

## It's Genocide

Ethnic cleansing got wide currency when the Serbs began to physically eliminate Bosnian Muslims and both Serbs and Bosnian Muslims had to suffer war time pain as Germany with the help of NATO and America, in particular, succeeded in dismembering former Yugoslavia to establish its dominance in the region. At that time international outcry against Serbian barbarity that bordered on genocide, was so strong that civilian casualties from NATO bombing were downplayed by the western media. Yugoslavia, a founding member of non-aligned movement, is no more. Nor will UN-brokered peace plan, rather partition plan to accommodate ethnic aspirations and identities, remain in force eternally because simmering discontent continues to stir Serbian and Bosnian minds. Earlier the Pakistan army in the early 1970s launched a brutal ethnic cleansing drive against aggrieved Bengalis and the result was the birth of Bangladesh and obituary of East Pakistan. Initially Pakistan had its way because international opinion on anti-Bengali pogrom was divided and America and China found nothing wrong in Islamabad's policy of ethnic cleansing. In reality their covert and overt support emboldened Pakistan to carry out its genocidal programme. In the same period China earned the dubious distinction of backing Sri Lankan government's efforts to suppress Janata Vimukti uprising. Rivers became red with the blood of Janata Vimukti activists but Beijing was happy to sell arms and cement to Colombo because it was part of their business deal.

And now there is no international murmur against the planned genocide of Tamils by the Sri Lankan army. Ethnic cleansing it was and, yet there was no attempt from any quarter to have a concrete UN brokered mission for lasting peace and democracy. For the Tamils of Sri Lanka it is now a situation of back to square one. After the barbaric elimination of Tamil Tigers coupled with ethnic cleansing of civilians, it is again the second class citizenship for Tamils who now live in perpetual uncertainty. The war on 'Tiger Terror' is over but what is not over is the subtle way to keep slow genocide going by other means.

Even now about 1400 people are reportedly dying every week at the giant Manik Farm internment camp set up to detain Tamil refugees from the nation's bloody civil war. These internment sites otherwise euphemistically called "welfare villages" are actually concentration camps to house 300,00 people or more.

There is every reason to believe that the Rajapaksa Government is consciously trying to change the demographic balance in favour of the Sinhala majority of the area. The reason is simple: Sinhala chauvinists can think of only this kind of solution. The authorities in Colombo say the situation is under control. True, it is under their control in the sense that they can do anything they would like. Abduction and extra-judicial killings, practice that human rights bodies reckoned despite official restrictions they face in gathering reports, are on the rise. The Srilankan Government has devised a nice strategy to stigmatise ordinary people by describing them as "traitors" and "patriots" and 'there is no indication that this mode of thinking is slipping' in the policy-making machine.

Mr Rajapaksa doesn't tolerate any dissent from democratic and liberals who do not subscribe to his idea of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Very recently five Sri

Lankan doctors who witnessed the bloody climax of the country's 26-year-old civil war and made claims of mass civilian deaths recanted much of their testimony, ostensibly under pressure. The doctors concerned were too panicky to deny other former testimony, including the military shelling of a conflict-zone hospital in February, albeit the witnesses from the UN and the Red Cross corroborated the allegation.

For the Rajpaksas anti-Tamil campaign is not yet over. The tragedy is there is no organised international opinion against Rajpaksa and his war crimes against humanity. Milosevic had to face war crimes tribunal but Rajpaksa on the contrary, is receiving accolades even from his Indian friends who run the biggest showcase of democracy. Rajiv Gandhi did the blunder by sending Indian Peace Keeping Force to Sri Lanka and Manmohan Singh who is the able champion of Rajiv Gandhi legacy, is doing the same blunder by not responding to the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils and totally ignoring Colombo's genocidal approach to the age-old Tamil minority question of Sri Lanka. □□