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On Sri Lanka, ICP Asks of UN Working For Merely National Probe

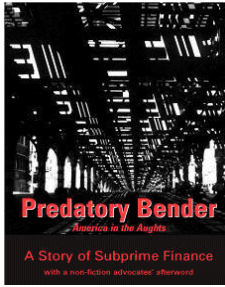
By Matthew Russell Lee

UNITED NATIONS, July 30 -- The UN delayed the war crime report on Sri Lanka until September. Now UN documents leaked to [Channel 4](#) indicate that the UN is trying to undercut that report and support a merely national investigation, or cover-up. On July 30, Inner City Press asked UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric, [video here](#), [UN transcript here](#):

Inner City Press: this has to do with the UN's engagement on the issue of Sri Lanka. There's been a... Channel 4 has published what they say is a leaked UN document in which it appears that the UN is preparing to give its blessing to an entirely national accountability mechanism that would involve the National Provincial... according to the document, Northern Provincial Council, Tamil, which they deny that they ever saw it. They say it's an outrage and would be a... a... kind of selling out the Human Rights Council and any international mechanism. I wanted to know, since I saw the pictures of Mr. [Jeffrey] Feltman meeting with that group and that there was a lot of discussions of documents going back and forth, is the document referred to by Channel 4 a document that Mr. Feltman had?

Spokesman: Let me see... I don't have any language on that with me here.

Five hours later, no answer from Dujarric - who had, it emerged, provided [notice of Ban Ki-moon's visit to the US White House only to the same UN Censorship Alliance president](#), Giampaoli Pioli, who unilaterally granted a UN screening of "Lies Agreed To" after [renting one of his apartments to Sri Lanka's Palitha Kohona](#). This is today's UN.



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On Sri Lanka, After UN Is Exposed Pushing for National Pr...



Back on June 24, Inner City Press [asked UN Spokesman Dujarric](#):

Inner City Press: Sri Lanka. I wanted to get your comment on this, given the Secretary-General's historic involvement. It's been now confirmed by the Foreign Minister there that the promised internal domestic human rights investigation into crimes in the final stages of the conflict is now not going to take place until September, and now this is being laid off on elections, due to the failure to dissolve parliament. So, I guess, given that the Secretary-General, it seems, kind of supported the delay, what's the response?

Spokesman Dujarric: I don't have any language on that, but I will harvest some for you.

But the language "harvested" did not address the delay. Dujarric's deputy Farhan Haq [on June 25 returned with this answer](#) to Inner City Press:

"We were also asked earlier about accountability in Sri Lanka. I can say that the new Government in Sri Lanka has passed a constitutional amendment which, if implemented appropriately, brings renewed hope for democracy and the rule of law. In this regard, it is important that the Government consults broadly with all political parties, civil society, and above all victims and their families, to ensure full national support and ownership of these processes.

"The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights remains engaged in discussions with the Sri Lankan authorities on the need for transparent and inclusive processes to develop credible mechanisms for accountability and reconciliation."

So delaying or even dispensing with the promised domestic war crimes investigation is now OK with Ban's UN? We'll have more on this.

Back in May, with the UN's already long delayed report into war crimes in Sri Lanka postponed until at least September, now one of those most responsible for the crimes in 2009, [Jagath Dias](#) of the 57th Division, was named Chief of Staff of the Army.

One wondered if those recently praising the Sri Lankan government, from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to US Secretary of State John Kerry during his visit two weeks ago will say anything about this.

On May 18, Inner City Press asked Ban's deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq if Ban had any comment on Dias, named in Ban's own report on Sri Lanka, getting this post.

Haq said to wait and see what the Human Rights Council says -- the Human Rights Council which already delayed release of their report.

[Video here.](#)

On Sri Lanka, ICP Asks UN If Any Ban Comment on Jagath...



Dias was [ejected from Germany and Switzerland](#), as a Sri Lankan diplomat, for his past. At the UN, equally problematic military figure [Shavendra Silva at a screening of the Rajapaksa government's war crimes denial film "Lies Agreed To"](#) chided Inner City Press for attribution to him the acts of Dias' 57th Regiment.

Now Silva is in War College in India and Dias is Army chief of staff. Will anything be said by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid, now embroiled in a scandal about OHCHR's seeming cover up for child rapes by French troops in the Central African Republic, and letting French UN Peacekeepin chief Herve Ladsous try to fire the OHCHR whistleblower? What has changed?

Inside the UN in September 2011 the government's "Lies Agreed To" -- but NOT "No Fire Zone" -- was screened. When Inner City Press reported on the screening, then on the background fact that the person who agreed to the screening, Giampaolo Pioli, had previously been the landlord of Palitha Kohona, who as [Sri Lanka's Ambassador requested the screen in the UN hosted by the United Nations Correspondents Association](#), then and now headed by Pioli, demands for censorship and expulsion began.

Unhappy with Inner City Press reporting, Pioli demanded that the story come down.

When Inner City Press instead of censorship offered amplifications and to publish a letter to the editor of any length, Pioli rejected it and pushed

to get Inner City Press thrown out. After [some of this was reported](#) in the media in Sri Lanka, and Inner City Press informed Pioli of this and of death threats it had received, Pioli refused to suspend his campaign, instead trying to use the threats as leverage to get Inner City Press to publish a "box," that he would dictate, on the front of its website.

In [this audio clip](#), after Inner City Press informed Pioli and other UNCA Executive Committee members that their kangaroo court proceeding had given rise to death threats, Pioli demands a "box of apology... as long as it is Inner City Press."

This is what UNCA became, the UN's Censorship Alliance, and what it is, and functions as. Inner City Press when its elected term on the UNCA Executive Committee ended quit the group and co-founded the new Free UN Coalition for Access, now defending the rights of journalists from Somaliland to [Bangladesh](#) and beyond. We will have more on this.



*Pioli & Ban Ki-moon, Sri Lanka war crimes denial not shown. UN
Photo/Mark Garten*

And it has been on [HuffPost Live, here](#). Watch this site.

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