

Wanni under the Tigers was a horrendous concentration camp

From the Editors of Sri Lanka Watch

Prologue: Pro-LTTE Diaspora, certain neo-colonialist interests in the West and some international organizations seem unable, rather unwilling, to understand that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam operated one of the worst and indeed the largest concentration camp known anywhere in the world.

It grew into such by intent and custom to cause chaos and anarchy in Sri Lanka, a base to target the destabilization of South Asia; a manic obsession of the neo-colonialist interests. The pro-LTTE Diaspora that grovels to such forces generously funded the LTTE and to such unbelievable scales that surviving Tiger lords like Kumaran Pathmanathan are now reckoned as incredible billionaires operating a vast network of an underworld of horrendous evil. This feature describes how the LTTE's Wanni concentration camp came about and was set up.

[July 16, Colombo] When President Ranasinghe Premadasa requested India to withdraw the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) that was invited by his predecessor President Junius Jayawardene, it was a defining moment for Sri Lanka ravaged by the dastardly brutality of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In order to bring this about President Premadasa, his shameless pro-West toadies, the United National Party (UNP), the LTTE and certain anti-Indian hidden forces and interests conspiratorially cooperated even to the extent of financing and ensuring more arms to the LTTE. President Jayawardene even financed the training of Tigers in Israel cheating the World Bank out of millions of dollars (By Way of Deception by Victor Ostrovsky and Claire Hoy, Chapter 3).

The LTTE had in due course begun to enjoy the support of some forces of darkness that had their own agenda aimed at destabilizing South Asia with a base in Sri Lanka. The LTTE was quite happy to be considered the very force that would control this base under the guise of Eelam for the Tamils. Its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, contrary to the image LTTE interests tried to propagate over the years, had no political sense or acumen in him. He was a ruthless bloodthirsty sadist and all that he wanted was a mafia smuggler state under his total dominance. This suited the forces that had adopted him as the force of terror to silence the patriots of the country and those who were against the LTTE and the UNP.

Earlier, even President Jayawardene obviously conspired with the LTTE to provide the spark for the genocide against the Tamils that he had meticulously planned. A small group of people have been in the confidence of this man and they organized teams of goondas with the promise of good returns from prowling and pillaging Tamil homes by going on an anti-Tamil pogrom of mayhem and murder. But for India's timely warning, Jayawardene would have caused serious decimation of the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

This was the crucial background when the IPKF left Sri Lanka and the LTTE had the might of free for all and none to question rule of the wild law in the North and East. It was also already evident that the Catholic Church was the chief ally of the LTTE and it enjoyed immense media support from Radio VERITAS, a most reactionary media organization run by the Catholic Church based in the Philippines.

Unfortunately, Sri Lanka was open to all kinds of INGOs and NGOs to whom the country was attractive in many ways. This state of affairs attracted quite a few evil elements that began to dabble negatively in the country's affairs and even certain agents were sent with the express purpose of supporting anti-Sri Lankan and anti-Indian interests. They had several aid humanitarian agency masks such as Save the Children, Feeding the Poor, Birth Control, Helping the Homeless, Introducing IR8, Bottle Milk and such high-sounding tags and titles but then what was the net result of the activities of these organizations?

The result of these activities were seen in the increasing debit status of the country and as a consequence running to the West for loans most of which were traded off for personnel and goods from the West. While the UNP was happily and shamelessly stoking corruption in high places, mismanaging the economy to serve neo-colonialist interests, fanning communal passions in the country, people were suffering and unrest and chaos was taking massive leaps that were first expressed in the revolts of the southern youth in 1971.

President Jayawardene even tapped into the funds made available for the Great Mahaweli Project initiated by the Honourable Srimavo Bandaranaike to buy arms from Israel. By financing the training of both sides of the dispute, it was clear Jayawardene wanted Sri Lanka in a state of war to satisfy his masters in the West. His nephew Ranil Wickremasinghe who has served in his cabinet merely continued carrying that vicious and venomous torch of racial conflict and divide.

This is the background of how the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement was brokered by Erik Solheim of Norway and brought into effect by the prime minister of that time, Ranil Wickremasinghe. By this time, the LTTE was chased out of the Jaffna peninsula but had that campaign continued, this terror force may have been destroyed once and for all. But on hindsight it is becoming evident the whole episode was intended to save the LTTE by enabling this terror contraption to have a territory of its own and the Ceasefire 2002 was merely a drama towards such a predetermined plot.

In allowing the LTTE to have full control of the Wanni with a virtual de facto yet a usurped government which in the eyes of the world was interpreted as an effort towards bringing a solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic problems, seeds of

terror were laid in the grounds. The Wannu is a highly developed agricultural region, even recognized as the granary of the country. It also had vast ocean resources. Unlike the people of the peninsula, the Wannu people are tame and politically meek and compliant, an ideal ground for the LTTE to burgeon and become a major force of terrorism.

Prior to this, on the boot out of Jaffna October 1995, thousands of peninsula civilians were force-marched by the Tigers as human shield and consequently were settled in the Wannu; they were given no other choice. The LTTE also made selective settlement of people from Prabhakaran's community in choice areas to wield his terror power over the people of Wannu effectively. He also seized children from the orphanages in the north to create his nucleus of suicide bombers and front line fodder for his military campaigns in none of which he fought from the front, not even from the back. He stayed in the bunker and gave his orders from there.

Among his early actions in the Wannu were the setting up of torture cells to ensure that no one challenged his authority in the manner Malaysian coconut pickers trained monkeys to be effective in this activity; often a monkey would be chosen and bashed to death in front of the others to make them understand the consequence of failing in the expectations of their master. The difference was that Prabhakaran used more horrible means, even employed deadly snakes for that purpose.

The fact that his one-time deputy Mathaya entertained a certain solution to the ethnic problem made Prabhakaran go hysterical and utterly frenzied with uncontrollable fury. Without even considering his contention he not only chained him up under unbelievable torturous conditions but eventually had him killed along with hundreds of his followers, all in Wannu.

The LTTE had its own police force and set up a court system where it was claimed that sentences were determined even before a trial and they were carried out instantly. The decisions of these courts had no recourse for appeals and it was Prabhakaran who determined whatever was of any consequence.

Conscriptions to the Tiger Forces were all done as determined by Prabhakaran and his deputies, all of whom had to follow only the orders of the Tiger Supremo. Wannu families not only had to pay high taxes, their produces were all the priority of the LTTE and worse, at least one family member had to be in the Tiger Forces which later increased to two or whatever numbers they determined according to their needs.

Age was immaterial and even children of ten and eleven years of age were forced to become cadres. Students preparing for public examinations were not given permission to sit for the examinations unless they received arms training. Even elderly people were forced to have arms training.

Contrary to the popular belief, the Tigers did not pay for the various services that a state provides such as health, education, farmer seeds and other needs, public transport, services that come under the Grama Sevaka and civil administrative officials under the Government Agent. All these were taken care by the Government of Sri Lanka.

The LTTE on the other hand collected taxes, virtually unbearable to the Wannu farming population whose farms were devastated by the Tigers themselves. They also had a vicious customs-style operation on either side of the A9 highway that ran through this territory. Heavy duties were imposed on trucks that went through, travelers and whatever they carried from the mainland to the peninsula and vice versa too.

No one from Wannu was allowed to leave the territory; in fact the entire area became a terrible prison. Technically any one wishing to travel outside has to obtain a pass but this was practiced more in default than in reality. Diaspora Tamil visitors were often demanded to part with large sums of donations and generally the sum they had to pay was calculated at the rate of one US dollar for each day one has been out of Sri Lanka. Brutal methods were exercised to extract their demands and on occasions local relatives would be held in ransom under threat of death until the sum demanded is paid.

Regular ambushes of deadly consequences were often conducted to keep the terror image of the LTTE alive and one of the worst was when a busload of school going children and pregnant mothers on the way to a local clinic in the neighbouring Kebbettigollewa were killed by a bomb planted in the bus. This was just one of many such horrors with which the LTTE terrorized the entire country. There were the assassinations too. Two world renowned Buddhist icons, the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy and the precincts of the Sacred Bodhi Tree in Anuradhapura were also subjected to vicious attacks. The list of their hideous campaigns and assassinations is virtually endless.

As for the people of Wannu, a proud, self-dependent producer community was extensively impoverished, their families ravaged of their young people and the entire community traumatized to the extent they had lost all hopes of any salvation especially with even their parliamentary representatives becoming turncoat suckers of the LTTE.

If this Wannu is not a concentration camp, what else is?

This is the camp certain western interests wanted to exist, the pro-LTTE Diaspora generously funded, corrupt Tamilnadu politicians advocated, people like Navaneetham Pillai tended to see them as legitimate rulers and the UNP nurtured and

nourished and still it has not the guts to own up its terrible mistake if not betrayal and apologize to the people of Wannu to have brought them under the terror yoke of the Tigers.

Who can count the hundreds of children and young people who were led to slaughter in the Wannu apart from all the devastation the Tigers caused to the people of Wannu and the destruction to their rich land? Let it be understood that the IDP camps are necessary halfway relief the government had to organize for the Wannu people before they are able to return to their habitats. If the government had other ideas, the LTTE would have certainly obliged and that was the way President Jayawardene intended but failed miserably. He failed because Sri Lankans do want to live in a peaceful country where every citizen will enjoy equal rights.