

Deputy Chairperson of Northeast Secretariat on Human Rights (NESoHR), K Sivapalan issued a memorandum on June 4, 2009

Excerpts from the memorandum follows:

Two weeks have passed since the final onslaught took place at Mullivaikkal in Vanni, where more than 20,000 were killed and more than twice that number were seriously injured. According to the Government of Sri Lanka's (GOSL) own report, only a few days before that event, almost 120,000 persons left the "Safety Zone" in just two days, where for a long time the GOSL, India and even the UN were saying only 50,000 were 'trapped' in the area.

Almost 300,000 are currently being held in the different internment camps.

Women and mostly children had been killed in the most gruesome manner on, and for many days before, May 18, 2009 but it is shameful that those who talk about 'Child Rights' especially 'child recruitment' at the 'drop of a hat', including the UN, its Agencies, and 'Special Representatives,' have been silent for too long about the large scale killings.

UNHCR and other humanitarian INGOs have not been permitted to see or serve those injured. In fact, they were expelled from Vanni with the full knowledge of the UN and the International Community on time to be bereft of any eyewitnesses to the oncoming 'genocide' of the Tamils.

Even the ICRC has not been given full access to many Internment camps.

Hon. Chief Justice of Sri Lanka, Sarath Nandana de Silva, has lamented at the condition of the Tamil refugees at Cheddikulam Camp, and has stated that their plight will never be brought to justice.

The GOSL spokespersons continue to state that 52 NGOs have been permitted to give humanitarian assistance in these camps, but the details of these NGOs have not been made public yet.

13,000 persons are said to be missing from the country, which is only second to Saddam Hussein's Iraq in Enforced disappearances and Involuntary removals. Extra judicial killings and torture are rampant, even after the so called 'war against terror' is over.

Mr. Bothale Jayantha, the Secretary of Working Journalists Association of Sri Lanka has been abducted and tortured by people who came in a now infamous white van in high security capital Colombo, who as usual will never be 'identified'.

We, at the Northeast Secretariat of Human Rights (NESOHR), are deeply concerned of the

welfare of the Tamils held in the internment camps, and the plight of the three Doctors, Dr. Varatharajah, Dr. Sathyamoorthy and Dr. Shanmuganathan who had continued to serve the suffering masses at great risk to themselves in great adherence to their professional oaths. Instead of being treated with dignity and honour, they are said to be interrogated by elements of the armed forces.

Those who had been part of the legal system of Sri Lanka are only too familiar with the so-called 'confessions' obtained through such interrogation and to what purpose they have been put to use. Reputed Journalist Tissanayagam's so-called 'confession' is a case in point.

We appeal to the authorities concerned and the UN to see that the doctors are unharmed and to guarantee their safety.

NESOHR appeals to those concerned to adhere to due process and international humanitarian law in the treatment of those who have surrendered to the government forces, for transparency in the screening process, and for adherence to the UN Guiding Principles on treating Tamil civilians who fled the war and are currently held in internment camps.

Above all, we appeal to the United Nations to execute its primary responsibility to look after the welfare of those held in internment camps, especially the children and the elderly. We expect the UN to exercise its humanitarian mandate to ensure that vulnerable civilians are safeguarded from disappearances, and the young from sexual harassment and rape by Sri Lanka Security forces.

To the countries of the world, we appeal to respect their U.N. charter obligations.

K. Sivapalan,
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Northeast Secretariat on Human Rights (NESoHR)