

The Report of the UN Panel of Experts Supports the Case for Genocide in Sri Lanka

Credible evidence indicates that the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) committed murder, extermination, and persecution of the Tamil population of Vanni, in addition to torture, rape, disappearances, inhumane imprisonment, all of which constitute crimes against humanity. The events described in the UN report bear a striking resemblance to the genocide in Srebrenica while the estimated number of civilians deaths are an order of magnitude higher. Estimates of civilians deaths vary from 40 000 to 80 000 or more depending on the estimation methodology used.

([PRWEB](#)) May 01, 2011 -- Tamils Against Genocide (TAG) welcomes the publication of the advisory report submitted by the Secretary General's Panel of Experts on 12 April 2011. The report strongly supports our position that Sri Lanka has been engaged in a genocide of the Tamil people.

It provides estimates of Tamil civilian deaths in the final phase of the war ranging from 40 000, 75 000 to 80000 and 120 000 respectively based on different credible methodologies. The UN report concludes that a range of 40 000 deaths cannot be ruled out and finds that "most civilian casualties in the final phase of the war were caused by government shelling"

The Panel found credible evidence that the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) committed murder, extermination, and persecution of the Tamil population of Vanni, all of which constitute crimes against humanity (as defined in the Rome Statute of the ICC).

The report characterizes the systematic shelling of civilians and intentional deprivation of access to food and medicine as "calculated to bring about the destruction of a significant part of the civilian population". This characterization is identical to the definition of genocide in Article 2(c) of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. The report based their findings on precedents set by the tribunals for Yugoslavia (ICTY) and Rwanda (ICTR), as well as ICC statutes and UN conventions.

The parallels between the events described by the Panel and the genocide of Bosnian muslims in Srebrenica are striking. Srebrenica was a designated a safe haven (by the UN), encouraging civilians to concentrate there, and thereby making the mass killings possible. In Sri Lanka, the Panel found that the "government shelled on a large scale in three consecutive No Fire Zones, where it had encouraged the civilian population to concentrate, even after indicating it would cease the use of heavy weapons ..it shelled the United Nations hub, food distribution lines and near the ICRC ships that were coming to pick up the wounded.. It shelled despite its knowledge of the impact, provided by its own intelligence systems and through notification by the United Nations, the ICRC and others. Most civilian casualties in the final phase of the war were caused by government shelling"

The ICTY found that the Srebrenica was chosen for its cataclysmic destruction because of its strategic significance for the viability of the Bosnian state: "capture and ethnic purification of Srebrenica would therefore severely undermine the military efforts of the Bosnian Muslim state to ensure its viability." Crucially, the ICTY found that Serbian forces decided "the elimination of the Muslim population of Srebrenica .. would serve as a potent example to all Bosnian Muslims of their vulnerability and defenselessness in the face of Serb

military forces.”

Similarly, the Vanni region had strong strategic and symbolic significance for the de-facto Tamil state. In exterminating the Vanni population, GoSL sought to deal the Tamil people such a traumatizing blow that they would no longer challenge Sinhala dominance of the entire island.

While Sri Lanka may have adopted the modalities of the genocide in Srebrenica, the civilian deaths were an order of magnitude greater for a similarly sized population.

The report says of GoSL’s attitude towards the Tamils: “By denying that tens of thousands of lives were lost in the Vanni, the Government sends the message that the lives [of Tamils civilians]... were of no value to the society”. This observation reflects the Buddhist supremacist ideology of the main Sri Lankan religious book, the Mahavamsa, which describes the killing of thousands of Tamil lives as worth less than the lives of one and half ‘believers’.

As to the institutionalised racism that is a precondition and enabler of genocides the Panel noted “political, social and economic exclusion based on ethnicity” and highlighted the mono-ethnic nature of the army that carried out the extermination and persecution of the ethnic Tamil population of the Vanni. The Panel characterises Sri Lanka’s history as one where ‘Sinhala Buddhist nationalism gained traction, asserting a privileged place for the Sinhalese as protectors of Sri Lanka, as the sacred home of Buddhism’.

The report finds that the persecution of the Tamil population was not only a feature of (overt) war. Abuse continued in the time of ‘peace’ that followed. It details continuing post-conflict abuse of the Tamil survivors including deprivation of liberty amid inhumane conditions, “execution, disappearances, and sexual violence.” in internment camps. The report describes the GoSL’s detainment and torture of civilians with suspected LTTE links, doctors, and United Nations staff members, with testimonies to “sounds of beating and screaming... heard from the interrogation tents.” The Panel refers to “camp conditions that created an enabling environment for gender based violence.”

The Genocide Convention defines genocide as acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in substantive part a specific national or ethnic group. It is clear that the UN report strongly supports the assertion that GoSL committed genocide.

TAG calls on UN member governments, particularly the Human Rights and Security Councils to redress their contribution to the crimes described by the UN report.

The Convention obligation to prevent and punish genocide is not a matter of choice or political calculation but one of binding law.

Genocides do not happen outside of historical context. They occur in repetitive patterns. Genocide of the Tamil people had already happened in Sri Lanka in July 1983. Now the UN report describes credible evidence of genocide in 2009.

TAG urges UN member governments to recognise the genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka and to appoint an international Tribunal to investigate the perpetrators. We appeal to leading genocide experts, jurists, and civil society organizations to support our call.



Based on the Panel's findings on the failure of the UN and noting the conflict of interest where UN staff have been linked to war crimes in Sri Lanka, TAG calls on the Secretary General to set up a review of UN actions by a panel of independent jurists with no present or prior relationship to the United Nations.

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