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United Sri Lanka Association Ranaviru Commemoration Wellington New Zealand 19th May 2015
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Dr. Chula Rajapakse MNZM Spokesperson, United Sri Lanka Association Wellington New Zealand. 19th May 2015

The annual *United Sri Lanka Association* (USLA) Ranaviru commemoration was held at the Lak Madura , Tawa Wellington at 7.30 pm , presided over by USLA president Sadun Kithulagoda with Honorary consul Aruna Abeygoonesekera in attendance. Following the singing of the National Anthem , observing a minutes silence ,the USLA president welcomed and appreciate the attendance of the large gathering present despite being so late on a working day. He vouched that USLA would always honour the Ranaviru on this day. The Hon Consul thanked USLA for carrying on the remembrance and reflected on the significance of the day and the practice. The meeting also connected by phone to Sri Lanka for a message from Army spokeperson.

The USLA spokesperson Dr Chula Rajapakse said that the ANZAC commemoration held recently in Welington even one hundred years after the event, drove home to him the importance of Sri Lanka and Sri Lankans continuing to gratefully remember the sacrifices of the Ranaviru.

The following is the full text of his address:

I too would like to join today in remembering the victims of three decades of tiger terror in Sri Lanka , victims from all races and religions. Even more, I would like to remember gratefully the valiant members of the security forces who liberated Sri Lanka and all of us from this terror, some sacrificing life and limb to deliver this liberation and also remember those who gave leadership to this liberation.

The extreme importance of doing so came home to me strongly when I partook of some of the ANZAC centenary events in Wellington recently and followed others on TV . The Kiwi's were paying grateful homage to the soldiers for their sacrifices even hundred years later, for they feel that without these they would not have the life of peace that they lead today. What wonderful sentiments, even though non partaking of these events would have experienced the horrors that the ANZAC's spared them of , not first hand , not even second hand. Nor would they know first hand or even second hand those ANZACS who made these sacrifices one hundred years ago.

In contrast we, all Sri Lankans have experienced Tiger Terror first hand, know personally who paid the ultimate price in Tiger hands. Many know first hand security force personnel who paid the ultimate price on their behalf. All is what behoves us not to forget them so easily.

Speaking for my self, I remember the pettah bus station bombing in the mid 80's that claimed hundreds of lives, & remember thinking after the event that it was only days earlier we had been at the same place at the same time. Similar sentiments came to me a few years later following a similar bomb this time opposite the Maradana railway station. Then I remember , my cousin describing vividly his injuries from glass splinters as he worked in the nearby BOC building during the Central bank bombing. I recall my school friend and fellow member of Royal College debating society, Neelan Tiruchelvem a moderate Tamil politician, with whom we would be involved in friendly debates on such topics as "Whither Lanka?" or "The Pen is mightier than the Sword" , subjects that would become so relevant to SL only a few decades later. I remember how he became a victim of tiger terror as he

turned into Kinsey road from Rosmead place where he lived and on his way to work.

I also remebber how our NZ prime minister John key on his return from the CHOGM in Colombo in Nov'13, in the Sunday Q & A program on NZ national TV, recounted how his security person during his trip to Colombo explained to him how , during the war, he and his wife would not travel in the same bus even though going top the same destination, lest one Tiger bomb robs his children of both their parents. When asked why he was so conciliatory towards Sri Lanka , he indicated that Sri Lanka needed time to work through their problems. Sentiments rthat has endeered him not only to Sri lankan in New Zealand but Sri Lankans world wide.

Thanks to the sacrifices of the valiant members of the security forces, the Ranaviru, today we can go without fear to the Pettah bus station or the Maradana railway station without fear of a tiger blast. My cousin can go to BoC without a similar fear . Neelan 's family too can turn into Kinsey rd fro Rosmead place without fear of a tiger bomb . So can John Key 's security person travel with his wife in the same bus when going to the same destination without fearing a tiger bomb.

However ladies and gentlemen, the dignity and sanctity of the security personell's sacrifices to achieve this liberation from tiger terror, is being tarnished by allegations that these were achieved at the cost of human rights violation, at the cost of an unacceptably high civilian casualty rate ranging from 40,000 to 100,000. These allegations originated from Tiger diaspora virtually days after the end of the war. In my submission to UNHCR , which many of you co signed and is now available on the USLA website, I explain why these allegations are illogical, have no credibility and are counter productive.

However, despite these, powerful nations have chosen to use these allegation as a stick to beat Sri Lanka, which they did for several years every March and Septemeber at the UNHCR in Geneva, to further their geopolitical interests at the cost of Sri Lanka's. These beatings culminated in the UNHCR resolution of March 2014 requesting UNHCR to inquire into these allegations. The appointment of Dame Sylvia Cartwright former NZ governor general as adviser to this inquiry among others, gave me some confidence of a fair hearing at this inquiry, which prompted me to respond to their call for submission.

Sadly , subsequent events have dented this confidence very badly. When I phoned Geneva a few days after emailing my submission, not having had an acknowledgement, I had a response from the other end in Geneva, who informed me in easily recognisable Tamil accent that it was not the office practice to acknowledge submissions. Surprised at the response , I requested his name which too he refused to divulge. However , I did receive an email acknowledgement eventually. But the whole experience has left me wondering , what fair ness SL could expect from the openly anti Sri Lankan Navi Pillai leading the UNHCR and the office she would have staffed and stuffed with the like minded.

Given the importance of NZ in the UN now as a member of the security council, whose election SL supported, I plan convey my concern to the PM Key & foreign minister Murray McCully. I was hoping for the presence of our own National list MP Chris Bishop to be with us today to personally convey our misgiings . Unfortunately, parliamentary sittings now on prevented this. I hope the Prime Minister & Foreign Minister would respond appropriately and convey our misgivings to the UN.

Ladies & gentlemen once again I wish to gratefully remember the security forces that liberated Sri Lanka from three decades of Tiger Terror , and those who gave the security forces the leadership to do so.

Than you

Dr. Chula Rajapakse MNZM

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