



Feature

2ND LEAD

## Genocide needs investigation but separation contextually unwise: Alan Keenan

[TamilNet, Tuesday, 09 October 2012, 21:43 GMT]

**Calls for investigation on what has happened and is happening now in Sri Lanka from genocide angle need to be looked into, said ICG's Sri Lanka Project Director, Dr Alan Keenan, in an interview to TamilNet on Friday. "If you want to call it an investigation, it needs to be looked into. I am fully supportive of it being looked into," he said 3 years after the war and the Dublin Tribunal calling for such an investigation in Jan 2010. The ICG had earlier targeted the diaspora for the genocide argument that it aims achieving Tamil Eelam. To questions on ICG negating independence to Tamils, while supporting it for others, he said that independence [even] as an ultimate goal is unwise to the current context of Tamils, while "balance of merits" favours it in other contexts. When pressed to explain the contextual difference, he hinted at the chance of further violence coming from the Sinhalese.**



Alan Keenan

Alan Keenan was interviewed in London, when he came for the launch of the book, "Still Counting the Dead" by Frances Harrison, on Friday.

He was one of the three panel discussants at the book launch, along with Norway's Erik Solheim, the failed peace facilitator and Yasmin Sooka, member of the UNSG panel that brought out a report on the war in the island.

A striking development in the stand of Keenan, noticeable in the interview, was his repeated stress on including "what is happening now" in Sri Lanka for the genocide investigation.

Alan Keenan's interview brought out in full, is followed by observations on the interview by TamilNet political commentator in Colombo, added separately after the interview transcription.

Alan Keenan, 05 October 2012 by [TamilNet](#)

### Full transcription of the interview of Alan Keenan by TamilNet:

**TamilNet:** You had said that the argument of genocide is being put forth by sections of the diaspora with the political objective of achieving a separate state of Tamil Eelam.

**Dr Keenan:** I meant, for some people that is one of the reasons that the argument appeals. It doesn't mean that this is the only reason and it doesn't mean that there isn't a case to be made that genocide has happened or is under way. I think that is a possibility, it needs to be explored by people who put together the facts and compare it to the legal issues involved and make some kind of chronological assessment.

**TamilNet:** So you agree that an investigation needs to happen to show whether it was genocide or not?

**Keenan:** An investigation. I think it would be a useful issue to look into in a serious way with legal scholars and people who are well informed of the facts of what has happened in Sri Lanka and is happening now. If you want to call it an investigation... it needs to be looked into. I am fully supportive of it being looked into.

**TamilNet:** The Permanent People's Tribunal report in 2010 said that charges of genocide need to be investigated. Isn't that good enough?

**Keenan:** What do you mean by isn't that good enough?

**TamilNet:** Isn't it good enough as a point of reference that charges that genocide happened to the Tamils need to be investigated by an independent commission?

**Keenan:** I would think that would there ever to be, as I hope there will be, an independent investigation into the incidents leading up to the end of the war, and preferably also post-war, the question of genocide should be included among those issues.

**TamilNet:** About the political aspect of the entire question. There is a problem that whatever happened to the Tamils is being reduced to an issue of let's say, just war crimes or humanitarian concerns, while obfuscating the larger political demands that the struggle of the Tamils put across. ICG, for instance, does not recognize the right of the Tamil people to have a sovereign state of their own. But you have recognized the right to form sovereign nation-states in some other conflicts. Why this difference and is there some other standard by which you are measuring this conflict?

**Keenan:** I don't think that the Crisis Group has ever rejected the right of the Tamil people to rule themselves in a sovereign fashion. I think what we have argued, in the current political context, that the demand for separation is not a wise one. Having that as the agenda, as the ultimate goal, for the rights of Tamils, as the ultimate expression of how Tamil rights, collective rights and individual rights should be protected, is not a wise one in the current context. That is all we have said as far as I understand. What I believe we have said in other contexts, which are not ones that I have worked on, I don't write reports about other parts of the world, is that in those contexts, given the balance of political forces internationally and internally, the risks and benefits of declaring an independent state in a given situation. In some of those other situations, on the balance of merits, it was the right thing to do. In Sri Lanka, our judgment is that's not right way to go. But it is always a contextual judgement. And it doesn't deny that there is a certain right of self-determination to find in a particular way. That there is an argument to be made for that and it is quite a strong argument.

**TamilNet:** You told that the context is not right. Why do you say that the context is not right? If not now, then when? After whatever happened in May (2009) and the after all the routinization of abuses which is happening...

**Keenan:** This is always a difficult judgement to make. I am not Tamil. I don't live in Sri Lanka. But from an as dispassionate and as compassionate perspective as I can come to, the costs of pursuing a separate state to the Tamil people, given the lack of international support and given the virulent opposition that it would provoke among the Sinhalese, it would not be a wise thing. The costs, in terms of death, physical destruction, to the Tamil people themselves is not worth it especially given that the chances of succeeding are very small. That's what I mean 'it's contextual'. If it was a different political context, if there was a larger percentage of the Sinhala population which was potentially amenable or open to that, if they were more sympathetic, if the political dynamics among Sinhala dominated parties was more open, then that might well be something that could be pursued. But in the current context, it is a recipe for further violence and further conflagration that will just add up more dead bodies to the already enormous pile of dead bodies that Sri Lanka, particularly Tamils have suffered the last 30-40 years.

**TamilNet:** Do you think Tamils are entitled to Remedial Sovereignty?

**Keenan:** Remedial Sovereignty? I don't know what that means.

**TamilNet:** This is a concept which is gaining ground in international jurisprudence that

any nation or a group of people facing systemic persecution under a current political system have a right to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in order to protect their community from extinction in whole or in part. Do you think Tamils are entitled to this?

**Keenan:** I'll have to think more about the question. I am not going to give you an off-the-cuff answer. I am sorry.

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### **Observations on the interview by TamilNet political commentator in Colombo:**

Two weeks ago, Keenan came out with a piece of writing, "Sri Lanka: Time for action, not action plans."

While his piece of writing was viewed by many as counting trees for action and deliberately deviating from the sight of the wood, Sinhala media in Colombo reacted strongly, providing excuses for the ICG-like, to cite at the Sinhala attitude to negate justice to Eezham Tamils and to hide the fact, whose 'balance of merits' actually denies justice.

Any one determined in committing genocide would not provide the kind of amicable 'context' envisaged in the interview by Keenan to facilitate independence to victims.

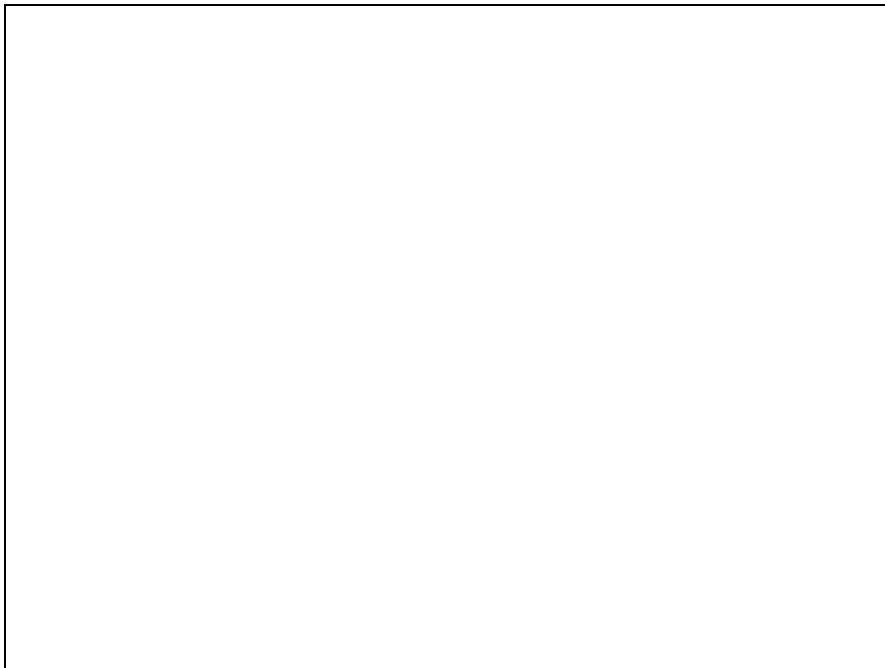
The ICG was actively articulating during the antecedents as well as the course of the genocidal war. It continues its articulation in the structural genocide aftermath.

Dr Keenan, in lines with the stand of the US Asst. Secretary of State, Mr Robert Blake and the failed Norwegian peace facilitator, Mr Erik Solheim, is well known in the Tamil circles for his project of campaigning among potential Tamil activists, dissuading them from uttering the word genocide or claiming independence.

Keenan in the interview on Friday said that he didn't think that the ICG had ever rejected the right of the Tamil people to rule themselves in a sovereign fashion, but all what the ICG had said is that the demand for separation is not a wise one in the current context.

This is blatant denial of the detrimental role the ICG played by internationally negating any righteousness in the independence demand of Eezham Tamils.

For the edification of Keenan and enlightenment of the readership, the video evidence added herewith would show how the CEO of the ICG, Louise Arbour, was negating the sovereignty and the demand for independence of Eezham Tamils in September 2010.



Why after more than three years of the war, and after allowing structural genocide to set in, Keenan now says the genocide case could be looked into, without compromising on his fundamental of negating independence and dodging a question on remedial sovereignty rights of a people?

Has a situation come where they could now confidently tell, 'yes, there may be genocide, but accept it, try to survive through it, and nothing could be done about it now'?

But, sections of Eezham Tamil activists think that there is a change in the ICG perception. This is exactly what Keenan aims at, to insinuate into sections with which the ICG has no credibility and to engage them in the brainwashing.

A perusal of his interview would show that the genocide investigation he envisages is a passive one, as though somebody else has to undertake it and prove it through a lengthy legal process.

"It needs to be explored by people who put together the facts and compare it to the legal issues involved and make some kind of chronological assessment," Keenan said.

The tactic is to buy more and more time.

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TamilNet on Sunday has reproduced some of the recent email communications it had with its columnist in the Asia Pacific who passed away last week, explaining the course of affairs of the International Community of Establishments (ICE) and the ICG:

"We need to open our eyes and see the collusion games being played by DFAT, ICG and the like as tools of the International Community of Establishments (ICE)," the columnist said.

"Up to the CFA it was GoSL that was buying the time, but after that, it was the IC that is buying the time," he wrote.

On the current world situation, the columnist said: "Humanity is facing a leadership crisis. The dark clouds of deteriorating environment, the deepening world economic crisis, and the successful pre-emption of the completion of national liberation by the globalised establishments currently transforming under the influence of intelligence agencies as an insurance against the establishment of a socialist world order- All indicate a very favourable objective conditions for a revolutionary change."

"But the 99% having been submerged under ideology of individualism and egoism, being influenced and divided by the uneven distribution of the bribe/spoils of war & oppression, are suffering from a leadership crisis."

"History will not forgive us if we engage in the propagation of divisive stories promoted by the oppressor," the columnist cautioned.

If justice is not coming from the 'context' of the Establishments of today, Eezham Tamils have no option other than reaching out to the likeminded masses of the world for mobilized action.

The Asia Pacific columnist was suggesting a Plan B of canvassing International public opinion, as he was sure of the Plan A of approaching India or the West becoming useful only in proving that they would not support the cause of Eezham Tamils.

The diaspora is fully capable of Plan B, he said.

"A very effective Plan B may even make Plan A workable, if the numbers behind Plan B are large enough. Mobilising TN [Tamil Nadu] population is very important," the columnist said in an email in July this year.

An orchestrated campaign is currently unleashed specifically against TamilNet, by

certain Establishments, their agenda-workers, diplomatic missions, and by a group of gullible followers or '1% aspirants' among Eezham Tamils, who believe that the stand of TamilNet is spoiling the 'grand designs and strategies' they have for the island.

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