

Lies and a Tiger: How a Diaspora is Killing its Own

Editorial Note: We felt the need to publish this feature by David Becker since it reveals the realities that arose from the LTTE using the civilians as a weapon in their arsenal hoping thousands of them would perish and there would be international intervention to help grab another ceasefire. Towards this the LTTE also buried arms for future use in the jungles, some of them unbelievably very powerful military hardware. The Tamils have a just cause and it is time they addressed themselves to it in real earnest.

As the war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam grinds inexorably towards certain defeat for the self-proclaimed representatives of the Tamil nation, there seems to be no great fanfare, no glorious last stands. This revolution dies not with a bang, but with whimpers and cowardice. And lies.

For a year the Tamil Diaspora, spread from Tamil Nadu to Toronto, watched open-mouthed with disbelief as the iron fist of the Sri Lankan infantry divisions cut the Tiger formations to pieces, hammering them back into a tiny pocket close to Mullaitivu on the island's northeastern coast. Now, as the world watches, a mortally wounded Tiger cowers behind the very people it claims to defend, mauling them as it dies.

As the pace of the offensive slows down in the heavily populated Mullaitivu District, the Tamil Diaspora has finally found its voice, and a cause worthy of its outrage — the Tamil population of the Wannai, trapped in the fighting and suffering horribly. They lack everything human beings have a right to expect — food, shelter, clothing, security, life itself. If anything in the northeast is worthy of our attention, it is these people, held hostage by their proclaimed protectors, forced to face the guns and tanks of the SL Army in the cynical hope that if enough of them are killed or maimed, the world might step in and save the LTTE.

The Diaspora, organized and spurred by LTTE front organizations, chants its mantra of concentration camps and Sri Lankan government genocide of the Tamils, ignoring the fact that it is the LTTE, and not the government, that is holding the Wannai Tamils in these inhuman conditions. And like all human catastrophes, this one too, has spawned its celebrity hangers-on. First, Sri Lankan-born British rapper MIA, and now at the eleventh hour, Booker Prize-winning Indian author Arundhati Roy. These two individuals more or less represent the two strongest tones of voice we hear calling for a cessation of the Sri Lankan military offensive against the Tigers.

MIA largely chooses to ignore all reality in favour of an LTTE-created one in which hundreds of thousands of Tamils have died at the hands of a million-strong Sinhalese army which is gassing, raping and torturing its way through the Wannai, while the valiant Tamil freedom fighters stand like Leonidas's three-hundred between Adolf Hitler and a Tamil holocaust. Roy, on the other hand, seems to be more a victim of her own intellectual laziness. Her recent article in this paper is mostly third-hand information, cherry-picked from a single Sunday Telegraph interview of a disgraced former Sri Lankan foreign minister. Instead of delving into the real issues, Roy chooses to skim across what pricks her outrage the most. At least MIA pretends she knows what she's talking about, but Roy prefers emotion and drama, and makes even well-established facts sound like tribal tom-toms in the jungle. In addition to echoing MIA's genocide charge, she claims that the Sri Lankan government is busily setting up concentration camps to enslave the Tamils of the island.

The accusations of genocide and concentration camps remain a figment of fiction, regardless of how many times the lie is repeated. The one single thing standing between the Wannai Tamils and safety is the LTTE. And there is very little the Diaspora or anyone outside Sri Lanka can do to make them let their people go. Twice the government has declared 'no fire zones' in LTTE territory and urged the civilians unable to escape to find shelter there from the fighting. The Tigers have, however, blatantly violated these zones, operating within them and using them to launch attacks against the SL Army, inviting the inevitable retaliatory strikes and resultant horrors on the civil populace. Meanwhile, the LTTE continues to hold the thousands of Tamils in these 'no fire zones' hostage, conscripting even the elderly and very young as slave labour and cannon fodder, forcing them to endure the unbearable, and using deadly force to prevent them escaping to safety in the government-controlled areas. In spite of the dangers, thousands of civilians have risked death and injury at the hands of their self-proclaimed protectors in order to flee to safety, many paying the ultimate price in the attempt. All of this has been clearly documented by NGOs and international envoys. And all of it is ignored by the likes of MIA and Arundhati Roy and the millions of Tamils across the world that has outsourced the future of the Tamil cause to a megalomaniac.

So while they bask in the post-orgasmic glow of their righteous anger, out in the jungle, little children are dying. And no amount of protest, no flag-waving, no hunger strike will save them. What will save them is the speedy and efficient destruction of the LTTE that has visited this catastrophe on them

By David Blacker