
Parallel Perspectives: Tamil Diaspora Warming to Peace Initiatives

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The Tamil Diaspora is gradually warming to peace initiatives surfacing in Sri Lanka as the Tamil cause brutally hijacked into a ruthless terror outfit breathes its last. Judging by the mood in many western cities, the trend towards a non-violent approach is taking hold according many observers. Representatives of the Tamil Diaspora for peace and development seemed receptive to Rajapaksa Government's initiatives to rehabilitate and reconstruct the North and East. "The path ahead is hard but it is worth all our efforts", said a long-time resident in Los Angeles. "Threats and intimidation and even prospects of bodily harm from die hard LTTE activists still lurk like ghastly ghosts of the Vanni." he added. The news of a dozen or more representatives from seven countries, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Norway, Germany, Switzerland and France meeting recently in Mt. Lavinia hit the headlines here in Los Angeles. The meeting reportedly coordinated by Dr. Noel Nadesan of Australia was the first ever interaction program between the Government and the Tamil Diaspora, under the theme, 'Diaspora Dialogue.' Said one representative in LA "shedding the garb of a brutalized approach to the ethnic issue is hard, but we are bent on talking the only responsible path-the peace approach". Consumerism and growth are the key words. There is work to be done in the development of infrastructure, education, agriculture, fisheries, tourism and other sectors in the North and East. The first ever session on the North-South dialogue was well received here as participants as Foreign Affairs Minister Rohitha Bogollagama and Ministers Prof. Tissa Vitharana, DEW Gunasekera, Member of Parliament and Presidential Advisor, Basil Rajapaksa, Foreign Secretary, Dr. Palitha Kohona and Secretary to the President, Lalith Weeratunga and the Tamil Diaspora members were taking a shot at a consensus building. The terrorist shackles that Prabhakaran used to thwart the Tamil cause included killing all moderate Tamil leaders starting with Alfred Duraiappah and disabling any semblance of dissent within the LTTE demoralised the Tamils. Amicable political approach was anathema to Prabhakaran. The Diaspora in the US, Canada, Europe and Australia were silenced as tactics of terror occupied centre stage. Moderates who had been voicing strong sentiments against the war and violence in the North and East seemed to have pleaded in vain as their desires fell on deaf ears and the LTTE goons held sway all these years. The handmaid of terror was the extortion of money. Prabhakaran knew and practiced the dictum that no terror group can exist without a substantial quantum of foreign funding. They were the means to ensure arms, logistics, food supplies, training facilities, propaganda and recruitment. The world watched the Tigers become the most internationally networked terror group in the world, milking the Diaspora to the tune of over 300 million dollars every year. As nearly one million Tamil civilians migrated to Canada, Australia, US, UK, France, New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden and several other countries since the early eighties, some of them became the funding source for Prabhakaran's sinister plot. Using blatant intimidation mixed with extortion and sometimes violence, funding went on. The Tigers found a goldmine in these expatriates. While smaller section of the Tamil Diaspora voluntarily funded the Tigers, others who were reluctant to open their wallets for the terrorist coffers faced "intimidation, extortion and even violence to ensure a steady flow of funds for operations in Sri Lanka and to suppress criticism of human rights abuses by the LTTE. Human Rights Watch reported these activities but nothing was done to stop them. LTTE tentacles reached even those leading normal lives and making decent living in Jaffna and sometimes Colombo. Saving relatives back home from the vengeful LTTE punishing squads became an excruciating exercise for many. The ability of the LTTE to form front organizations became legendary and the US Government, for example, had their hands full in tracking down these sinister groups in disguise. Ninety percent of the LTTE funding was extracted from the Diaspora by foul means. Prabhakaran also planted the seed of the Eelam dream using the internet and the hero's day messages. Gradually, the dwindling and residuary hard core field workers in Prabhakaran's outfit lost its verve to generate support for the Eelam cause. They are losing their foothold in groves as we write. A few die-hard groups continue to get brain-washed and duped ad nauseam despite the inevitability of the demise of LTTE hegemony in the North. Using Tamil civilians as a human shield nailed Prabhakaran's claim to be a leader. It is likely that some misguided elements of the Tamil Diaspora, will continue their activities as before but not for long. The conscripted civilian mass is now out of Prabhakaran's grasp. He is not able to use human beings as canon fodder anymore. The majority of the Diaspora knows that. Courtesy: dailynews.lk