



Feature

## HR organisations urged to attend plight of ex-militants needing asylum

[TamilNet, Friday, 16 March 2012, 05:55 GMT]

**While Amnesty International and other international organisations have started to look at widespread and systematic mistreatment of detained former LTTE combatants in the hands of genocidal Sri Lanka, the organisations should also attend to the way some countries have enacted laws to create conditions of detention to asylum-seeking former Tamil militants, deport them or detain them in constant fear of deportation, and at the same time encourage and assist the handling of the Tamil militants by the genocidal state, urged Tamil civil activists in the island. In the context of the island, the human rights question and rehabilitation of all ex-militants could ultimately be handled with satisfaction and dignity, only when the Eezham Tamils are restored with their sovereignty, the activists further said.**

Six months back, in September 2011, the UK Border Agency came out with a new policy of further tightening its "Restricted Discretionary Leave" (RDL) provision under which asylum seekers rejected for Geneva Convention and Humanitarian Protection considerations are placed.

When provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights prevent immediate deportation, the UK Border Agency gives them a short period under RDL, but always pursuing their removal as a priority. Extension of the period may be reviewed but appeals against the decision are not permitted.

During this time of stay, the virtual detainees cannot work, cannot study, should remain in their last address and should report to the immigration office at regular intervals.

Those who were considered "undeserving for protection" because of reasons such as having committed war crimes, crimes against peace or humanity, serious non-political crimes or acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the UN, are placed under this category.

The UK Border Agency would ensure that such persons do not avoid being returned to their home country where they would be held to account for their acts.

Excluding the former LTTE militants from the Geneva Convention provisions for Prisoners of War, but at the same time deploying the paradigm 'war crimes of both sides' in a one-sided way targeting only the Tamil militants, the UK Border Agency through its new policy has started detaining one party of the war and handing it over to the other, as a priority.

In June last year, the British Deputy High Commissioner in Colombo, Mark Gooding, accompanied by the war crimes accused Sinhala Army occupying the Tamil country, visited a group of 'reintegrated ex-combatants' of the LTTE kept in a SL military 'rehabilitation' centre at Thellippazhai in Jaffna. No civil officials went with him.

On the occasion of his visit, the British diplomat announced his government's contribution of 500, 000 pounds (approximately SLR 90 million) towards the "reintegration of rehabilitated ex-combatants in the north," a British High Commission press release said on 13 June 2011.

The money from UK's Conflict Pool, to be spent for the SL military handling of the ex-LTTE combatants, was routed through International Organization for Migration, which was of questionable local credibility.

In the so-called rehabilitation centres, the ex-combatants including females are kept without access to even their parents.

There are widespread allegations of sexual abuse, torture, forced labour and 'recruitment' of ex LTTE members to paramilitary activities by the SL Army in the facilities.

On Tuesday The Amnesty International in a new report has raised the issue of Sri Lanka's detainees.

"Former detainees have been harassed and rearrested, and physically attacked. Killings and enforced disappearances of newly released detainees have also been reported," Amnesty said in the report.

But the British being adamant over handing the ex-combatants to genocidal Colombo through some pretext of circumvention is increasingly evident in their treatment of many recent cases.

While praying at the Kachcha-theevu church fete early this month, Tamil Nadu's Fr. Michael who delivered the sermon said the sons of the soil should be released, they should be honoured and they should lead their lives as heroes (Maaveerar).

But even the New Delhi Establishment either hands over the ex-combatants to Colombo, or keeps them under virtual detention or supervision.

One's 'terrorist' is another's freedom fighter, just as a genocidal military for one people is 'patriotic' to another.

Eezham Tamils don't want their freedom fighters becoming asylum seekers. They don't want to see those who sacrificed their youthful part of the life for the sake of the nation languishing in the hands of those who committed the predominant part of the crimes, even after the truth being increasingly evident to the world.

Eezham Tamils also don't want to see their freedom fighters getting humiliated, collectively treated as criminals, insinuated to denounce their noble conviction and handed over to their adversaries, whether in the UK or elsewhere, while the genocidal adversaries are treated as legal and professional.

The due space and opportunity to lead the life of self respect for those thousands and thousands who were involved in the struggle of Eezham Tamils could come only when the Eezham Tamils get their sovereignty.

As the former colonial power that appended the sovereignty of Eezham Tamils with that of the Sinhalese in creating Ceylon, the UK has a special responsibility in working for the restoration of the sovereignty of Eezham Tamils, if it doesn't want to see the asylum seekers. But it is despicable to see the UK in pursuit of shortcuts collaborating with genocidal Colombo in handling the cases of former Tamil combatants, civil activists in the island said.

The civil activists urged the international human rights organisations to rise above states in scrutinizing the injustice meted out to former Tamil combatants not only in the island but also in the other countries. They also urged the organisations to work for a sound international justice mechanism for the combatants of nations without state.

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