
There is absolutely no truth in Channel 4's concocted story: Minister Bogollagama

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The Government of Sri Lanka is concerned over an increasing number of comments from some sections of the international community, on an unauthenticated video footage telecast on Channel 4 Television in the UK on 25th August 2009, which contains alleged atrocities being committed against Tamils by the Sri Lankan Forces.

The Government of Sri Lanka reiterates its strong and unequivocal rejection of the contents of the video footage telecast on Channel 4 on the grounds that there is absolutely no truth in its concocted story. It is also a deliberate and sinister attempt to cause embarrassment and bring disrepute to the Government of Sri Lanka. It is indeed deeply regretted that despite the Government of Sri Lanka refuting these allegations, some sections of the international community are repeating these allegations which appear to be an orchestrated campaign against Sri Lanka.

This diabolical video footage is reported to have been filmed in January in an unidentified location. In Sri Lanka during that time, there was a substantial presence of the international community, especially in the areas of conflict. At that time, the LTTE was also an active, fighting force. If such atrocities had taken place as claimed, then it is highly unlikely that the international community would have remained silent and continued to remain so, for over eight months. Considering the fact that the LTTE was finally eliminated only during the latter part of May, it is surprising that no attempt was made by the LTTE or its front organisations to bring these alleged atrocities or this video to light at the time they remained active. The authenticity of the Channel 4 news report being in question is evident, as the presenter himself has stated that the footage "claimed to show Sri Lankan Forces executing Tamils" and that it "appears to show number of men being shot in the head by forces speaking Sinhala". The presenter further stated that the "video footage has emerged apparently showing Government troops summarily executing Tamils". The news reporter categorically pointed out that it was not possible to "verify the authenticity of the pictures". This commentary in the Channel 4 telecast in itself clearly demonstrates the fact that the footage is of a dubious nature. In this context, attention is drawn to a subsequent BBC World News report telecast on 26th August 2009 at 1730 hrs. BST where Thirumalai Manivannan from the BBC Tamil Service responding to a question on the assessment of the genuineness of the pictures stated that "the video footage does not give the dates when it was shot though the people who have distributed it to the media say the footage was taken in January this year. The pictures themselves don't tell you anything nor do the pictures tell you anything about the location where it was shot". Doctoring of videos in this day and age of modern technology is a common occurrence. The credentials of the group, "Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka" which supplied the video footage are also in question, by the fact that Manivannan in the same BBC World News Report stated that he "spoke to one of their organizers in Germany, and he would not go on record though he gave some background in full which cannot be used". Manivannan had also made the point that until recently, there was no awareness of the existence of this group that had supplied the footage except that it had been established in July. Despite the telecast of this video by Channel 4 and various other media thereafter, those who produced this video have also so far failed to answer many of the queries which have emerged on the genuineness of this video from various quarters. The Government of Sri Lanka in carrying out its military offensive against the terrorists adhered to a policy of zero casualties among civilians. The fact that thousands of civilians sought refuge in the safety of the Sri Lankan Security Forces is a testimony of the confidence the civilians had on the Security Forces. In manifestations of its genuine intentions, the Sri Lanka Army, on its own accord, has sought the assistance of an expert in order to verify the authenticity of this video. In spite of Channel 4 on its own accord being unable to confirm the authenticity of the footage, it is a matter of grave concern that it continues to repeat these allegations and that some sections of the international community seem to be giving undue credence to this doctored video thereby attempting to bring discredit to Sri Lanka. The international community should not be misled by these fabricated stories which could culminate in erroneous judgments thereby sully relations. Instead, they must recognize the efforts taken by the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure durable peace for its people in all parts of the country. What Sri Lanka requires at this juncture in its post conflict phase, is the understanding and support of the international community. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Colombo

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