



Remembering Sri Lanka's Slaughtered Faces

by Roy Ratnavel

Any Tamil who lived in Sri Lanka knows how personal the month of May is. In sum: May will be etched in Tamils' memory as the month where Sri Lankan military most effectively demonstrated their ability and their desire to kill Tamils in the blood-lands of Vanni. This wound will stay raw forever.

This is a moment for Tamils to soberly reflect on how we value life and what meaning we attach to death. This moment is ripe for celebration, a celebration of the lives of innocent people killed in May 2009 and those who were caught in the crossfire of decade old war on Tamils in Sri Lanka.

When this Memorial Month concludes, thousands of Tamils around the globe will have participated in commemorations that represent a precious opportunity for reflection, remembrance and mourning — both public and private. It also presents an important lesson to us all to fulfill the obligation to the survivors — especially the kids.

My scarred memory is full with incidents of my experiences in northern Sri Lanka during mid-eighties. Skanthakumar and Roshan — two timid teenagers of Point-Pedro, a small coastal town whose inhabitants were frequently bombed and shelled to oblivion. Included in that was my family's ancestral home, which included two young boys — my only brother and myself.

As boys growing up in northern Sri Lanka during the conflict of 1985-86, on most nights during heavy bombardment we lay on the warm floor of our home. I soon learned to recognize, at a very young age the different sounds generated by bombers during an air raid: the aircraft guns; the machine guns and return fire of the Tamil fighters; the cracks made by the incendiaries as they landed; the shock waves from the high explosive bombs, pre-

ceded by the seismic wave that was felt as we lay on the ground.

For me, the fear I remember most clearly was feeling the ground shocks from a stick of bombs, each one getting closer and more intense, and then the relief when the next shock came from the other side and the intensities began to decay. Many homes and lives were destroyed on a daily basis by the Sri Lankan terror apparatus. But some nights, surprisingly I have slept through it all.

At school, the teacher would sometimes ask us to stand and observe a moment of silence for the souls of my classmates who had been killed in a recent raid. Often we heard of number of people dead in the recent raid.

In 1986, at one of those silence tribute at my school, I learned the details of my classmates — Skanthakumar and Roshan. I learned that Roshan's house, and subsequently his body was blown to smithereens by Sri Lankan navy's daily recreational night shelling. Skanthakumar was dragged out of his house kicking and screaming by a gang of drunken soldiers — shot like an animal right in front of his parents — the only son they had.

British philosopher, and Nobel Laureate Bertrand Russell once observed that war doesn't decide who is right, war decides who is left and people who are vigorous and brutal often find war enjoyable, provided that it is a victorious war and that there is not too much interference with rape and plunder. This is a great help in persuading people that wars are righteous. Tamils perhaps do realize today how complete Russell's thoughts were.

Western governments and the media have gone along with Sri Lanka in blaming the Tamils and have refrained from criticizing the Sri Lankan government's handling of the ethnic strife. This stance certainly gave Sri Lanka the carte blanche to kill scores of Tamils. The world had its opportunity to save them and did nothing, except to wax eloquence; proving that global human rights have become

Remembering Sri Lanka's slaughtered faces.....cont



more about carefully crafted marketing messages than about human life. It is either gross incompetence or collusion.

According to recent U.N. findings numerous war crimes were, and still are committed against Tamils. But it is too late for those murdered Tamils of Sri Lanka. However, the deeds of

those who tried to protect Tamils from persecution — the few righteous around the globe, represent a flickering spark of humanity in a world that had gone dark. They offer a sharp rebuke to those who say “we had no choice,” or “we did not know,” or “it was a war against terrorism.”

No words can bring meaning or sense to such senseless deaths. But commemoration can bring hope to those who survived and those who remember. And in so doing, we can at least show the victims of Sri Lanka's madness that their deaths had some effect on us, caused us to reflect, reconsider and even hope.

Like many Sri Lankan Tamils in the West, there's a troubled, guilty part of us that's still thousands of kilometers away. Troubled, because Tamils are still a persecuted minority in Sri Lanka. And guilty, because not everyone we loved managed to escape, like we did.

We lived, but many Skanthakumars and Roshans didn't. To this day, many of us worry that we didn't do enough to help them. It's hard to enjoy the Western dream when your nightmares leave you racked with survivor's guilt.

Many survivors, like us, found a haven in the West. Through pure motivation, we found the strength to start over again; to build new families and to leave a legacy of hope, love and determination for our children and their descendants to follow. We need to show them where we are going, without forgetting where we are from.

In the end, we must show a fidelity to history and memory. We do this for ourselves and for those whose echoes were so murderously silenced — for the Skan-

thakumars and Roshans — whose still, soft voices call out from the grave to all of us to remember.

Certainly, we each have our memories of those we have lost. Some are personal, subtle moments between two individuals; some are the stories we all share that unite us in our grief and make us smile fondly even in the midst of overwhelming loss.

It is important to replace numbers with names, which is why I felt the need to name my lost friends. Failing to do so is like a deafening silence — silence of a murdered generation, including thousands of innocent Tamil children. Each victim of the Sri Lankan terror had a name, felt love, was loved, laughed, cried, was scared and ultimately slaughtered by the Sri Lankan army hordes.

We have seen enough deaths to understand the value of life. It is important not to replicate the cycle of violence that has already crippled Sri Lanka. The war turned the innocent kids into numbers. It is for us Tamils in the West to turn the numbers back into kids.

If we cannot do that, then the tyrants have shaped not only these kids view of the world, but their humanity.

We must honour those who were lost with forthright action and a commitment to ensure we will enhance the lives of those who survived, but are still suffering. We must serve as the much needed prosthetic to those amputated souls.

I am left only with the memories — the mischievous smile of Skanthakumar, the shy nature of Roshan, the two timid boys. But somewhere in this mangled memory will always be the life it represents, like an echo you no longer hear but swear you will never forget. Skanthakumars and Roshans were and are the true faces of this sad epoch in history.

roy_ratnavel@hotmail.com

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ATC



Public Relations Team's report

May was an extremely busy month for the already overworked ATC PR team.

Upon hearing of the Australian government's acceptance of a former navy commander as Sri Lanka's next High Commissioner, the ATC media team set to work with a timely [press release](#) followed by [media coverage](#) on this issue.

To date, our Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd and our Prime Minister, Julia Gillard have still not commented on the UN Expert Panel's report. Nor have they openly called for an international independent investigation into war crimes in Sri Lanka. The ATC [fax campaign](#) on this issue is still active and can be accessed on the [ATC website](#), and we encourage you to participate.

Our media team's continuing engagement with media outlets has resulted in reports being published which continue to highlight the Australian government's silence on the issue of war crimes in Australia, whilst other countries and even other Australia political parties have spoken out on this issue.

To date the Greens have spoken out on several occasions about the issue, with Greens MP, Adam Bandt most recently stating in an interview, "We trade with them we have negotiating and diplomatic influence with them. And I think perhaps in a country closer to home or perhaps in a country where they were a group that had a louder voice, we would be jumping up and down saying this is unacceptable treatment." [ABC Radio Asia Pacific - [Tamils mark two years since end of Sri Lanka's civil war](#)]

And recently Liberal Opposition Deputy Leader Julie Bishop said claims of war crimes need to be investigated, and stated, "The UN report raises very serious allegations about the conduct of both the Sri Lankan government forces and the Tamil Tigers in 2009...The Gillard government should be raising concerns about the events in 2009 and urging all parties to fully cooperate with any investigation." [The Australian - [Kevin Rudd urged by Tamils to reject Sri Lanka envoy following war crimes allegations](#)].

The ATC political and PR teams have continuously raised awareness of these issues with all parties in the Australian parliament and the changes slowly taking place bring us some comfort that our tireless work is seeing some light. Our advocacy work is not just restricted to politicians, but also include academics, journalists, lawyers, and other eminent persons. Daily we see more opinion pieces being published, with the former Australian Deputy High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, [Bruce Haigh](#) and reknowned Human Rights Lawyer, [Stephen Keim](#) both having opinion peices published this month.

Another great achievement due to constant education of our journalists in Australia has been the front page and double page exclusive pieces written by Ben Doherty which appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age newspapers, and online in Brisbane Times and National Times. The first article, [Stark future for the vanquished](#), looks at ground realities for Tamils in Sri Lanka. The second article, [Australian entangled in a final act of war](#), is an investigative piece on alleged war criminal, Palitha Kohona.

ATC Meets UN High Commissioner Ms Navi Pillay

During May, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Ms Navi Pillay](#), was visiting Australia. The Australian Human Rights Commission organised an event called [Human Rights 2011](#) where Ms Pillay was the chief guest speaker. [Mr Paris Aristotle AM](#), Director of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture and refugee advocate, and [Prof Patrick Dodson](#), Co-Chair of the Federal Government's Expert Panel on constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians, were also guest speakers. The event was hosted by popular TV broadcaster [Indira Naidoo](#).

A few members from ATC attended the event. There was also an opportunity to submit questions and Dr Sam Pari, spokesperson of ATC had submitted a question online. On the night, we were lucky enough to have our question as one of only 6 questions to be asked. Dr Sam Pari's question was:

"It was quite interesting to hear you talk about Rwanda and war crimes and genocide. As you know, in April a United Nations Expert Panel found that war crimes took place in Sri Lanka, and they actually recommended an international independent investigation to take place. Now, despite many western countries backing these recommendations and these findings, Australia - the Australian government - our Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd and our Prime Minister, Julia Gillard have so far been very silent.

Cont...

Public Relations Team's report cont...



Dr Sam Pari with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navil Pillay

They haven't commented on this and infact, recently Australia has accepted a former military official as the next Sri Lankan high commissioner. My question is with war crimes and persecution causing thousands of Tamil refugees to flee by boats from Sri Lanka towards Australia would you say that Australia has to be more vocal when it comes to war crimes issues in Sri Lanka?"

In answering, Ms Pillay confirmed that Australia should be more pro-active on such issues, especially since it had signed the Rome Statute. She also stated that Australia had a crucial responsibility in this region to end impunity for serious crimes and should speak up and call for accountability in this region.

Mr Aristotle also indicated that he wanted to answer this question. He spoke at length and in detail, and stated his concern regarding the number of Tamils who were found to be legitimate refugees

being held back due "security clearances". He stated that in his 24 years of experience he was not aware of anyone who had been responsible for any criminal or terrorist act after having been resettled or granted protection in Australia. He highlighted that in reality, many Tamils from the Vanni region would have some sort of association with the LTTE, and that link being a reason for failing security clearance may mean that some people could theoretically be in detention of the rest of their lives.

This question was the last question for the evening so we hope most people went home with our issue resonating in their mind. After the event, several people came up and thanked Dr Sam Pari for discussing this issue, with many seemingly grateful to have been educated on a new human rights issue.

Of hundreds of questions, our question got chosen. And of 15 finalised questions, only 6 got asked - one of which was ours. This shows that it is an issue that is starting to be acknowledged as an important issue. 1700 people who had an interest in human rights attended the event and today they all went home knowing about war crimes in Sri Lanka and of the persecution of Tamils and the need for Australia to speak up. Refer - [Tamilnet](#)

War Crimes Inquiry

The War Crimes Inquiry team which was submitted to the UN Panel of Experts played a part in the outcome of the Panel of Experts final report conducted another round of evidence collection this month.



Ms Pillay joined Professor Patrick Dodson and Paris Aristotle AM from Foundation House in Victoria at the Commission's Human Rights 2011 forum



AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE! From The Australian Tamil Congress

Australian Bureau of Statistics



2011 அவுஸ்திரேலிய குடிசன மதிப்பீடு Australian Census of Population and Housing

நாம் எம்மைத் தமிழர் என்று அடையாளப்படுத்துவோம் Say we are Tamils

ஐந்து ஆண்டுகளுக்கு ஒருமுறை, அவுஸ்திரேலியாவில் நடைபெறும் குடிசன மதிப்பீட்டு விபர சேகரிப்பு, இவ்வருடம் ஆகஸ்ட் மாதம் நடைபெறவுள்ளது. அவுஸ்திரேலியாவில் வாழும் ஒவ்வொரு தமிழரும் இப் பத்திரங்களைப் பூர்த்திசெய்யும் போது, அதிலுள்ள கேள்விகளில் மூன்று கேள்விகளுக்குப் பின்வரும் பதில்களையளிப்பதன் மூலம், நாம் எம்மைத் தமிழர் என்று அடையாளப்படுத்துவதுடன், இங்கு வாழும் எமது தமிழ்ச் சமுதாயத்திற்கும், எமது வருங்கால சந்ததியினருக்கும் பல சலுகைகளையும் பெறமுடியும்.

அவுஸ்திரேலிய தமிழர் பேரவை, குடிசன மதிப்பீட்டு அலுவலகத்தினரோடு கலந்து ஆராய்ந்து பெற்ற ஆலோசனைகளின் பிரகாரம் இவற்றை உங்களுக்கு அறியத் தருகிறோம்.

Question 12 - Country of Birth

Answer - If you were born in the island of Sri Lanka please write **"CEYLON"**

நீங்கள் பிறந்த நாடு எது என்று கேட்கிறார்கள். இலங்கையில் பிறந்தவர்கள் இலங்கை என்றுதான் பதிலளிக்க வேண்டும். பதிலை 'SRI LANKA' என்று எழுதாமல் 'CEYLON' என்று எழுதுங்கள்.

12. In which country was the person born?

• Remember to mark box like this: —

Australia ▶ Go to 14
England
New Zealand
Italy
Viet Nam
Scotland
Greece

Other - please specify

CEYLON

Question 16 - Does the person speak a language other than English at home?

Answer - "TAMIL"

நீங்கள் வீட்டில் ஆங்கிலத்தைத் தவிர வேறு ஏதாவது மொழியில் பேசுகிறீர்களா என்று கேட்கிறார்கள். ஆம் தமிழர் நாம் தமிழில் பேசுகிறோம் என்பதைத் தெளிவாகச் சொல்லுங்கள். 'TAMIL' என்று எழுதுங்கள்.

16. Does the person speak a language other than English at home?

• Mark one box only.
• If more than one language other than English, write the one that is spoken most often.
• Remember to mark box like this: —

No, English only ▶ Go to 18

Yes, Italian
Yes, Greek
Yes, Cantonese
Yes, Arabic
Yes, Vietnamese
Yes, Mandarin

Yes, other - please specify

TAMIL

Question 18 - What is the person's ancestry? - Answer - "TAMIL"

This question relates to our heritage. Tamils have a long and colourful heritage.

உங்களது பூர்வீகம் என்ன என்று கேட்கிறார்கள். நாம் தமிழர், எமது பூர்வீகம் தமிழ் என்பதைத் தெட்டத் தெளிவாகச் சொல்லவேண்டும். எனவே 'TAMIL' என்று எழுதுங்கள்.

18. What is the person's ancestry?

• Provide up to two ancestries only.
• Example of Other - please specify are: GREEK, VIETNAMESE, HAWAII, DUTCH, KURDISH, MAORI, LEBANESE, AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDER.
• See page 7 of the Census Guide for more information.
• Remember to mark boxes like this: —

English
Irish
Italian
German
Chinese
Scottish
Australian

Other - please specify

TAMIL

மேலதிக விபரங்களுக்கும், மதிப்பீட்டுப் பத்திரத்தை பூர்த்தி செய்வதற்கு உதவி வேண்டுமாயினும் எம்மைத் தொடர்பு கொள்ளுங்கள்.

If you have any queries or need assistance to complete the form, Please call us on 1300 799 515

Political Team's Report

Political teams across all states have been very busy last month working in collaboration with PR teams in lobbying politicians and senior government officials on issues that are significant to our people back home. Some significant actions and achievements are highlighted here:

UN Panel Report

Well-prepared detailed submissions were made to all Parliamentarians articulating the key points of the UN panel report and requesting that Australia should take a public stand welcoming the report. This was followed by personal communications and individual meetings with several MPs across all states expressing our disappointment with Australia's silence. Several friendly Parliamentarians have articulated our concerns with the Foreign Ministry, and are taking further steps to address our genuine concerns.

Navy officer as High Commissioner:

The news of this appointment was a shock to the Tamil community. ATC political teams across all states had several discussions with friendly Parliamentarians, and a few Parliamentarians have written strongly-worded letters to the Foreign Minister and also have made several phone calls to the Ministry clearly expressing their disappointments on this appointment.

Defense meeting in Colombo- Defeating Terrorism Sri Lankan Experience:

ATC political teams have been campaigning with sympathetic Parliamentarians as well as directly communicating with Defense and Foreign Ministries to educate and discourage Australia from participating in the Defense Conference organised in Sri Lanka. We have been informed from various sources, including Human Rights Watch that the Australia has [declined](#) the invitation, and we all can be reasonably satisfied with this outcome

DFAT meeting:

ATC representatives had a robust meeting with DFAT officials (including with the Asst. Secretary) on 18/05/11 in Canberra. The lack of official response by the Australian government on the UN

panel report and the appointment of the new SL HC were the key issues discussed. The strong sense of disappointment felt by the Tamil community, in particular as related to the indifference shown by Australia when compared to UK/US/EU was clearly articulated. DFAT officials promised to convey our serious concerns to the FM. They also promised to do all they can to come out with a public/official Australian statement on the panel report and also to arrange a meeting between the Tamil community representatives and the FM.

Letters to foreign politicians:

Congratulatory letter was sent to the newly elected CM Hon Selvy Jayalalitha; her strong stand towards the well being of Tamils in SL was gratefully acknowledged. Thanking letters were sent to leaders of BJP and CPI-M for their principled stand on UN panel report. Congratulatory letter was also sent to Rathika Sitsabesan, the first MP to be elected in Canada from Tamil Diaspora.

Ms Navi Pillai addressing Parliamentary HR sub-committee:

When Navi Pillai (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) addressed the Parliamentary HR sub-committee, some members of parliament we actively have lobbied ensured that Sri Lankan war crimes issues were discussed in detail. It appears that Navi Pillai was quite forthright in asking Australia to take a principled stand on this issue. It is expected that important steps such as this will have an influence on the Australian foreign policy over time.

.Fund raising to support TNA:

Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has requested financial support from ATC to help with their campaigning activities for the upcoming council elections. Recent elections in N-E Sri Lanka have clearly shown TNA as the dominant party with popular support, and TNA's undisputed role in negotiating on behalf of Tamils has been recognized by Sri Lanka, India and several other countries. Significant pressure is also applied by the authorities in Sri Lanka to weaken TNA. In this context, ATC has decided provide financial help to TNA and its state chapters are coordinating this fund raising campaign. Anyone willing to contribute to this fund can contact our state chapters.

Political Team's Report...cont

CHOGM preparatory meeting:

An ATC representative participated in a full day consultation for preparation for CHOGM 2011 to be held in Perth. Our participation was in the Human Rights Group (eight group discussions took place in total). Several human rights groups and prominent human rights activists were part of this group. The group arrived at very strong recommendations with respect to human rights violations with particular focus on rule of law, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

For example, one of the recommendations was to the effect, "any countries alleged of serious human rights violations including war crimes and crimes against humanity (such as Sri Lanka), Secretary-General and Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) should investigate and re-assess the eligibility of those country's membership of the Commonwealth".

These recommendations were sent to all CHOGM leaders. Although several CHOGM leaders may object to adopt such recommendations, this was a worthwhile exercise and ATC played a part in the group was educated on the war crimes allegations on Sri Lanka.

UN Human Rights Council:

A well-prepared submission with proposed motions was submitted to all 47 members of the UN Human Rights Council. The resolutions were based on the recommendations of the UN panel report and, articulated for some immediate relief measures from the GoSL and an international investigation mechanism to address war crimes and crimes against humanity.

ATC mentioned in NSW Parliament

NSW Greens MLC David Shoebidge made a compassionate speech on [war crimes against Tamils in Sri Lanka](#). In his speech he has also mentioned ATC's call for an international independent inquiry..

Dr. Dennis Jensen MP's speech in the Parliament

WA Liberal MP Dr Dennis Jensen gave a powerful [Speech](#) in the Parliament addressing the UN panel report on war crimes in Sri Lanka. ATC WA team has been maintaining a cordial relationship with Dennis Jensen over long period and tirelessly lobbied.

Dr Jensen's Speech:



I rise to draw the attention of the House to issues brought to me by members of the Australian Tamil community in my electorate of Tangney. The United Nations has released the report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on the final stages of the armed conflict that ended in Sri Lanka in May 2009. The report states:

The panel found credible allegations which, if proven, indicate that a wide range of serious breaches of international humanitarian law and international human rights law were committed both by the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, some of which would amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

It also says:

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 that it would cease the use of heavy weapons.

It concluded:

... the conduct of the war represented a grave assault on the entire regime of international law designed to protect individual dignity both during war and peace. The United Nations report is scathing in its assessment of the Sri Lankan government-appointed Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, saying it was not impartial and concluding that it 'has not conducted genuine truth-seeking about what happened in the final stages of the armed conflict' between January and May 2009.

Full Speech

Western Australia Chapter Report

Remembrance Day.... Moving on... whilst remembering the disaster of May 2009

The Remembrance Day May 2011 by the Tamils of Western Australia was organised by the ATC WA at the Manning community Hall on Saturday 21st at 6.30 pm. Over a hundred attended the event.

Day's proceedings commenced with two minutes silence in memory of all those who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Eelam and was followed by the National Anthems, that of Australia was given precedence.

Regina Shanmuganathan compered the proceedings and the first act was for all present to place lamps and flowers at the Memorial Table in the background of Karthikai Poo and Eelam Music.

Mr Shanmuganathan gave an introductory speech where he spoke of the significance of the Day and the need to rededicate ourselves to the Cause.

Several members recited poems in Memory of the occasion.

The Chairman of the ATC, Prof Rajeswaran made a keynote speech which emphasised the need to "**Move On**" while remembering the disaster of May 2009. He started by saying that Remembrance Day events are nec-

essary but for the Remembrance to result in action and for us to Move On, we all should spare "5 minutes" everyday (beginning of the day or end of the day) remembering the Disaster of May 2009 and see what can be done for the Day. He made use of the occasion to detail the activities of the ATC and exhorted everyone to join hands with the ATC to "Move On".

He emphasised the need to educate the International Community that our problems cannot be confined to the period of armed resistance of the LTTE. He traced our long history of struggles and stressed that Eelam Tamils be recognised as a distinct Nation with the Right of Self Determination. Though the original United Nations had recognised the Right of Self Determination of Nations, subsequently it has become the "Club of Countries" and began restricting the Right of Self Determination to "Countries demarked by arbitrary boundaries" which has made the World to be in unstable equilibrium propped up by Weapons of Mass Destruction and that was showered on us in May 2009.

He concluded that the UNSG Panel Report, though incomplete, should be used as a Gateway to "Move On" by calling for its implementation

The Highlight of the day was playing of the following speech by Seeman:



Remembrance Day event in WA



Prof Rajeswaran-Chairman ATC at the Remembrance Day.

New South Wales Chapter Activities

Meeting with Senator Doug Cameron

ATC representatives met Senator Cameron and his Senior Advisor on 5th May 2011 at the Springwood office.

We discussed in detail the UN Panel Report and Australia's silence on the issue and the Tamil community's disappointment with acceptance of the former Naval Officer as High Commissioner of Australia.

We also discussed the lengthy delays in processing of Tamil refugee applicants and the ASIO clearance.

A few positive outcomes were agreed as a result of the meeting.

Thank you dinner for volunteers and supporters for the NSW state election Friends of Labor

ATC representatives were invited for the thank you dinner hosted by "Friends of Labor" for the support during the State election.

The event was attended by NSW Labor leader Hon John Robertson, Hon Nathan Rees (Former Premier), Federal MPs Michelle Rowland, Ed Husic and Debra O'Neil.

Speakers at the event Ms Michelle Rowland MP, Hon Nathan Rees and Hon John Robertson acknowledged the support and the volunteers from the Australian Tamil Congress during the election time and thanked the ATC representatives for keeping them informed of the concerns of the Australian Tamil Community.

Both Ms Rowland and Hon Rees mentioned their concern with the recent findings of the UN Panel Report on alleged war crimes and advised they would continue to work with the Tamil Community to bring justice.

CHOGM 2011-Preparatory meeting

NSW political team ATC representative attended a consultative meeting from civil society for the CHOGM 2011. It was a very productive meeting and due to the presence of a Tamil representative recommendations to the CHOGM leaders had issues of Sri Lanka and war crimes included. More detail in Political report.

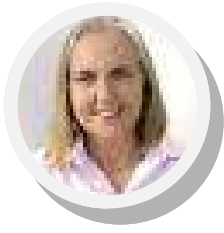


Thank you dinner with Federal and State Parliaments



Thank you dinner Hon Nathan Rees, Hon John Robertson and ATC representative

Federal Senator blogs about plight of Tamils and Aust's silence on the matter



Senator Lee Rhiannon

Standing among the 1000 plus Australian Tamils at Martin Place last week (18th May) to remember the Tamils massacred in the 2009 war in Sri Lanka, it was very obvious that the trauma for the community is still so deeply devastating.

What has become clear to me is that the Australian Government's silence during and since the 2009 war adds to the pain the community is enduring.

My Greens colleague in NSW Parliament [David Shoebridge in an adjournment speech last night](#) addressed this point. While the UK, US and European countries are taking a stand against the human rights abuses committed under the Rajapakse Government, the Australian Government's concern regarding Sri Lanka is minimal.

It was encouraging to see that at the recent forum organised by the [The Australian Human Rights Commission](#) the issue of Australia's voice on Sri Lanka's war crimes was discussed.

The question submitted by [Dr Sam Pari from the Australian Tamil Congress](#) was: *"With war crimes and human rights violations forcing thousands of Tamils to jump on boats and come to Australia seeking asylum, should Australia be more vocal on the issue of war crimes?"*.

[UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay](#) responded saying: *"In this region Australia has a crucial responsibility to urge respect for rule of law and urge a end to impunity for serious crimes. Australia has ratified the Rome Statute which set up the ICC and in the preamble to the Rome Statute is that there has to be a determination to end impunity for serious crimes. So on one level you have countries like Australia ratifying and committing to ending impunity. There is a responsibility then for it to speak up and call for accountability in this region."*

As my colleague David Shoebridge said:

"A generation of Tamils have been killed, brutalised and marginalised right under the gaze of the world, including Australia, and those who have been left behind are subject to a brutal military rule ... I hope that soon the survivors are respected and remembered by the Australian Government as it belatedly raises its voice for justice for the Tamil people".

When I enter Federal Parliament on July 1 I will continue advocating for the equal rights of the Tamils and all those living in Sri Lanka. The Greens have a deep commitment to speak up for those who suffer the injustice of discrimination, marginalisation and state sponsored terror.

[Lee Rhiannon's Blog](#)



Photo - More than 1000 Australian Tamil community members gathered to remember their loved ones who had perished during the Sri Lankan Government's offensive in 2009.

SRI LANKA: Australia silent over war crimes against Tamils

by Dr John Whitehall News Weekly, 28 May 2011

Everybody should read the United Nations' recent 214-page report on war crimes committed in Sri Lanka both by the government forces and by Tamils fighting for their homeland in the country's north-east. (UN Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka, March 31, 2011).

It is a timely reminder of "man's inhumanity to man". If Australia's Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd had declared that we must intervene in Libya because the world cannot allow another massacre of innocent civilians as had occurred in Sri Lanka, his call at the UN for intervention in Libya would have a certain logic.

If he condemned Mahinda Rajapakse, the President of Sri Lanka, and his younger brother, Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapakse, with the same passion as he has condemned Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi for attacking unarmed civilians, there would be consistency.

He would not need to emulate the NATO missile strike that killed the Libyan dictator's son and three grandsons. With Sri Lanka, the power of the spoken word would be sufficient. Rudd could have used his authority to revoke Australia's invitation to President Rajapakse to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Perth later this year, on the grounds of the Sri Lankan government's abominable record of butchery.

The UN report has attested that there are "credible allegations" indicating that "a wide range of serious violations of the international humanitarian ... and human rights law" was committed by both the Sri Lankan government, representing the majority Sinhalese, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who were fighting on behalf of the oppressed Tamil ethnic minority. According to the report, "the conduct of the war represented a grave assault on the entire regime of international law designed to protect individual dignity during both war and peace". Some

of the breaches of human rights "would amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity".

The report has revealed gruesome details of the butchery of innocent civilians. On January 20, 2009, the perimeter of the LTTE forces was shrinking before superior government firepower. Sri Lankan headquarters demarcated and publicised special no-fire zones for civilians, to one of which two remaining UN workers and "a large number of civilians ... relocated" and set up shelters near a food distribution centre. However, in the early hours of January 24, "hundreds of shells rained down"

Those with access to the UN bunker dived into it for protection, "but most IDPs [internally displaced people] ... had nowhere to seek cover"

The report said: "People were screaming and crying out for help." The UN security officer made "frantic calls" to the UN and to Sri Lankan leaders in Colombo, "but heavy shelling continued overnight.

It continued: "When the UN staff emerged from the bunker in the first morning light at the first opportunity, mangled bodies and body parts were strewn all around them, including those of many women and children. Remains of babies had been blasted upwards into the trees.

Among the dead were those who had helped to dig the bunker the previous day."

As the front contracted, over 300,000 civilians withdrew into another no-fire zone, but this was also shelled "from all directions ... land, air and sea ... (with) aerial bombardment, long-range artillery, howitzers, MBRLs [multi-barrel rocket launchers], as well as small mortars, RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] and small arms fire, some of it fired from a close range. MBRLs are unguided missile systems designed to shell large areas, but, if used in densely populated areas, are indiscriminate in their effect".

[More](#)

South Australia Chapter Activities

REMEMBRANCE WEEK & POLITICAL ACTIVITIES in SA

This year's commemoration was organized differently, focusing on Hindu Prayers at Ganesha Temple, Church service and Tree planting community activity which was similar to the one held last year. It was heartening to note that Toronto had tree planting activity this year.

Ganesha Temple Special Prayer meeting on Friday 20 May 2011 at 7.00 PM

On completion of religious ceremony Param K Paramsothy made a brief talk on the significant of the event as well as outlined the program details for the evening; participants who came for this event as well as other devotees also joined in

Community Project - Tree planting on Saturday 21 May 2011 at 1.30 PM

As part of commemoration last year we did tree planting at the same site. We were pleasantly surprised to see that our effort has resulted in promoting the re-vegetation with native plants. This year too we did similar activities, removal of guards for the plants which were planted earlier, planting new plants and putting guards for them. We are grateful to Melanie and Andrew from Community Action Program Division of Adelaide, Mt Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board, for organizing and making this program very successful with their expertise advice. Two of the photographs taken at this event are given below.



Volunteers at Tree Planting on 21 May 2011

Baptist Church Service on Saturday May 28 May 2011 7.30 PM

Church service which is held monthly for mixed community of people Tamils, Sinhalese, Burghers and Australian; a segment was allocated for prayer, as part of the remembrance week activities, for the victims of conflict in Sri Lanka. Special prayer was cleverly and well constructed by Sushila Nalliah considering that it was a mixed community gathering; praying for the victims for their losses and sufferings endured over the 25 years period, praying for the leaders to be guided so that peace and prosperity comes back to Sri Lanka and an appropriate hymn was sung to complete the special segment. About 50 adults and children participated in the prayer meeting which ended with serving of supper. It can be concluded that this approach set a new trend to bring Sri Lanka of the current quagmire it is in. Hopefully, we should use the services of Australian wider community to be effective and to promote and achieve peace.

Political Activities

We have increased communication with Federal politicians from SA, since the publication of UNSG's Expert Panel report and also promoting the All Party Tamil Friendly Group among the politicians. We have called upon the UNHRC members, by writing letters, to take action with respect to the recommendation from the UNSG's Expert Panel to set up an Independent International Inquiry for alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka.

Queensland Chapter Activities

QLD Remembrance Day -

ATC Queensland chapter hosted the Remembrance Day on 22nd of May . It was well attended with prominent speakers, spiritual activities, children activities.

On the 19th May Father Pan Jordan conducted a prayer meeting which was also well attended.

Hindu prayer service at Brisbane Pillayar temple was also organised.

Budget on overseas funding'

Senator Claire Moore organised and event "2011 budget on overseas funding' in Brisbane which was attended by Foreign Minister Hon Kevin Rudd. Selected community representatives were invited which included ATC. Mr Peter Audnt, Justice and Peace Commission raised the UN Expert Panel report and Tamil Community's issues briefly with the Foreign Minister.

Media

ABC National TV with assistance from the ATC Queensland chapter are building the story footages on 'SriLank

war and UN Report'. Once the full story is built and released we will inform the members.

Labour Day

ATC representatives were able to meet with ATCU Chair Ms Ged Kearney and had a brief chat on the UN Panel report reiterated the need for Australia to release a statement in line with Western powers.

International Commission of Jurist (ICJ) AGM and Seminar

ATC representatives attended the the AGM followed by a presentation at 6pm by Professor A.J. Brown of Griffith University Law School on "Whistleblower Protection in the Wikileaks Era: Moving Forward or Sliding Back?"

Barrister Stephen Keim who is a key member of ICJ, QLD Chapter has written opinion pieces on Sri Lankan war crime issues.

Victorian Chapter Activities

May 18th Remembrance Day

ATC Victorian co hosted the remembrance day inviting federal and state politicians to the event.

Tamils gathered in large numbers to pay tribute to the lives lost in Mulivaikal.

Census 2011

ATC-Vic chapter has launched the Census campaign in Victoria. ATC spokespersons was interviewed in 3ZZZ.

Political activities

ATC has been very actively lobbying parliamentarian and eminent persons to persuade the Australian government to support UN inquiry. The former Australian of the year Professor Pat McGorry has issued a statement calling for an independent UN inquiry.

26th May 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

"For over ten years I have been involved in the mental health care of very many Sri Lankans who have come to Australia seeking asylum from the civil war and the extensive use of torture and other human rights abuses that have occurred there. Most of my patients have been Tamil, however some have been Sinhalese or Muslim. Based on this knowledge of the situation in Sri Lanka in recent years, as seen through the eyes of my patients, all of whom have been granted asylum in Australia. I fully support the recent call from the UN Expert Panel for an independent investigation into war crimes in Sri Lanka, and respectfully urge the Australian government to support this call."

Yours sincerely

Professor Patrick D McGorry AO

Victorian Chapter Activities

Give a Hand for the Education of Our Deserving Kids

Appeal by Tamil Youth Organisation –Melbourne (TYO)

Melbourne Tamil Youth Organisation (TYO) is committed to the development of our Eelam kids' education, which has been so badly affected by the devastating war. As a first endeavor of this long term commitment, a pre-school had been inaugurated in January 2011 under the administration of the Social Economics of Children Development Association (SECDA).

The pre-school is established in Sinnaurani in the district of Batticaloa and it currently has 32 students who live below the poverty line. There are many other kids left out due to lack of funding and resources. However, TYO-Melbourne is working hard to do its best for these disadvantaged children. It wants to expand the number of kids at this pre-school or begin another pre-school as part of

its future plans. It is in our hands to help them out or leave them in an awful situation.

In order to establish this pre-school, TYO-Melbourne has donated \$6000.00. It is estimated that this pre-school needs \$1000.00 per month to pay for teachers, project managers, non-academic staff and other essential sports and administrative expenses.

TYO-Melbourne seeks more assistance from our community well-wishers to help our deserving kids. For more information, please ring Amalan Thuraisingam on 0431062831 or visit their website www.tyomelbourne.org.

ATC Victoria strongly urge our members to render their support to the noble endeavors of TYO-Melbourne.

Thank you.

ATC Victoria Public Relations Team



The Consensus Politics by Ram Mohan

Marx considered history as a history of class struggles and politics as unconscious Politics determined by Economics or more precisely by mode of production which in turn is determined by the instruments of production. He went on to say that history is created independent of Man's will. This is certainly true when Man had to rely on Nature for Survival just as a child has to rely on the Mother.

In childhood mother's influence over the child is enormous but over time as the child matures, the child's influence on mother dominates. So is the relationship between Man and Nature. While Marx's ideas were correct when Nature's influence on Man was dominant, there was a reversal as Man's influence on Nature became dominant and as Mao said, Politics determined everything else including Economics. Mao also went on to say that "People and people alone create History". The change over, took place sometime in the middle of the last century probably at the end of the World wars.

This can be confirmed by the fact that most of the countries won political independence from Imperialism but not economic independence. The political independence has to be used to develop Economic independence subsequently. Nations without State including Eelam need to win Political independence to achieve Economic independence. Thus National Liberation is a prerequisite for Socialist development. What is important to note is that while Politics was an unconscious development in the previous era, it (Politics) now is a conscious process. It applies to both the oppressors and the oppressed. The oppressors have realized this and developed conscious Politics to resolve the conflicts among themselves while perpetuating the conflicts with the oppressed as well as the conflicts among the oppressed, thus undermining the unity of the oppressed peoples.

The oppressors have developed the conscious Politics to a higher level of CONSENSUS POLITICS. The Politics of the UK governments (both Labour and Conservatives) between 1945 and 1979 has been commonly known as Consensus Politics. They had common understanding on the Welfare State, National Health Service and on State intervention in Economic affairs, particularly what was mistakenly called Nationalisation.

In reality, Consensus Politics is more widespread among oppressors Worldwide, as well as in time. Even after 1979 (after Thatcher and Regan), though the Strategy of oppression changed to more ruthless "Free Market", the

Consensus Politics between Labour and Conservatives has been growing and now they see eye to eye. Even after the current Economic Crisis or Depression, there is Consensus Politics between Labour and Conservatives in bailing out failing private enterprises including Multi National Corporations.

The same scenario is true for the Democrats and Republicans in the USA or wherever you have the "TWO PARTY DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM" including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India and Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, the Consensus Politics is made more transparent by the Free Flow of Politicians from the UNP to the UFPA and vice versa. The Consensus Politics is more obvious when it comes to the oppression of the Eelam Tamil Nation.

Since the transformation of Imperialism to Globalised Capital and the collapse of the Soviet Union or the so called Socialist Camp, the ruling elite in the One Party States also has been gradually drawn into the Worldwide Consensus Politics. The Consensus Politics is now being embraced by the Establishments of the World, See how International coalitions are formed whether it is the Iraq war or whether it is the Afghanistan war or whether it is the war against Eelam Tamils. It is the Consensus Politics that makes it easy for the transformation of G7 to G8 or even to G20.

The Ultimate Theater of the Consensus Politics is the UN Security Council, particularly the VETO Powers. The Consensus Politics is so dominant that the VETO is rarely used. The VETO had been used 252 times up to 2003 and only 10 times since then. In the back rooms of the world body, the major powers "make clear in private conversation what they can live with, what they can't," says Ruth Wedgwood, a professor of international law at Johns Hopkins University. As a result, some festering conflicts don't go before the Council: Russia won't tolerate resolutions on Chechnya, China of Tibet, or India - also a major UN player - of Kashmir.

Now it is clear why the Security Council went to the UN Basement to discuss Sri Lanka informally when the war against Eelam Tamils was reaching a climax. The Consensus Politics has become so obvious that Vidar Helgesen of Norway advised Eelam Tamils in the recent Remembrance Day Event to Press USA, UK and France to talk to China, Russia. The advice is good but

The Consensus Politics cont.....

we should talk to everybody direct.

The question is whether these Powers will listen to us. Whether it is in the Security Council as Prof Wedgwood observed or whether it is to do with individual relationships, the World moves on the basis of deals which are called “give and take” in a civilized fashion. We have nothing to offer except slavery as was the case before LTTE. We have seen that slavery does not even bring recognition apart from help. We became friendless because the few on whom we depended, took us for granted and did nothing while pushing others in the hands of the GOSL.

The only way we can change that is to talk to everybody direct so that nobody will take us for granted. Whether the talks will be effective and bring results will depend on how strong we are. GOSL is a member of the club of World Establishments and we are not. Hence we have the Consensus Politics of the World Establishments against us. The only way to challenge this is to be part of the “Consensus Politics of the Oppressed”.

There are several steps possible. Consensus Politics of Eelam Tamils, Consensus Politics of the World Tamils, Consensus Politics of the Nations without the State (often called the Fourth World) and finally Consensus Politics of the oppressed Peoples. We need not be pessimistic thinking that it is a long term approach. If we start moving in all directions or steps and if the number swells up to more than the population of the Sinhalese, the club of Establishments which depends ultimately on the Consumption Market will take note of us and by then we would have established our Bargaining Power.

What is the basis of Consensus Politics of the oppressed? If we look at the Consensus Politics of the Oppressors, they have established an order of Equitability among themselves as a basis for their deals and we need to do the same thing among the oppressed. Equitability within groups and Equitability between groups are essential. Naturally the starting point is the Consensus Politics of the Eelam Tamil Diaspora, more specifically at the present the three Global Bodies (GTF, TGTE and Makkal Avais). We are sometimes petty minded to the extent of not recognizing others even among ourselves. This is be-

cause of the Illusion of Leadership among many in the Diaspora. If the Eelam Diaspora understands that the Leadership of Eelam Liberation has to come from the Tamils in the Homeland in due course, then not only unity of Eelam Diaspora but also the unity of all Eelam Tamils will be very easy. The Diaspora has never led the Liberation of the Homeland anywhere anytime except in the case of Israel which is an accident of History, after 2000 years, facilitated by the need for a “secure air port” to the oil rich Middle East for the Industrial Powers. Even out of the 10 Vetos used after 2003, 6 were on behalf of Israel by USA. Surely we cannot expect such accidents to happen to us.

No doubt Consensus Politics should start with issues common to those who need to be united. To start with , a coordinating committee of the three Global bodies of Eelam Tamils can be established for the implementation of the UNSG Panel Report in the short term and for the campaign for the Recognition of the Right of Self Determination of Eelam Tamils in the long term. Another step could be the Establishment of a coordinating committee of World Tamils for stopping the Genocide of Eelam Tamils by the GOSL.

The Main Lesson is when the Powerful Establishments of the World including the “once upon a time” super powers need Consensus Politics to have their way, can we fight alone? Cannot even bargain alone.

Ram Mohan

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ATC

உலகத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Global Tamil Forum



May 18th Statement by President of the Global Tamil Forum, Rev. Dr S.J. Emmanuel

Dear Brothers and Sisters, it is now two years since the end of armed conflict in Sri Lanka.

Today is a day to commemorate all those family, friends and loved ones who died in such tragic circumstances.

Today is a day to reflect on the injustices suffered by the Tamil people at the hands of the Government of Sri Lanka.

And today is a day to look forward in hope to a time when truth, justice and reconciliation prevail.

The recently released UN Panel of Experts report has provided damning testimony as to the concluding months of the civil war. Justice demands that all credible allegations be investigated by an independent and international mechanism, as recommended by the Panel. For any meaningful and sustainable reconciliation to succeed, accountability for the past is mandatory.

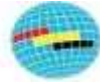
The crimes against our people can never be forgotten and the continuing injustices faced by so many of our brethren in Sri Lanka cannot be ignored. The Global Tamil Forum is playing a key role in engaging with governments and international organisations on these issues, in order to ensure that all victims of the war and its aftermath are treated with dignity and given justice.

They deserve nothing less.

Yours,

Rev. Dr S.J. Emmanuel
President
Global Tamil Forum

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Global Tamil Forum



Global Tamil Forum



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Tickets available at Dush Spices (Pendle Hill) and Pyramid Store (Flemington)

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In the past, only a fraction of Tamils have participated in politically active groups. Today the need is for a united and concerted action. We need to draw the silent majority and fresh blood into political awareness to convey the collective view of our community effectively.

We have some major projects and we cannot succeed without membership numbers and the funds that can generate! We are aware that a strong membership base is paramount to have a viable platform to make an impact. We earnestly request your help at this critical time to join our efforts. Being member of ATC, you will be entitled to participate in various ATC working groups and influence the direction.

You can contribute in various ways to our long-, medium- and short-term activities in humanitarian, legal, political, community, and communication fronts.

Please join us in our crusade for peace and justice by having your family and friends join ATC!

Articles and feedback to the National Newsletter

Please send us your views and creations to be included in our Newsletters to

newsletter@australiantamilcongress.com

Disclaimer : *The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ATC*

Australian Tamil Congress: On a Crusade for Peace and Justice

Vision

“Australian Tamil Congress is formed in order to create a congress of our people, for our people and by our people based on the principles of justice and peace amongst ourselves, and to provide for a common voice in promoting our general welfare, prosperity, independence, equality, security and peace”

Mission

“The Australian Tamil Congress encourages the positive participation of Tamils in Australian society, highlights issues of importance to Tamils, upholds core Australian values and engages other communities, governments and organisations in addressing the socio-cultural and political concerns of Tamils.”

Objective

“As part of an international Tamil human rights and political organization dedicated to generating change through ‘Collective Global Tamil’ action to institute and educate people on Tamils’ right to survival and self-determination, and to promote the safety, welfare, economic development of Tamils worldwide; and to teach the lessons of the Tamil Genocide in Sri Lanka for future generations.”

