

22 January 2011

Marion Pedersen
Chairman
Foreign Affairs Committee

Cc:Malou Aamund
Vice-Chairman
Foreign Affairs Committee

Dear Marion Pedersen

[Minority Rights Group: Report on Rising ethnic nationalism in Sri Lanka](#)

Please share this with all the members of the Committee.

We Women for Justice and Peace wish to bring the following to your attention:

<http://www.minorityrights.org/10463/press-releases/rising-ethnic-nationalism-in-sri-lanka-targets-minorities-for-abuse-new-report.html>

Rising ethnic nationalism in Sri Lanka targets minorities for abuse – new report, 19 January 2011:

Human rights violations in Sri Lanka continue unabated against ethnic Tamils and Muslims who fear an increasingly nationalist government, a new report by Minority Rights Group International says.

Nearly two years after the end of the war, minorities face daily repression and marginalisation in politics and development policies, particularly in the country's north and east, documents the report.

The report titled 'No war, no peace: the denial of minority rights and justice in Sri Lanka' includes groundbreaking first-hand research from the north and east of the country, including areas that international and national media and NGOs have limited access to.

'Despite the end of the war, many Tamil and Muslim minorities in Sri Lanka continue to live in fear, ' says Mark Lattimer, Executive Director of MRG.

The report quotes minority political leaders and activists who express serious fear of a state based on Sinhala hegemony. It documents cases of land in traditional Tamil and Muslim areas being seized by military and civilian authorities and used for the construction of everything from military

encampments and a power plant to hotels and leisure facilities. The report also expresses concerns by minority activists at the sudden proliferation of Buddhist temples and religious symbols in Tamil and Muslim areas, which they argue is politically sponsored.

In 2009 the Sri Lankan government declared that the country's 30 year conflict was over after it successfully defeated the Tamil Tiger rebels who had been fighting for a separate homeland for ethnic Tamils. In the immediate aftermath of the war the country faced a huge humanitarian crisis with more than 250,000 people displaced and interned in camps for months.

The report says that while many of those displaced in the last stages of fighting have been moved out of the camps, the resettlement process has not taken place according to international standards. It also stresses the need for the government to provide for the return and resettlement of over 200,000 'old displaced', who lost their homes in earlier stages of fighting. This includes a substantial number of Muslims who were forcibly displaced by the Tigers from the north in 1990.

'The situation in the resettlement areas in the north and east is very worrying, particularly as international and national media and NGOs have restricted access. There is a high level of militarisation and state control over freedom of movement and association, with local women vulnerable to sexual abuse and harassment,' says Lattimer.

The report argues that the government is doing little to resolve some of the original minority grievances that led to the conflict, such as violations of physical integrity including torture and enforced disappearances, lack of political autonomy and denial of language rights.

'The government has made little mention of greater political autonomy for minorities which has always been a key demand of Tamils and Muslims. In fact, the government is now proposing legislation to change the electoral system in a way that threatens to decrease their political representation,' Lattimer adds.

The report makes a series of recommendations to the Sri Lankan government including asking for a published policy to address minority rights issues, the resumption of all-party negotiations aimed at reaching an agreement on political representation and governance for minorities, and the development of an impartial and credible mechanism for justice and reconciliation in the country.

'We urge the Sri Lankan government not to lose the opportunity to bring in a lasting peace that can be enjoyed by all communities in Sri Lanka. Justice,

reconciliation and human rights protection are essential for peace to become a reality for all,' Lattimer says.

What is given in the report go to show that many of the Articles in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights have been violated. The evidence given to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission within the last 8/9 months by retired, conscientious Sinhalese of high profile and religious clergy go to show how these rights have been violated from the time of independence:

http://transcurrents.com/tc/2010/09/jayanatha_dhanapala_submission.html
Jayantha Dhanapala's oral presentation to LLRC, 2 September 2010:

" The recent history of Presidential Commissions has been a dismal and uninspiring one. We have the Udalgama Commission which was aborted and we have a number of Commission Reports which have not been implemented... I believe that your Commission has been appointed one year too late.... The conflict that has ravaged our country is not only the result of the perversity and the venality of the LTTE and its leader Prabakaran, but also the cumulative effect of bad governance on the part of successive Governments in Sri Lanka. Our inability to manage our own internal affairs has led to foreign intervention but more seriously has led to the taking of arms by a desperate group of our citizens.

I think we need to rectify this bad governance and the first and foremost task before us is to undertake constitutional reform in order to ensure that we have adequate devolution of power. We have already missed several opportunities in the past; we have had an APRC functioning for quite some time but its report is still languishing in obscurity and needs to be presented to the public of Sri Lanka for discussion. We need to have State reform; we need to have rule of law established; we need to ensure non discrimination amongst our citizens; we need to have devolution of power, tolerance of dissent and strengthening of democratic institutions." (Dhanapala is a Sinhalese and was formerly UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament).

Time is running out to save those oppressed for more than six decades.

Ethnic Violence, Development and Human Rights, Netherlands Institute of Human Rights Consultation - Utrecht, 1-3 February 1985: "... there is an immediate need for the creation of an independent group which would have the function of making clear and making widely known the present serious condition of the Tamil people and their genuine demands."

Ethnic Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka - Report of International Commission of Jurists 1981: "The fate of the Tamils in Sri Lanka remains a matter of international concern".

Hope to receive your kind attention.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

P.Selvaratnam

Women for Justice and Peace