single civilian! Having carried out the killing out of sight of the world media, Mr Bogollagama has come to London to push everything under the carpet by talking about bilateral relations between old friends.

You were kind enough to visit Vavuniya to see the show case camp. You had verbal exchanges with the SL Defence Secretary about their bombing into the No Fire Zone. After you returned empty handed and without a ceasefire, the President went on record saying he didn't want any lectures from the west. Soon afterwards, your effigy was burnt in the streets of Colombo and the Sinhalese youth damaged the UK High Commission building as well.

When asked about the position of the prime minister's special envoy Des Browne, the minister stated that the position of the SL government remained unchanged.



TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

That means no, no, no. The SL government rejected Mr Browne three times. By any standards, I am afraid, it's an insult to the British Government. Your softly softly approach didn't come to fruition.

Ministers may come and go, ministers are here today gone tomorrow. But the Tamil problem which started on 4 February 1948 will continue until it is solved satisfactorily to all parties. It might take decades even generations, as it happened to the Jews in the Genesis. Mr. Bogollagama talked about his government working closely with other Tamil politicians. There are 22 elected Tamil National Assembly politicians who were not invited to be consulted in the APRC process. They represent more than 90% of the Tamil population but were not even given an opportunity to meet the UN Secretary General. When will this attitude change?

To conclude, the SL minister met Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. They discussed the way forward for the Tamil issue. In September 2008, Lord Malloch-Brown told a Tamil audience in Harrow that Sri Lanka is not a failed state. I wonder if he has reviewed that stance now.

Governments should be made accountable for their actions. Knowing that Mr Bogollama is not telling the whole truth and yet listening and extending a warm welcome is not a good stance to take, when the aggrieved Tamils are mourning for their parted brethren. It's only in Sri Lanka, in the month of May when Lord Budha attained his enlightenment of love and charity, a Buddhist government can celebrate with dancers and fireworks, while thousands of its own citizens perished and were lying on the beaches of Mullaitivu! Oh Time, Oh Manners!

Please offer the effective guidance and ethical stance that is expected from the British Government, otherwise you too will be playing a supportive role in the increasingly documented genocide.

British Tamils support for the current government cannot always be taken for granted.

Yours sincerely

Joachim Anandan BSc CEng MICE
Tamil Writers Guild