
What the West does not say

Tuesday, 02 June 2009

Last Updated Tuesday, 02 June 2009

by Rajiva Wijesinha

Secretary General

Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process For many years we indulged the LTTE, in part because we felt sorry for the Tamils of Sri Lanka and believed the LTTE slogan that Tigers were Tamils and Tamils were Tigers, in part because we thought the Tigers would win out and would provide us with a useful base to extend our influence in South Asia. Even though present in profusion in Tiger controlled areas, we kept quiet about their forced recruitment of one person per family. This was recorded in several internal UN documents, back in 2007 and earlier, but these were documents that none of us leaked. Leaks occur only when we want them to occur. We also kept quiet when in 2008 they raised the level of forced conscription to two per family. We connived at their refusal to release child soldiers, and were grateful when, in 2007, five years after the Ceasefire Agreement, long after we had given them a million dollars for the purpose, they said they would finally release and rehabilitate. We accepted their explanation that they could not release those over 17 since their legislation provided for such recruitment. While officially representing the UN we repeated their use of such terms, even though we knew that national and international law forbade this practice, and that terrorists could not legislate. For many years we spent millions of dollars of taxpayer money in LTTE controlled areas on projects with no identifiable outcomes. When asked for examples of the capacity we had developed, we claimed that we had taught the people to boil water before they drank it. When the LTTE was corralling people into ever smaller areas, though we granted that the health situation was under control, we predicted that there would soon be epidemics. These monthly predictions were widely publicized in our media outlets. When the predicted epidemics did not take place, we gave no credit to the health services which had been maintained by government for years in the LTTE controlled areas, but rather declared that the reason was our having taught the peasants to boil water before drinking it. We kept quiet right through 2008 when the Tigers were forcing people to flee along with them. We heard the Sri Lankan government asking us to condemn this and demand that the Tigers let their people go, but we said and did nothing, in part because we did not want to damage our relations with the Tigers, in part because we thought this a very clever tactic which would help us at the end to halt the advance of the Sri Lankan forces. We continued to say nothing even when our own workers were forbidden to leave with their families, and we realized that they too would be held hostage by the Tigers in the endgame that was planned. It was only when the trap had been set and escape was difficult that, towards the end of 2008, a few of us started asking the Tigers to release the civilians. From the beginning of 2009 we started making up figures of killed civilians. We used the term extrapolate, and came up with figures far in excess of those for which we had our own witnesses, much in excess of those for which we had reports from Tiger sources. We agreed the figures in our reports were uncertain, but we managed regularly to leak these reports, at crucial moments which we thought essential to slow the advance of the Sri Lankan forces. On the first day on which there were reports of many civilian deaths, which we initially attributed to the government, we later found that most were attributable to the LTTE. Though we put this on record to the government, which is the closest we will ever come to an apology, we made sure that we did not do this publicly. We arranged for what we felt was evidence against the government to appear on a website and called up journalists to make sure they saw this, and we made sure there was no inquiry into what we claimed was an accident, nor into any leaks. We know that several of our employees have carried or secreted weapons, but this does not take away from our right to insist that none of us be searched, and we can only hope that some things will not be found. We use large gas guzzling vehicles, travelling in convoy, often with only one driver in them, but we are spending all this money only on behalf of the poor suffering Sri Lankan people. We have used these vehicles to secrete LTTE personnel, most recently getting some of them out of the camps in Vavuniya in which they have been so unfairly confined, because they are really freedom fighters and we believe in freedom of expression, and the freedom to express oneself violently should not be circumscribed provided the victims are not us. We know that not many of us do anything improper, and that the vast majority behave very well, have never done anything that might give strength to terrorists, and have never sought to undermine the democratically elected government of this country which is such a comfortable place to live in if you are well off. However we know that to admit that any of us has done anything wrong would undermine the whole mystique which allows us to function with such authority, and therefore we will deny most things, and simply apologize when we cannot deny, but never in writing, since that leaves things vague enough and liable to be forgotten soon. We will not have any inquiries into anything that might be wrong, and certainly never make public the results of such inquiries if by chance they do occur. We know that in general Sri Lankan officials do not do anything very wrong, and only a few might err, but we have to point the finger generally to ensure that wrongdoing does not recur, and insist that full responsibility be taken for any error by the state as a whole, through inquiries which can preferably be run by us. If people accuse us of double standards with regard to this or anything else they should understand that by any standard we are richer and control the international media, and by God, who lives somewhere in the West, we will keep it that way. Courtesy: Island.lk