

## STATE TERRORISM AND GENOCIDE IN SRI LANKA

[A Memorandum Submitted To The Delegates Of The Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of Coordinating Bureau Of Non-Aligned Countries On Namibia Held In New Delhi, India On 19th - 21st April, 1985 ]

The Honourable Chairman and Distinguished Delegates,

1. Since the anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983 when more than 2,000 Tamils were massacred, tens of thousands displaced and dislocated and political prisoners brutally murdered in a state-sponsored spree of murder and mayhem, the international world opinion, which was roused, is now beginning to show signs of declining into a state of helplessness. This is largely due to the false propoganda drive of the Sri Lankan Government which has sought to conceal the genocidal situation facing the Tamils of Sri Lanka by projecting the Eelam freedom fighters as "terrorists" and the present conflicts as a "civil war", where a military solution is projected as being necessary and the loss of innocent Tamil lives as inevitable.

The objective of this Memorandum is to highlight the nature of State Terrorism and the genocidal situation facing our beloved People, and to appeal to the peace-loving Peoples of the world for material, political and moral support for the legitimate struggle of the oppressed Tamils of Sri Lanka (i.e. the Eelam People).

### 2. STATE TERRORISM AND GENOCIDE - THE PRESENT PHASE OF NATIONAL OPPRESSION

The widening and deepening of national oppression against the Eelam People (i.e. the Tamils of Sri Lanka) over the past three decades and the colonial legacy of the Eelam National Question has been well documented and needs no further elaboration. What needs to be emphasised here, however, is that the resistance of the Tamil People against attempts by the neo-fascist Sri Lankan State to undermine their territorial, economic and linguistic integrity, has compelled the Sri Lankan state machinery to engage in acts aimed at terrorising the Tamil People into submission. However, contrary to these expectations, State Terrorism has merely served to strengthen the resolve of the Tamil People to resist all forms of national oppression and to exercise their inalienable right of self-determination. It is, indeed, tragic that the present Sri Lankan government, led by J.R. Jayawardene

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and backed by the forces of Imperialism and Zionism, has embarked on a futile military campaign to solve a problem that has no military solution; since, where a military solution becomes inevitable it can only imply victory to the legitimate struggle of the oppressed People. It is, further, reprehensible that the Sri Lankan State has embarked on a murderous assault, combining State Terrorism and the perpetration of a genocidal situation, as inseparable components of a "military solution".

We give below the systematic and conscious manner in which the neo-fascist J.R. Regime adopted the strategies of Zionism and the South African racist regime in oppressing the Tamil People :

#### 2.1 The 1979 Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act, No. 48 of 1979 (PTA) is a virtual replica of the 1967 Terrorism Act of South Africa. This obnoxious Act subordinated all existing legal safeguards and provided for the incommunicado detention of those arrested in undisclosed places for upto 18 months. The passage of the PTA which gave State Terrorism the required "legality", was immediately followed by a mandate by the head of the Sri Lankan State, J.R. Jayawardene, to an Army Brigadier to "wipe out" the "terrorists" before 31st December, 1979. This was immediately followed by a spate of killings and the disappearances of countless number of Tamil youths. The Prevention of Terrorism Act and the acts of State Terrorism that immediately followed were condemned by Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists for gross violation of human rights and the absence of safeguards against torture or even deaths during the long periods of incarceration. In a memorandum from Amnesty International to J.R. Jayawardena contained in the A.I. 1980 Report, references were made to the methods of torture imposed on the political prisoners. The Report of the I.C.J. entitled Ethnic Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka, condemned the Prevention of terrorism Act for being "objectionable from the human rights point of view", and also stated that the "limitations on human rights ... do not seem acceptable as a necessary means of maintaining public security."

## 2.2 District Development Council Election Violence of 1981

On 31st May 1981, a few days prior to the holding of elections to the District Development Councils which was expected to concede a certain degree of devolution of power to the political representatives of the Tamil people, the armed forces led a well-orchestrated attack on the Tamil civilian population, private property and, most brutal of all, the destruction of the Jaffna Public Library. This was very clearly an act of genocide which not only claimed the lives of Tamil civilians, but was also directed against the repository of Tamil culture and symbols of the heritage of the Tamil People. The following Statement issued by the Opposition Parties of the time, gives a graphic account of this state-sponsored violence against the Tamil People: "More than 100 shops have been broken, burnt, looted; market squares in Jaffna and Chunnakam look as if they have been bombed in war time; several houses have been looted and badly damaged; the house of the M.P. for Jaffna has been reduced to ruins ... Several deaths have occurred at the hands of the State armed personnel; the Headquarters of the TULF in the heart of Jaffna has been destroyed; the Public Library in Jaffna - the second largest library in the island with over 90,000 volumes - has been reduced to ashes. Even more reprehensible are the facts that these outrages should have taken place when cabinet ministers and several leaders of the security services were personally present in Jaffna directing affairs, and that the section of the security services which has been sent there to maintain law and order, had been directly involved."

## 2.3 1983 Anti-Tamil Pogrom

The gruesome details of the carnage that took place in July 1983 is now common knowledge internationally, and needs no further elaboration. What needs to be pointed out is the direct involvement of the State machinery in initiating and sustaining the pogrom over a period of one week, covering virtually all Tamil-concentrated areas of Sri Lanka. Influential sections of the ruling United National Party, extremist Sinhala-Buddhist organizations, and the armed forces plunged

into the human carnage in a well-orchestrated assault on the defenceless Tamil People. The most telling instance of State Terrorism was the massacre of 53 political prisoners, held at the Welikade high security prison, by Sinhala convicts and criminal elements at the direct instigation of the prison guards and security personnel.

#### 2.4 State Of Seige In The Traditional Homeland Of The Tamils

Subsequent to the 1983 anti-Tamil Pogrom which spread all over the country and severely undermined the international image of the Sri Lankan government, the neo-fascist Sri Lankan State has embarked on the strategy of directing State Terrorism in the Northern, Eastern and parts of the Central Provinces of Sri Lanka which constitute the traditional homeland of the Tamils of Sri Lanka (i.e. Eelam). The above strategy is a two-pronged assault aimed at achieving the following objectives :

- (i) To impose a military solution and wipe out all semblance of resistance against state repression and national oppression by the Eelam National Liberation Movement;
- (ii) To create a genocidal situation aimed at depopulating strategic Tamil areas and their resettlement with Sinhalese, so as to undermine the territorial integrity of Eelam.

We give below some instances of this devious and murderous strategy adopted by the J.R. Regime :

- (i) In April 1984, the towns of Chunnakam and Jaffna in the Jaffna District were subject to rampages by the armed forces, resulting in the deaths of more than 100 civilians, including the blowing-up of a prison cell containing Tamil youths who had been rounded-up by the security forces.
- (ii) In August 1984, Jafna, Valvettithurai, Point Pedro and Chunnakam in the Jaffna District and significant sections of the Districts of Mannar, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu were subject to arson and destruction by the armed forces. On the 3rd and 4th of August,

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the Sri Lankan navy shelled and machine-gunned the coastal town of Valvettithurai causing loss of lives and massive destruction of houses and places of worship. In addition, the male members of the families were rounded-up, tortured and transported like cattle to unknown destinations.

- (iii) On September 11, Sri Lankan security forces hijacked a passenger bus carrying 45 passengers and machine-gunned the male members in the most brutal manner. Fourteen Tamils and one Muslim were killed on the spot. In addition, two young girls were gang-raped by these scabs.
- (iv) On 1st November, the security forces opened fire on the Jaffna bus station and the vicinity of the railway station killing numerous commuters. The following week the Sri Lankan army went on an indiscriminate shooting spree in the Northern Jaffna city, killing over 20 civilians and injuring several others.

The above are just a few instances of State Terrorism and does not included the entirety of the terror that has been imposed on the Tamil People in the northern province of Sri Lanka.

## 2.5 The Emergency Regulations No. 1 of 1984 - Replica of Zionist "West Bank Solution"

The Emergency Regulation No. 1 of 1984 proclaimed on November 29 imposed severe restrictions on the movement of all vehicles, provided for the arrests of those who do not carry identity cards and authorized the security forces to remove persons and destroy homes in areas where "terrorist" incidents had occurred. These measures were to apply to a "Security Zone" which covered the entire Jaffna District. In addition, a Prohibited Zone was declared from Mullaitivu to Mannar along the North Eastern, Northern and Western coastal belt. The conditions under which the Tamils live in these areas is best brought out in the following extract from the eye-witness account of a foreign journalist: "Rigid curfew and a plethora of complex regulations and (permits) have reduced transport to skeleton services. People find

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it hard to get to work and to transport food and raw materials. The army has its grip on the juggular of commerce. Factories are closing, trade in most shops has dwindled .... People are dying because they cannot be taken to hospital during the 6 P.M. to 6 A.M. curfew. Jaffna Hospital is running out of vital drugs, oxygen and anaesthetics." (The Times, 31.12.84). In addition to crippling the day-to-day existence of the Tamil People, the Emergency Regulations were immediately followed by sustained cases of State Terrorism. The most brutal was the massacre on the 4th of December of more than 100 Tamil civilians in the Districts of Mannar and Vavuniya. The Present situation has deteriorated even further which is manifest in the influx of refugees in their thousands to South India since the proclamation of the Emergency Regulations of November 29.

3. In conclusion, the strategies adopted by the neo-fascist Sri Lankan regime are not an isolated phenomenon. In fact, it typifies the phenomenon of State Terrorism and Genocide on a global scale by powers which seek to perpetuate its hegemony and dominance over a People through sheer force. The parallels between the Sri Lankan strategy and that of the Zionists are identical, but not accidental. Mossad and Shin Bet, the murderous agencies of Zionism, are physically present in Sri Lanka advising the Sri Lankan security forces, while U.S. Imperialism, its allies and puppet regimes are directly involved in the militarization of the armed forces and in the provision of economic aid and financial assistance to a perpetually crisis-ridden economy. These forces seek to spread its sphere of influence in the Indian sub-continent through the destabilization of anti-Imperialist and progressive forces in the region and the strengthening of regimes whose survival depends on the patron-client relations that it enjoys with the forces of Imperialism. It is, therefore, imperative that national liberation struggles of all oppressed Peoples with an anti-Imperialist content be strengthened and expressions of solidarity be put into action. Neither State Terrorism nor acts of genocide can destroy a struggle that is legitimate, enjoys the popular support of that oppressed People and reaches out in solidarity with the struggles of all oppressed Peoples.

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The Eelam People extend their solidarity to the Namibian People and their sole and legitimate representative, the SWAPO, on the occasion of the Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of the Co-ordinating Bureau of Non-aligned Countries on Namibia.

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EELAM PEOPLE'S INFORMATION CENTRE (EPIC)

POST BOX No. 5551,

MADRAS - 600094

INDIA