
“Sri Lanka has prevailed over a fanatical army”:Ambassador Dayan Jayatilleka

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GENEVA – The U.N.'s top human rights official demanded an independent investigation Tuesday into atrocities allegedly committed by both sides in Sri Lanka's civil war. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay told an emergency meeting of the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Council that tens of thousands of civilians had been killed or injured in intense fighting between the government and Tamil rebels since December. But a majority of the 47 countries on the council appeared unwilling to heed her appeal for a war crimes probe.

Pillay said the Sri Lankan government had an obligation to respect humanitarian law at all times, even when fighting terrorism. "In no circumstances can the end justify the means," Pillay said. "There are strong reasons to believe that both sides have grossly disregarded the fundamental principle of the inviolability of civilians." Sri Lankan Ambassador Dayan Jayatilleka said it was "outrageous" to suggest the government should be investigated along with the rebels, saying it was like asking the victorious allies of World War II to accept a war crimes tribunal for the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. "Just name me one country in history anywhere in the world ... that would embrace such a suggestion," Ambassador Dayan Jayatilleka told The Associated Press. "It's outrageous. Sri Lanka has just prevailed over a notoriously fanatical and formidable army, the Tamil Tigers." Jayatilleka insisted the conflict was a domestic matter in which other countries had no right to interfere, and denounced the staging of the council meeting. He said no other country would accept such "patronizing suggestions and criticism one week after it has won." Pillay, other senior U.N. officials and rights groups have said that a team of independent investigators should examine claims that government forces shelled civilians that were allegedly being kept as human shields by the Tamil Tigers in the war the rebels lost last week. Sri Lanka, which has strong support in the 47-member council, proposed a resolution of its own stressing "the principle of noninterference in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of states." The resolution, which has the support of China, Cuba, Pakistan and others, also urges the international community to cooperate with Colombo by providing it with more financial aid. Switzerland, backed by European countries, Mauritius and Canada, proposed a resolution condemning the loss of life — believed to have exceeded 7,000 in the last months of the war — but stopped short of demanding a war crimes probe. Debate on a resolution will continue Wednesday. The U.N. Human Rights Council has no enforcement power, but countries fight doggedly to avoid criticism and the negative attention its resolutions bring. Earlier this year the body voted to establish a war crimes probe for the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. That resolution had the backing of 33 mostly African and Asian members of the council. Courtesy: Yahoo.com