

Demonizing the Tamil Struggle and Vilifying a People: Mastery of the Sri Lankan State for 35 Years - V. Rudrakumaran

LTTE has never been designated by UN as a terrorist entity. UN Security Council Sanction List 693 individuals & 400 entities; neither LTTE nor any Tamil is included

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Given the flaunting of impunity by the State of Sri Lanka, given the fact that the war ended almost ten years ago; given the fact that the LTTE made an announcement nearly ten years ago that they had silenced their guns, and given the fact that structural genocide of the Tamils is still continuing on the island of Sri Lanka, the controversy pertaining to Professor Ramasamy, the Penang Deputy Chief Minister in Malaysia and his relationship to the LTTE in the past is not only ludicrous, but also morally outrageous.

For many decades, any effort by Tamils and Tamil organizations of any kind to express their identity as a people and a nation has been labeled as 'terrorism,' and this sweeping attitude of demonizing a people continues to date. With the end of the war in 2009, the true nature of these smear campaigns has become clearer.

Since May 18, 2009, the only violence on the island of Sri Lanka has been perpetrated by the State itself. Yet, Tamils continue to be victims of this labeling. The noted Malaysian Tamil academic and politician, Professor P Ramasamy is the most recent of such victims for the part he played in contributing to peace building in Sri Lanka during the 2002-2006 cease-fire period. The political nature of this vilification is very evident now that the war is over.

During the national war in Sri Lanka, from 1983-2009, the State of Sri Lanka, one of the parties to the conflict, used its standing as a state, with access to the elites of other states and to the international press, exploiting the U.S. "War on Terror" campaign to attempt to portray the Tamil national liberation struggle as an illegitimate terrorist process. And Sri Lanka indeed achieved success in this Goebbels propaganda. The 2012 Report of the UN Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on UN Action in Sri Lanka (the 'Petrie Report')[1] noted the State's efforts to have the vanguard of Tamil nationalism considered a terrorist group by international players. The Report noted that credible sources estimated that 70,000 people, most of them Tamil civilians, died in the last few months of the war, as a result of the international system being paralyzed by the success of the State's painting the Tamils' military force as terrorists. The Catholic Bishop of Mannar, Rev Rayappu Joseph, had noted that, based on State figures, 147,000 people were remaining to be accounted for from Sri Lankan military action over those same months. [2]

Even today, the terrorism label is being used to stifle legitimate political discourse and/or tarnish the image of dedicated public servants, political actors, journalists, academics, etc. who espouse the Tamil cause. It is time to put an end to these new forms of "McCarthyism."

The Eelam Tamils view the LTTE as an embodiment of their political aspirations. The attendance of tens of thousands of people at the annual Maveerer Naal (Heroes Day) celebrations in Tamil diaspora capitals is a clear demonstration of the continuing respect and allegiance to the LTTE the people of Tamils Eelam maintain. The above also demonstrates the gargantuan failure of the

Sri Lankan state to silence the LTTE in the hearts of Eelam Tamils.

Not only Eelam Tamils, but Tamils across the globe, perceive the LTTE as an entity that gave them the dignity and moral courage to challenge injustice, irrespective of its source.

The LTTE's ideology namely the exercise of the right to self-determination in the form of an independent state, is anchored well in the UN's Political and Civil rights Covenant, Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Covenant, and the General Assembly Resolution 2625, which is considered as customary international law. In the US, the LTTE was not designated as a terrorist organization due to its political ideology. In fact, the US Supreme Court clearly stated that an individual has a right to espouse the LTTE's political ideology and to raise its flag. The only prohibition for the US citizen is about providing "material" support to the LTTE. Freedom of speech and freedom of association are honored in the US.

The LTTE has never been designated by the United Nations as a terrorist entity. In the Consolidated United Nations Security Council Sanction List comprising 693 individuals and 400 entities, neither the LTTE nor any Tamil is included.

It is pertinent to note here that on June 14, 2018, the Swiss Federal Criminal Tribunal rendered a decision in a high profile, lengthy trial during which the Tribunal determined that "the LTTE is not a criminal organization.[3] During the 2002-2006 ceasefire, the State of Sri Lanka dealt with the LTTE as a legitimate actor, as did other members of the outside world, in particular the US, the EU, Norway and Japan.

It is high time we all work together for a world where human rights are protected and promoted.

Let us put an end to impunity; Let us put an end to abductions. And let vilification also end. Let reason prevail; let moral imperatives prevail; and let the rule of law prevail.

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[1] [https://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri Lanka/The Internal Review Panel report on Sri Lanka .pdf](https://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/The_Internal_Review_Panel_report_on_Sri_Lanka.pdf)

[2] [http://www.jrs.net/Assets/Regions/IOR/media/files/LLRCsubmission by MannaarDiocese.pdf](http://www.jrs.net/Assets/Regions/IOR/media/files/LLRCsubmission_by_MannaarDiocese.pdf)

[3] https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/society/court-case_no-jail-for-swiss-tamil-tiger-financiers/44190280

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