

Two Years after the Eelam War: The Flames of Liberation Continue to Expose the Oppressors and their Apologists! dsu

Two years back, on 18 May 2009 the Sri Lankan army claimed to have killed Vellupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of LTTE, along with hundreds of his comrades. The next day in the Sri Lankan parliament a jubilant Rajapakse declared victory in the Eelam War IV. This was the day, two years back, when the Eelam Tamils lost their hard-fought freedom at the hands of the fascist and expansionist Sri Lanka. This week the Tamils in Eelam and outside remember the heroic sacrifice of the sons and daughters of Eelam who laid down their lives fighting the armed forces of the chauvinist Sri Lankan ruling classes. Braving threats, intimidation and harassment from the Sri Lankan armed forces and intelligence, the people of Eelam paid homage to those who have fallen in the decades-long struggle for national liberation. They reiterated that it is the people of Tamil Eelam alone who have the mandate to choose their destiny, denouncing and warning against any 'negotiated settlement' of the issue which compromises with the historical realities. The people have stated that any secret deal or confidential talk with the Sri Lankan state by those who claim to represent the Eelam Tamils will not be acceptable. The 'solution' only lies in the recognition of the historical reality of Tamil Eelam, i.e., its right to exist as a free and independent national state.

The injustice, oppression and discrimination of the Eelam Tamils by the Sinhala chauvinist ruling classes of Sri Lanka has a long history that goes back many centuries. The genocidal murder of Tamils in the first five months of 2009 in the last phase of the war was one of the most extensive and brutal phases of this national oppression. In the last days of the war alone, more than 40,000 Tamils – including combatants and non-combatants – were slaughtered by the marauding Sri Lankan army and air force. As the 'international community' watched in silence, cluster bombs and chemical weapons were unleashed on the entire population. Houses, schools, hospitals, ambulances, civilian shelters, and even No Fire Zones were bombed with impunity. By the time the war was declared over, almost the entire Tamil population of the north and east was uprooted, their lives and property was destroyed, and were forcefully confined in concentration camps which the Sri Lankan state calls 'refugee camps'. Even conservative estimates put the number of displaced people to be above 3.5 lakhs. A large part of them are still not allowed to return to their villages, most of which have been ravaged and ruined beyond recognition. Eelam has been transformed into a mammoth prison-house by the occupation army of the Sri Lankan state. Here any form of dissent and articulation of political demand is strictly prohibited. The aim is to enslave the entire nation, and to kill the very hope of a free homeland. By forcing them into utter misery, the Sri Lankan state expects the Eelam Tamils to give up their aspiration for liberation, to abandon their dream of Eelam as a mere illusion, and to accept the present condition as their immutable fate.

Living under the shadow of fascist repression, experiencing the terror unleashed by the Sri Lankan state, and deeply aware of the historic oppression of their nation, it is the Eelam Tamils more than anyone else who seek the punishment of the perpetrators – the Sri Lankan ruling classes and its mercenary army. They deserve the severest of reprisal and punishment for their crimes. The question however is, what should they be punished for? For 'crimes against humanity', 'war crimes', 'international crimes', 'violation of human rights', flouting the rules of 'Geneva Convention', etc.? Or, for trying to wipe out a whole nation fighting for their inalienable right to self-determination and national liberation? Here lies the difference between the perspective of the peoples' movements and that of the International Human Rights industry/NGOs promoted by the imperialist camp. It is in the name of humanism, humanitarian intervention, and the so-called crimes against humanity that imperialism and its faithful lackeys such as the comprador ruling classes of Sri Lanka commit national oppression. Not for nothing that the Sri Lankan state called its war on Eelam a 'humanitarian war to liberate the people of the Northern Province'. This is how the warmongers sell their wars, and the international weapons industry, its wares. This is the language in which the 'internationally recognised bodies' like the United Nations (UN), NATO and the European Union wages war on peoples' movements and organisations. No wonder the imperialist countries and their 'recognised legal bodies' like UN spends millions of dollars every year to promote the discourse of 'human rights' or 'crimes against humanity' by funding thousands of human rights organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations. In the 'conflict zones' they protect the interest of the forces of oppression by accusing and persecuting the oppressed people, their leaders and their organisations, who dare to rise up against imperialism and its lackeys, while silently or vocally approving the acts of the oppressors. In the name of 'conflict resolution', they seek to take away the oppressed peoples' right to fight back.

Any talk of 'humanity' and 'humanism' in a world divided into oppressor and oppressed classes, or oppressor and oppressed nations, is nothing but a sham. It is not in the name of 'humanism' that oppressed nations demand the right to self-determination. It is not in the name of 'human rights' that oppressed people seek liberation. The right of every oppressed nation to self-determination including secession from the oppressor nation is a political right. It is a genuine collective right of a nation or a people, which even the UN was forced to recognise under pressure from the tidal wave of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist liberation struggles in the twentieth century. It is this inalienable political and collective right that the Eelam Tamils and their organisation Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fought for almost four decades without compromise. In the path of liberation they unflinchingly suffered, but have not surrendered. Even today, after undergoing such extreme forms of repression and near extinction, they have not given up the aspiration for liberation. Therefore, when some sections who claim to represent the Eelam Tamils or to be in solidarity with them talk of 'war crimes', 'crimes against humanity' or 'human rights violations' in Sri Lanka without even acknowledging the right of a separate, sovereign and independent Tamil Eelam, stands accused of not only betraying this heroic struggle, but also of colluding with imperialism and its trusted

executioners, the Sri Lankan and Indian ruling classes. They would do well to pay heed to the students of Jaffna University, who while remembering the martyrs of Eelam War this week, warned that it is the Eelam people alone that have the right to decide upon their destiny, and not those who compromise with the peoples' aspirations in the name of tactics.

The Sri Lankan ruling classes responsible for centuries of oppression of the Tamil national minority must be punished so that the people of Eelam can win their freedom. But this punishment can only be in the form of overthrowing the repressive rule of the Sri Lankan state and through the liberation of Eelam, not by 'demanding punishment' for this or that member of the ruling classes. Let us not forget that the Rajapaksas – Mahinda, Basil, Gotabaya, or Sarath Fonseka etc. are mere instruments of class rule and national oppression – they are the puppets of imperialism. To howl for the punishment of such puppets without opposing Eelam's continued occupation by the Sri Lankan state and its plunder by the imperialists is nothing but to legitimize this oppression and to backstab the Eelam liberation movement. Only the wolves in sheep's skin are capable of such opportunism. The struggling people everywhere – including the Eelam Tamils – have seen too many of these chameleons to be fooled by their pretensions.

Who then will punish the ruling classes of Sri Lanka and bring them to justice, after all? Will it be United Nations, International Criminal Court, United States of America, India, the Sri Lankan state itself? Or the oppressed people of Tamil Eelam and Sri Lanka? Anyone who trusts the collective strength of oppressed people and believes in their unwavering determination to struggle against injustice knows the answer. However, those who are in the payroll of imperialism or benefits from oppression and status-quo, call upon the people to repose faith in their masters to 'deliver justice'. This is the characteristic role of the imperialist-funded human rights industry and the NGO racket. What is the track record of imperialist agencies like the United Nations or the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 'punishing' despotic and authoritarian rulers complicit in mass murders? The worldwide operations of ICC, for example, are run by a consortium of international NGOs called 'Coalition for the International Criminal Court' which has over 2,500 NGO members in 150 different countries, most of which are directly funded by the imperialists. No surprise that ICC has prosecuted ruling-class members of six countries for 'crimes against humanity', all of which are from African countries. The latest target against whom ICC prosecution has begun is Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, his gravest crime being the opposition to imperialist intervention and the US-led war. As per the official rhetoric, however, he is to be tried for 'war crimes' and 'crimes against humanity'! On the other hand, the biggest criminals in the world – George Bush Junior and Senior, Barack Obama, Tony Blair etc. are roaming free, some even managing to get Nobel 'Peace Prizes'! Therefore, at a meeting of 30 African ICC member states in June 2009, several African countries called on African ICC members to withdraw from the Court in protest against the Court's targeting of only Africa. The Commissioner of African Union, Ramtane Lamamra, said that the Prosecutor of the ICC was applying "a double standard in pursuing cases against some leaders while ignoring others". Knowing all this, can anyone be so naïve to be ignorant of the politics of 'war crimes', 'crimes against humanity', and the 'justice' system of "internationally recognised legal bodies"?

Is the real character and purpose of the UN any different? History proves that this 'recognised legal body' too has been a 'powerful tool' and a 'strategic weapon' in the hands of the imperialist powers and their surrogate regimes the world over. Just five years after its establishment, the UN – brainchild of US president Roosevelt – fought in favour of South Korea against Peoples' Republic of Korea and revolutionary China under Mao in the Korean War (1950-53). From its inception till now the UN and its legal wing, the so-called International Court of Justice, has worked untiringly for establishing the New World Order under US imperialism. Its role during the 'Cold War' and thereafter needs no elaboration. In light of this dark history, to welcome the UN to be the arbiter of 'international crime' and 'world peace' is to invite imperialist intervention, to strengthen the forces of oppression and to deny any possibility of justice. Has the Libyan 'rebels' who invited UN bombardment in the name of 'ousting Gaddafi' and 'liberating' Libya opened doors for peace, justice and democracy? The people of Libya know that they are the lackeys of imperialism, no matter how much they try to convince the world about the 'strategic' need of using the UN-led war in Libya. For the Libyan people, the so-called rebels are nothing but imperialist collaborators and traitors.

The recent UN Expert Panel's report on Sri Lanka exposes its real character to those who care to see. The so-called 'major limitations' of the UN report are nothing but the very basis of the report. Like any other imperialist agent, it does not recognise the right of Eelam Tamils for a separate and free homeland, instead offering a humiliating 'common homeland'. It falsely accuses LTTE and its leadership, the force spearheading the decades-old liberation struggle, of using Eelam Tamils as 'human shields' and of even 'point blank shooting of civilians'! In fact, while the UN Expert Panel finds five allegations of 'potential serious violations' against the Sri Lankan state 'credible', it held the LTTE guilty of six such 'potential serious violations', including the killing of its own people for whose defense and liberation it heroically fought for three decades! By accepting, welcoming and propagating the UN and its report, one tacitly accepts that the leaders and cadres of LTTE were also criminals, an opinion which is alien to the people of Tamil Eelam. The oppressed people of Tamil Eelam will never accept such a conclusion against the very organisation which they built and sustained with their blood and sweat. Nor would the LTTE or its leadership would accept such a verdict, no matter how much the report is 'critical' of the Sri Lankan genocidal state.

Sri Lanka's ruling classes too have rejected the report, but for entirely different reasons. They know very well that the report and the threat of 'prosecution' in international courts will be used as a tool by the Western imperialist countries to wrest economic benefits, and hence is this rejection. Apart from outright imperialists, only those turncoats who see opportunities in the decimation of LTTE and the plight of the Tamils in Eelam can talk of 'using the report as a strategic weapon' in favour of Eelam Tamil and their political aspiration, after slyly declaring that "considering that the Lankan government claims that all the leaders of the Eelam movement have been eliminated, it can be presumed that the report shall apply only to those in state machinery who were responsible for war crimes"! We must thank them for exonerating the martyred sons and daughters of Eelam from being prosecuted for 'war crimes'! But we have no right to anticipate whether the oppressed people of Tamil Eelam will be so merciful and benevolent as to exonerate the renegades for their crime of betraying the ongoing Eelam liberation struggle at one of its most critical junctures. Long live the struggle for free and independent Tamil Eelam!