
Leaks, errors and improprieties of UN underlings

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The Peace Secretariat is disturbed by a recent programme on British Channel 4 TV, which raised issues with regard to sexual violence in welfare camps. The programme is not however surprising, because we were aware that material was being prepared for leaking, as has become all too common recently with some employees of the United Nations in Sri Lanka.

We should note that such employees seem to have taken their superiors for a ride. The number of occasions on which the UN Resident Coordinator has had to apologize for accidents or leaks or fraudulent criticisms of Sri Lanka is steadily mounting. The attached correspondence indicates that the disease is spreading. The Head of UNHCR claimed, when asked about a press release in Geneva that contained material not previously brought to government attention, that these matters had been discussed, and that there was more that he had kept confidential. It has however been pointed out, in Vavuniya to those responsible for these wild allegations, that the word of the UN as regarded confidentiality was a joke, given how often junior officials seem to have got away with irregularities. We predicted that the story of three dead bodies would soon hit the headlines, so it is not at all surprising that it did so, on British Television. The detailed response of the Deputy Head of UNHCR as to what actually had been conveyed to the Sri Lankan authorities confirms the view that senior officials of the UN are both utterly decent and easily fooled by their subordinates. The assertion by the UNHCR Head about the body of a woman found in the river with torn clothes was also delivered in good faith, though this was too great a canard for his subordinates to put in writing. Certainly a discussion on SGBV issues is absurd if indeed there were worries about dead bodies. The Deputy Head has still not responded to the simple query, following her detailed e-mail, 'does this mean that the issues noted in the HCR release had not been previously discussed with authorities? And the deaths not at all?' We hope the UN will now at least take disciplinary action against those members of its staff engaged in insidious assaults on the Sri Lankan government. But, given the indulgence shown thus far to improprieties, we have little doubt that this game will go on and on and on, until either terrorism is destroyed, or until it rises again with the witting or unwitting support of these angels of death. Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha Secretary General Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process Email by Ms. Elizabeth Tan: [Click](#) Response by Prof. Wijesinha: [Click](#)