
Government rejects abuse allegation

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Minister insists that controversial video is pro-LTTE propaganda By Jamila Najmuddin The Government yesterday strongly refuted claims of abuses taking place in camps for Internally Displaced People (IDP) in Vavuniya and termed some of these claims as mere Tiger propaganda. Defence Spokesperson Minister Keheliya Rambukwella told the Daily Mirror that pro-LTTE groups, under the guise of journalists, had infiltrated the IDP camps in Vavuniya and were carrying out a pro-Tiger propaganda to tarnish the image of the security forces.

“The Government has been successful in defeating terrorism and looking after the civilians in the IDP camps. All their needs have been met. Therefore the Tigers are carrying out a campaign by circulating fabricated stories to the international community. However this will not stop the Government from eradicating the Tigers,” Minister Rambukwella said. The Government’s strong reaction came after a British media group illegally sneaked into one of the IDP camps in Vavuniya recently and videoed the situation in the area alleging that civilians were facing harassment. The media group says that it managed to get cameras pass the Army checkpoints in the north into a camp in Vavuniya where Tamils who escaped the battle zone were being taken. They claimed they had filmed for the first time civilians talking freely to the media ever since journalists were barred from entering the camps without the guidance of the Army. The video, which is now being circulated in the international community, alleges that there was a food shortage in the camps and implies that paramilitary groups guarding the camps along with the soldiers, were posing a risk to the lives of the innocent civilians who were fleeing the LTTE. Minister Rambukwella however rejected these allegations stating that they were the work of the Tigers and pro-LTTE groups in circulating such fabricated stories and the Government would not take into consideration such false allegations. Quoting unidentified aid workers, the report further alleges that dead bodies of civilians were left out in the open for days in the camps and people lived in fear. “People just live with the dead bodies without doing anything. Some children were close to one dead body. They did not know it was a dead body. People do not know whom to complain to so they just ignore such incidents,” the aid worker, interviewed by the media group said. Minister Rambukwella, while maintaining that the Sri Lankan Army was one of the best disciplined in the world said that the soldiers were not involved in any illegal or criminal activities and were focused in safeguarding the civilians. “We have had many foreign dignitaries who have visited the IDP camps and each one has commended the Government’s and military’s efforts in looking after the civilians. If the situation in the camps were not good, these foreign dignitaries would have reacted in a negative manner, which was not the case,” Minister Rambukwella said. He added that the Government would not take into consideration such false propaganda and would concentrate its efforts on looking after the civilians and freeing the remaining civilians from the clutches of the LTTE. Courtesy: DailyMirror.lk