Tiger paws behind humanitarian pause?

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The LTTE has lost the entire land area under its control save about one sq. km. Before the present phase of war began in 2006, the LTTE held over 15,000 sq. km in the North and the East. But, today it has taken refuge in the no-fire zone behind a human shield. In fact, the term no-fire zone has lost its meaning as the LTTE is using it to mount attacks on the army. It is a no-fire zone only for the troops.

If civilians were to flee the 'no-fire zone' today, Prabhakaran and his lieutenants would be dead tomorrow. In other words, Prabhakaran will never allow civilians to leave that area, as he knows their release is tantamount to his death. It is against this backdrop that international pressure mounting on the government to agree to yet another 'humanitarian pause' should be viewed. Such a pause should come from the LTTE and not from the military which is not taking the war into the safe zone, as could be seen from the fact even the LTTE leader has found a safe haven there. If the LTTE did not hold civilians forcibly and use violence to prevent them from fleeing, to begin with, there would be no humanitarian crisis in the Vanni: All the civilians would be safe in welfare centres elsewhere. Even if the government were to agree to a 'humanitarian pause', what difference would it make in the humanitarian situation with the LTTE determined to hold civilians as a shield? In such an eventuality, the LTTE would only make a virtue of necessity by releasing the sick and the aged in small numbers at a time, as it did during a recent humanitarian ceasefire so that the process of evacuation would drag on till kingdom come. It is reported that an attempt is being made in some quarters to have an international task force in the conflict zone. Regrettably, some prominent members of the international community have turned a blind eye to reality. There are some vital questions that the proponents of such action should be made to answer. Is it with or without the LTTE's consent that the proposed task force (TF) seeks to operate? As it is clear that the LTTE will not risk its safety by releasing civilians it is using as a human shield, how would the TF secure their release without the LTTE's cooperation? If the TF were to act without the LTTE's concurrence, there would be resistance from the LTTE and how would the TF respond to such a situation? Would it fall in line or would it stand up to the LTTE? What if the LTTE trained its guns on the TF in case of the latter wanting to do something detrimental to the former’s interests? The LTTE, it may be recalled, even took on India in the late 1980s, when the IPKF trod on its corns. The TF at issue could also turn out to be a Trojan horse in that the countries supportive of the LTTE are trying to gain a foothold here again to expand their operations and reverse the battlefield gains of the military by forcing another peace process on Sri Lanka. By no stretch of imagination could we believe that their intent is to evacuate civilians and expose the LTTE to the military. Even if there were to be one million more 'humanitarian pauses', as for removing civilians to safety with the LTTE dependent on their presence in the safe zone for survival, the international community stands the same chance as a cat in hell! The countries sympathetic to the LTTE cannot surely bear to see the outfit annihilated. They, instead of feigning concern for the civilians whom their pet Tigers have taken hostage, ought to stop dithering and openly stand by their beleaguered friends, Prabhakaran and his killers. That’s what friends are there for! It would be less ignoble for them to let their real intention be known to the Sri Lankan government and seek the latter's assistance to remove their pets to safety. Meanwhile, the other members of the international community genuinely desirous of making a breakthrough in the civilised world's war on terror should assist Sri Lanka in crushing the so-called most ruthless terrorist group in the world so that other terrorists will get the message loud and clear. There would have been no humanitarian issue in this country, if the LTTE had not taken civilians hostage. The real problem is that Prabhakaran and his fellow criminals are hiding behind women's clotheslines and under cots, unable to face the army. If they took up President Mahinda Rajapaksa's recent challenge, came out and fought it out like men, the humanitarian situation in the Vanni would improve overnight. In the alternative, Prabhakaran must heed the Co-Chair's call and surrender without causing any more bloodletting. It is the LTTE activists masquerading as human rights activists in the West who are making Prabhakaran hold out by giving him hope of an international intervention in time to come. If the international community could tell those terror backers in no uncertain terms that they will not succeed in their endeavour, the Tigers leaders trapped in Puthukudiyiruppu will have no alternative but to stop hoping against hope and bite their cyanide capsules.Courtesy: Island.lk Photo: Defence.lk