

# Are the IDPs' in their arduous trek to their elusive homes to be "finished off" with India's complicity?

[Editorial, Eelam Nation]

President Rajapakse's government claiming to liberate the Tamil people who were caught up in between the clutches of the LTTE, and the atrocities of the Sri Lankan army including the bombings of civilian hospitals by them, called the "humanitarian operation" in the final days of the war, lured more than 300,000 thousand Tamil people from the war affected zone to move into areas controlled by the government. Little did they realise that this "liberation" meant that they were to be confined within razor wires only to experience another other facet of Sri Lankan State terrorism. Far from being free, much to their consternation, they were to experience the worst form of human indignity within these camps euphemistically called welfare villages. The idea was to identify, torture and kill those suspected of LTTE loyalties. In keeping with the former Army Commander Fonseka's statement to a congregation of Buddhist priests in the US that at least 10,000 more of such persons were yet to be identified and killed, many are missing, some poisoned at the very early stages and some paying the supreme price for being the relatives of suspected terrorists. Hundreds have been summarily executed. Numerous women of all ages have been raped and children, killed or taken to be slaves in the homes of army personnel or influential persons in the south with no hope of any freedom.

Around 7000 persons are still in custody most being severely tortured to this day said to be in the process of being rehabilitated. The idea is to weed out the suspected militants and leave the rest to perish being part of the process of "being finished off" reminiscent of the Nazi "final solution". 40,000 civilians are still in the camps still surrounded by barbed wires virtually imprisoned. With no foreign NGOs allowed in and no witnesses, thousands of Tamils are shown to be released to go back home but when they reach their homes they are chased away by the security forces back to the camps from where they went, a drama that depicts their never ending trauma and suffering.

Besides the tremendous physical agony and the painful inconveniences there is also the enormously serious long and short term psychological impact on the IDPS. Dr Daya Somasunderam of the department psychiatry at the University of Jaffna in his well researched scholarly paper on: "Collective trauma in the Vanni- a qualitative inquiry into the mental health of the internally displaced due to the civil war in Sri Lanka" (July 2010), states: "The narratives, drawings, letters and poems as well as data from observations, key informant interviews, extended family and focus group discussions show considerable impact at the family and

community. The family and community relationships, networks, processes and structures are destroyed. There develops collective symptoms of despair, passivity, silence, loss of values and ethical mores, amotivation, dependency on external assistance, but also resilience and post-traumatic growth..... Considering the severity of family and community level adverse effects and implication for resettlement, rehabilitation, and development programmes; interventions for healing of memories, psychosocial regeneration of the family and community structures and processes are essential”....and further in his conclusion : “However, instead of using the historic opportunity for national reconciliation, the repressive ethnocentric approach without dealing with the underlying grievances in the long term will only alienate the minorities once again. Apart from the political implications, the contest of the different discourses at stake and the need of the Vanni IDP trauma for healing; if not social justice, the whole national reconciliation process at least needs some acknowledgement of what happened. If there is no healing of memories, merely a repression, the untreated collective trauma could well turn into resentment and rekindle cycles of violence once again.....” In no way can these observations be dismissed lightly. It is not like the flippant use of terms like “humanitarian operation”, “liberation” etc.

At the beginning of the incarceration immediately after the war and thereafter, the world was told at various media interviews that land mines were being removed as if the people leaving their homes had mined their own houses before they left, being out of their minds, and whereas, while on their way to the camps from all directions no mines had exploded. The story of de mining was a myth to help contractors on both sides to make money and to stall the process of resettlement. Then we were told that the elusive electricity and water services were being connected to their new homes. What is real is that thousands of pre fabricated homes for the Sri Lankan army personnel are being constructed with Chinese aid in the Tamil homeland with its face being transformed to appear to be traditionally Sinhala Buddhist. The Tamil IDPs, if they are lucky, will get the residue of these. If the IDPs are lucky to return to their home environment they will not be able recognise their former habitat completely transformed to look a Sinhala Buddhist village. Those displaced from the Muttur and Sampur areas in the east a few years ago still remain displaced.

In May 2010, in an interview with Al Jazira TV, President Rajapakse, besides his other blatant lies, stated that by the end of the current year all IDPs would be resettled in their own homes. It is becoming increasingly evident that the government can tell all kinds of lies in regard to Tamil affairs and get away with them, an indictment on the Sri Lankan sense of justice and integrity, emanating from the very top. A month later, Suresh Premachandran, an outspoken Tamil parliamentarian, stated at a televised interview that the provision of dwellings to the displaced Tamils both in the North and the east was negligible with little or no

assistance given and absolutely no houses built in the Vanni area and that people including children and the sick were living under trees in some areas. They obviously are not enjoying a prolonged picnic. Premachandran also stated that any progress in regard to resettlement especially in the high security zones in Muttur (east) and Jaffna (north) was at a complete standstill.

New Delhi's claim that the assistance to the Tamil IDPs is being monitored is an absolute lie. The corrupt Indian polity with their hypocrisy and ruthlessness, intensified by a centre with a weak backbone, loving the Sri Lankan Tamils to death have come forward to provide housing and their maintenance to tens of thousands of displaced Tamils in the north and the east after having helped the Sri Lankan State to massacre tens of thousands of Tamil civilians during the first five months of 2010.

With Chinese influence or rather aggression in the Indian ocean increasing, India not to lose any more time and favour, though far too late, has been desperate to build a buffer against any further Chinese advance and find the helpless Tamils a convenient friend and scapegoat. The other motivation is the appeasement of the Tamil Nadu government so that they could in turn keep their people happy while keeping the corrupt leadership in power. The Tamil people should not be bamboozled or deceived any more by Indian machinations. We recommend that they should, however, accept any favour that comes their way but should not be swayed by feelings of sentiment. The Sri Lankan government, on the other hand, claiming that the Tamils are their own citizens, seem to think that the Indians are obligated to help the Tamils because of their cultural affinity and would try to milk every cent out of them. Given the corruption on both sides there is also a lot of money to be made in this game. Incidentally, the magnitude of Indian corruption could show its face at the conduct and the success of the Commonwealth games in Delhi which the rest of the world watch with trepidation. It would be recalled that the Indian Foreign Secretary who while being the Indian Ambassador in Sri Lanka formerly was flirting with Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism, has now developed a surprisingly inordinate love for the Tamils.

To digress a little, for the Chinese, with their increasing influence and power in the region, their interest in Sri Lanka is strategic, economic and hegemonic diplomacy. For them the Sinhalese and the Tamils are faceless entities as long as their interests are satisfied. In Myanmar, the military junta is able to sustain themselves because of Chinese assistance and in return China's strategic interests are fulfilled, while democracy and Aung San Suu Kyi despite the overwhelming landslide in their favour can wait for another day, and in Sri Lanka by no stretch of imagination is there any democracy.

The question that has arisen in many Tamil circles is whether the Tamil people should show their backs to the Indians and turn to support the Chinese as the new strategy, with their children learning Chinese (Mandarin) developing to be a world language) to be taught in schools. Furthermore, the plague of Brahminism will no longer haunt the Tamils. They should be pragmatic in turning to the winning side that will bring them more benefits, not wasting their time with India. This was also the view that the late N. Shanmugasundaram, a former leader of the Ceylon Communist Party (Peking Wing) and intellectual, advocated in the 1960s and the 1970s as a remedy for the redress of Tamil grievances.

If the Tamils now languishing are to be continued to be used as pawns in the diplomatic games between India and Sri Lanka, it has to be presumed, that they are being considered for a slow and painful final solution to be “finished off” with Indian complicity as was done in their massacre between January and May 2010.