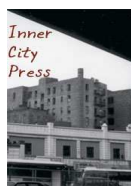


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In Sri Lanka, Marie Colvin Mediating Role in White Flag Killings Recalled as Suspects Surge at UN

By Matthew Russell Lee

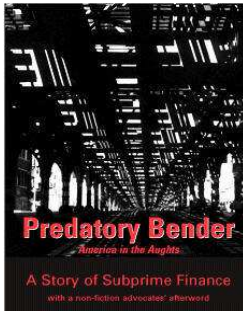
UNITED NATIONS, February 22 -- The death of journalist Marie Colvin in Homs in Syria calls to mind her work in another war zone: Sri Lanka. Based on her reporting in 2001 forward, she became an well meaning humanitarian intermediary in attempted surrenders that ended in the murder of those surrendering.

Also involved were UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's chief of staff Vijay Nambiar, who conveyed assurances of safety but refused to go witness the surrenders, and Shavendra Silva, a Sri Lankan General since made Deputy Permanent Representative and, unless it is stopped, a UN Senior Adviser on Peacekeeping Operations.

Imagine what Ms. Colvin would think. But what will others now do? Consider:

Marie Colvin, a reporter with The Times of London, wrote that on Monday, May 18, 2009, at 5:30 a.m. she personally called Nambiar in Colombo to relay a message she had received from members of the LTTE leadership, who were surrounded in a bunker with 300 loyalists including women and children, that they were ready to give themselves up to Sri Lankan government troops. According to Colvin the leaders wanted “Nambiar to be present to guarantee the Tigers’ safety”.

Nambiar told Colvin that he had been assured by Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa that those who gave up would be safe if they were to “hoist a white flag high”. When Colvin suggested that Nambiar go personally to witness the surrender he told her it



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would not "be necessary" and that "the president's assurances were enough". Hours later the lifeless bodies of dozens of members of the LTTE leadership including the two men who told Colvin they were ready to give up, were put on display

The UN's gloss on the incident is in Paragraphs 170 and 171 of Ban's Panel of Experts report on Sri Lanka, which names Silva as well as the Permanent Representative who may as a "fix" replace him, Palitha Kohona.

Twenty six days ago Inner City Press began asking the UN and then various countries' missions to the UN how they could accept as a UN "Senior Adviser on Peacekeeping Operations" General Shavendra Silva, whose Division 58 is repeatedly named in connection with war crimes in Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's Panel of Experts report on Sri Lanka.

Now, with no credit to the UN Secretariat of Ban Ki-moon, multiple Ambassadors have told Inner City Press that there is a "fix."

"It's very simple," a well placed Permanent Representative told Inner City Press on Tuesday morning in front of the Security Council. "We can do one thing. When we created this [Senior Advisory Group], we insisted the membership must be a PR [Permanent Representative] level. Wherever it isn't will not be welcome this time. Palitha [Kohona] will have to come himself, he cannot nominate anyone. That's their choice."

Inner City Press had predicted this semi-solution weeks ago but Sri Lanka Permanent Representative Palitha Kohona, who also appears by name in the Panel of Experts report in connection surrenderees who were killed, said that he would not switch with Silva.

The outrage of Silva's nomination, which Sri Lanka got through the Asia Group not by election but by getting Nepal and Saudi Arabia to withdraw, has spread to other regional groups and major member states.

Also on Tuesday morning, Inner City Press asked UK Permanent Representative Mark Lyall Grant about l'affaire Silva. He said "there has been a lot of discussion" between the UN Secretariat and others -- he mentioned "the Americans," whose Ambassador Rice told Inner City Press of US concern back on February 17 -- but added that "the Secretariat says they can't do anything."

This position, with which even UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Navi Pillay disagrees, as she told Inner City Press in response to a question after she briefed the General Assembly about Syria on February 13, was reiterated by Ban's spokesman Martin Nesirky at Tuesday's noon briefing.

Inner City Press noted that Ban was in effect disagreeing with Pillay, who wrote to him to say that the same vetting applied to UN

peacekeepers should apply to a Senior Adviser on Peacekeeping Operations. Nesirky said it's up to member states, you are putting words in my mouth and I think I'll leave it at that." [Both Ban and Nesirky have now left town for a week.]



Ban shakes with Silva, Kohona back to camera (c) MRLee

Inner City Press had asked if the Secretariat had any role in the "fix;" Nesikry said "that's a very very long question," the "answer is very short: this is a decision that was taken by the Asia Group member states, it is for the member states to decide."

This stands in contrast to instances when Ban Ki-moon urges the member states on the Security Council to reach consensus and take action, and expresses regret when they do not. Is having an alleged war criminal from Sri Lanka as a UN adviser just not of as much concern to Ban Ki-moon?

Prior to these developments, the Sri Lankan Mission's action was to send a letter of complaint to Inner City Press, sending a copy to Ban's spokesman Martin Nesirky as well as to some in the UN press corps.

Inner City Press in less than 24 hours [published and responded to the letter, citing only some of the many references to Silva's Division 58 in the report.](#)

Now that's updated, and [Silva is blaming his problems on the Press.](#) How about the deeds, of May 2009 and before? Watch this site.

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