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## Those who want our children released should welcome our victory over terrorism: SL Peace Chief at UN

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Statement of Prof Rajiva Wijesinha, Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat and Secretary to the Ministry of Human Rights and Disaster Management exercising the right of reply at the High Level Segment of the 10th Session of the UN Human Rights Council.

&ldquo;Mr President, Sri Lanka thanks the distinguished Minister from the United Kingdom for his condolences to those affected by the terrorist attack on our cricket team in Lahore. We too condole with them, and in particular, the families of the servicemen who died in protecting our sportsmen. They may only have been doing their duty, but we here must never forget the sacrifices of servicemen fighting against terror, even as we regret its impact on civilians. Our cricketers escaped that attack, and I use the word advisedly, not as the noble Lord did in suggesting that certain countries, including perhaps Sri Lanka, had escaped Council attention, and that this must be examined. This Council, Mr President, is not a terrorist organization; it does not target its members who then fortuitously escape. This Council is about principles and issues, not personal or political predilections. It is also about Human Rights as a whole. We in Sri Lanka, and all of you here, must appreciate the need to improve the human rights situation in all our countries. The High Commissioner has stressed the importance of social and economic rights; this Council has focused on the right to development. The Universal Periodic Review process is intended to keep all of us on our toes, on behalf of all our peoples. Complacency on the part of anyone is misplaced. In Sri Lanka, the ongoing military operation has increased the need for humanitarian assistance, but we reject the noble Lord&rsquo;s assumption that that adversely affects human rights. On the contrary, we are close now to eliminating one of the most effective terrorist organizations in the world, and that should be encouraged, not stymied, by those who believe in human rights and in basic human decency. We are sorry too that the distinguished French Secretary of State also confused the issue, in talking about civilians affected by conflict helpless before violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. It is a moot point to what extent terrorists can be subjected to such law, but we would point out that civilians in the conflict zone are helpless because the LTTE will not let them go. All those sincerely concerned about these our fellow citizens should make the point loud and clear, that the LTTE should not hold people hostage. We are happy however that we were able to correct another misapprehension on the part of those who seem to care about us, namely that the Sri Lankan forces use child soldiers. That, Mr. President, give or take a few drummer boys in Britain, is the preserve not of regular armies but of terrorists, and all those who want our children, now held by terrorists, released should welcome our victory over terrorism. Fortright support on that issue, Mr. President, will lend credibility to efforts on the part of those who say they love us to improve our human rights situation. We are doing our best in that regard, despite the corrosive effects, as the High Commissioner described it, of over twenty long years of conflict, from which we have suffered for so long, from which we now hope escape &ndash; and I use the word advisedly &ndash; is near.&rdquo;