

Tamil nationalists hail government on Sri Lankan civil war victims' Memorial Day

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May 18 marked the seventh anniversary of the end of the Sri Lankan civil war. In memory of thousands of civilians massacred during the last phase of the military onslaught, various events were organised and thousands of relatives and family members gathered to mourn.

The Northern Province Council (NPC) organised the main event in Mullivaikal lagoon, where civilians and the entire leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were massacred. NPC Chief Minister C.V. Wigneswaran led the event. His speech centred on praising the Sri Lankan regime, whose top officials play key roles in carrying out the massacre, and providing a political cover for the pro-imperialist politics of the increasingly discredited Tamil nationalist parties.

Tamil National Alliance (TNA) leader Sampanthan and other leaders like Sumanthiran and Mavai Senathirajah refrained from making any statements or participating in the Mullivaikal event.

Wigneswaran began his speech praising Sri Lanka's "good governance" regime, installed last year in a US-led regime change operation, for allowing the memorial event to be held. Unlike previous governments, he said, the current one, "also elected by us" does not prohibit Tamils "to express our sadness."

The rest of his eight-minute speech promoted anti-Sinhala chauvinism and illusions that the TNA and other Tamil nationalist groupings still want an international inquiry into the war crimes. He said that "this government, Sinhala people, and even some among us intend to sacrifice the war crimes inquiry for national reconciliation. Some of the governments supported the war crimes inquiry initially now ask us to forget such inquiry in exchange to federal solution. We can't accept this."

In concluding, he appealed to the imperialist powers,

and the Sirisena government that war crimes inquiry must be held. "Our good governance government, international governments and United Nations Human Rights Commission must give us justice," he said.

Wigneswaran's comments simply echo the propaganda of the Colombo regime and its US backers, who exploited opposition to the massacres at the end of the civil war as part of their campaign to oust the previous president, Mahinda Rajapaksa. This ouster was not, however, motivated by concern for the victims of the civil war, but Washington's concern at Rajapaksa's pro-Chinese geostrategic orientation. Its goal was to turn Sri Lanka into a staging post of the US "pivot to Asia" and the preparations for war with China.

Once it ousted Rajapaksa and installed a US-backed regime in Colombo, Washington abandoned the issue of the war crimes committed during the civil war.

As long as Rajapaksa was in power, Washington insisted on an international inquiry. After the regime change operation, it passed a UN resolution in September 2015 calling for a "local mechanism," controlled by the Sri Lankan government itself, to investigate the war crimes. Since then, nothing has been undertaken even to establish a local court.

Wigneswaran's claims to oppose bargaining away a war crimes inquiry in exchange for greater local powers under the terms of a "federal solution" is a cynical fraud. By promoting the current regime, which is drenched in the blood of the civil war's victims, Wigneswaran and the TNA have made clear they do not intend to investigate the war crimes, but to enjoy the positions and influence they have obtained inside the regime of President Maithiripala Sirisena.

The pro-imperialist Tamil nationalists are an integral part of the government and have no interest in

punishing war criminals. Their political perspective is driven by the sole purpose of working out a deal with the imperialist powers to defend the interests of a tiny Tamil bourgeoisie in the Tamil-dominated northern provinces of Sri Lanka.

Sampanthan's refusal to even issue a formal statement on the massacres underscore that the TNA is in the front lines in helping the government whitewash the war crimes. Leaders of the present government, opposition and military establishment are responsible for the carnage. Sirisena was in charge of the defence ministry during the last two weeks of the war, when most of the crimes were committed.

The TNA won last year's parliamentary elections promising an international war crimes inquiry, the withdrawal of soldiers occupying northern Sri Lanka, and the resettlement of displaced people. These promises were political frauds. None were realized, while the TNA functioned as a tool of the government in implementing its agenda, including IMF austerity measures.

The TNA has also remained silent on a series of arrests and abductions of Tamil civilians. Sampanthan cynically stated in a recent press meeting in Jaffna that he doesn't have the prison keys to release Tamil political prisoners.

The media reported the Sri Lankan government "scrapped" the annual "victory" day celebrations and military parade organised by the Rajapaksa regime, as a "commitment to healing ethnic wounds."

Defence Secretary Karunasena Hettiarachchi said, "We are having a cultural show instead of the military victory parade that was practised in the past six years."

In fact, a military victory parade did proceed. Contrary to Hettiarachchi's statement, the Ministry of Defence web site reports, "The annual War Hero remembrance ceremony was held under the patronage of the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, President Maithripala Sirisena, at the War Hero Cenotaph in Sri Jayewardenepura, Kotte this evening."

The report says Prime Minister Wickramasinghe, Hettiarachchi and former military commander Sarath Fonseka, who led the war in 2009, were among the "distinguished" guests.

Sirisena may have avoided pompously celebrating the "victory day," but none of Sri Lanka's ethnic tensions have been resolved over the last seven years. Military

harassment in the Tamil provinces is reaching the levels that were seen under the previous government. During the remembrance day ceremonies in the North and East, military intelligence personnel intimidated and videotaped the participants. Military intelligence forcibly entered the office of the pro-TNA Tamil daily *Uthayan* and videotaped the staff.

Taylor Dibbert, a Washington-based freelance writer who recently visited the Tamil provinces wrote that the government tolerates certain criticisms, has returned some land to the civilians. He continues, "However, these positive changes pale in comparison to the longstanding problems that permeate daily life in these locations: unresolved disappearances, the military's continued occupation of civilian land, the government's refusal to release Tamil political prisoners, sexual violence, sustained militarization, widespread surveillance, livelihood issues."



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