
Sri Lanka replies Pax Romana, Interfaith International

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Sri Lanka notes with sadness the emotional and misleading statements of Pax Romana and Interfaith International during the interactive dialogue. The former is well aware that the situation at Kalimodai is not at all how he represents it. It is certainly not the Garden of Eden, which had a far more dangerous snake as the good father knows, but it is infinitely preferable to the LTTE controlled areas whence the refugees now housed there have fled. They have fled, as the Norwegian Refugee Council so graphically puts it, from forced and underage recruitment, from a situation where, as a recent UN report has it, marriages are being cancelled so that more youngsters can be forced to fight.

As Fr Croos is well aware, problems in these areas are discussed at length at the Consultative Committee on Humanitarian Assistance, and canards such as the idea that a hundred wanted to live with friends and relations dealt with. According to the Government Agent, just ten had asked for this, and they will be permitted after proper security clearance. As Father Croos knows, the LTTE often sends people out on many pretexts, sometimes armed with deadly weapons as with the UN employee who was conveying a pen pistol to the south, doubtless to be used against yet another unsuspecting victim. Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha - Secretary-General, Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) exercising the right of reply on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka at the UN Geneva Pax Romana may not however be aware of the actual situation, since clearly it depends on particular witness, testimony of an emotional sort that one would have thought the Catholic Church avoided as part of its great intellectual tradition. Thus it is sad to see complete contempt for the facts about the Madhu Shrine, in which the LTTE kept weapons and cadres for years.

However Sri Lankan forces managed, by avoiding the provocation to attack, and solve the problem militarily, to ensure that the occupying LTTE cadres left peacefully, when their means of support were exhausted, with no possibility of renewal. Immediately after the forces took control of the area peaceably, they handed it back to the Catholic Church, which has still not been able to guarantee that the LTTE will not be permitted to use it again. Such guarantees are perhaps impossible when the LTTE holds certain priests too hostage, and makes them against their will complicit in acts of terrorism. The priest who was arrested recently when transporting explosives did not belong to the Catholic Church, but even that is not exempt from forced labour. Certainly the government, which had initially intended the Madhu Sacred Area to be a Zone of Peace, as expressed in its manifesto of 2005, was deeply disappointed when, the area being under LTTE control, the Church was unable to ensure its sanctity. It is ironic that Fr Croos should now urge that it be

recognized as a Zone of Peace – he can rest assured that the government desires this too, and will engage in discussions with responsible and accountable members of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to pursue this possibility in the context of guarantees regarding peace. Rev. Fr. Jeyabalan Croos Pax Romana Pax Romana can rest assured that the government is determined to restore normalcy as soon as possible, and ensure returns as expeditiously as it did in the Eastern Province. The reported arrest yesterday of the Head of the LTTE Peace Secretariat by his superiors who could not countenance his less intransigent approach suggests that the time of peace is coming soon, for an even older European religious tradition than the Catholic has it that those whom the Gods destroy they first make mad. This

internecine warfare within the LTTE may bode well for the future of the country, and we hope that Pax Romana and its representatives such as Fr Croos will escape from LTTE shackles and help to build a brighter future. With regard to Interfaith International, there is less excuse for emotional claptrap. The claim that over 100 civilians have been massacred by government forces and the paramilitaries working with them is breathtaking in its effrontery. As has been mentioned previously, the ruthless murders of other Tamils by the LTTE, in particular during the so-called Ceasefire Period, led to attempts at revenge when the LTTE was weakened but this has been brought under control. Indeed, even when the Human Rights Activist Maheshwari Velayuthan, connected with the EPDP, was killed in Jaffna by an LTTE gang, dressed in military fatigues, there was no reaction, and the subsequent killing of two journalists, which many feared initially was EPDP revenge, turned out to have been of yet another EPDP associate. Regrettably the reach of the LTTE continues vast, and if it is able to take in ignorant do-gooders, that is less dangerous than the use for more sinister purposes of innocents such as the 12 year old boy who led the killers to Ms Velayuthan. Deirdre McConnell Interfaith

International Mr President, the Interfaith representative spoke of the work of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission and the recommendations concerning it of the Special Rapporteur. Perhaps she is not aware that the UN office in Sri Lanka belittled those recommendations, and the SLMM itself was decimated by the LTTE driving away all monitors from countries belonging to the EU. Though we had taken issue earlier with certain rulings, in the last six months of its existence the SLMM and the Peace Secretariat worked well together, with the latter supplying Tamil local monitors since none of the LTTE local monitors were to be found. The representative clearly has not read through the original report of the Special Rapporteur that was categorical in its condemnation of the LTTE. She is also unaware that, despite the refusal of the Special Rapporteur to engage, the Government has independently taken steps in accordance with his suggestions to improve capacity and address possible human rights abuses. Finally, the use of the word genocide is an outrage, and we hope that the Council will take measures to stop such words being used loosely. Nine months ago, on September 25th, we responded to yet another pack of lies from Interfaith International, though then we did not realize that in fact they were not concerned with facts at all, but with flinging insults broadcast. Their statement then was with regard to the paucity of Tamils in the armed forces of Sri Lanka as well as in senior official positions, and we pointed out then that the LTTE had been busy killing Tamils who took up such positions. That is you like is genocide, since as statistics of people killed during the Ceasefire show, it was Tamils who suffered most from LTTE violence, since those were the days in which they thought they could soon prove their claim that they were the sole representatives of the Tamils. Despite such threats, we have since specially recruited Tamil policemen and women, who were brave enough to enlist. I will not mention the many Tamils who contribute to our work in all respects since they may come under threat. But, Mr President, when a lady who should know better uses such words loosely, one wonders about whether some

procedure to ensure accountability, and transparency with regard to the funding of such effusions, might not be in order.