

Petition

I hereby affirm that my financial contributions to the World Tamil Coordinating Committee (WTCC) were made voluntarily. I did this to assist my brothers and sisters in our homeland who were facing a genocidal military offensive. I reject the premise of the accusation made by the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland, and propagated in the Swiss media: that by supporting my people I have prolonged the war and am therefore to blame for the death of my own brothers and sisters. Would a woman who resists rape be responsible for the injuries resulting from this resistance?

I reject also the notion that Tamil resistance movement had been the instigator of the violence in the island. On the contrary, the Tamils endured, year after year, the destruction of our language rights, education rights, colonisation of our land, burning of our libraries, and every conceivable form of racial discrimination, without resorting to violence. It was only after **three decades** of non-violent protests were met with extreme state violence and racial pogroms that the armed resistance was born. When the Tamils voted in the parliamentary elections (in 1977) calling for self-rule in our homeland in the north and east of the island, the violence against us escalated to genocidal proportions. During the 80's and the 90's the Tamil armed resistance movement protected our very existence as a people.

During these two decades of terrible war about a hundred thousand Tamils died and hundreds of thousands more have fled to countries all over the world. As a part of this Diaspora, as a victim of war having found peace, my deepest wish was for a just peace for my brothers and sisters who we have left behind. So, at the turn of this century, when our resistance movement reached military parity with the Sri Lankan state and initiated a unilateral cease-fire, I, like most in the Diaspora, was overjoyed. In February 2002, when the Sri Lankan government finally responded positively to this cease-fire the peace process started. We were especially proud of the Swiss Government, and the EU's strong support for the peace process. Hitherto, the powerful international players (some actively and others passively) had exclusively supported one side of the conflict – that of the Sri Lankan state and of its unitary structure. Without the vigorous actions by a part of the international community to reject this position and instead offer 'parity of esteem' to both sides, the peace process would not have even started. By proclaiming that there was no military solution, this part of the international community was encouraging the Sinhalese and the Tamils to work towards a scheme where they could share sovereignty in this beautiful island – exclusively through negotiations.

We have promoted peace not war

The peace process was a period of immense hope for all of us in the Diaspora. We could visit our homeland – we took great pleasure in helping to rebuild what had been destroyed by several decades of war. But just as the Tamils and the Sinhalese were shaking hands over the negotiating table the world was moving towards war. The international 'co-chairs' of the peace process were deeply divided on the issue of the Iraq war. This influenced the Sri Lankan peace process. The invasion of Iraq had brought to the forefront the strategic importance of part of our homeland – Trincomalee harbour in the east of the island. We the Tamils and our resistance movement have always supported the Indian ocean as a zone of peace and were opposed to any external power using our territory for military purposes. But the US/UK axis knew that their long term ally the Sri Lankan state was more flexible. We were horrified to witness the US and UK taking calculated steps to dismantle the peace process. These measures ended with the EU – which had previously supported parity of status – banning the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) thus fatally undermining the peace process. As Swedish Major General Ulf Henricsson, the head of the 'Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission' put it, the decision for the EU to ban the LTTE was arrived at through 'massive pressure from the US and the UK' and that the democratic processes of the EU were bypassed and the decision was made in the 'coffee shops in Brussels'.

I know that the Tamil Diaspora in Switzerland and in the EU countries held massive demonstrations in Brussels and in other European cities demanding that the EU stand firm against the US/UK attempt to destroy the peace process. But, our efforts to maintain the peace process was unsuccessful. The ban on the LTTE dramatically strengthened the hand of the pro-war politicians in Sinhala society, as they could argue that this action by the EU demonstrates that there is no support for peace within the international community and that it signalled the victory of US/UK policy. This in turn led to the election of Rajapakse as president. 2007 he signed an 'Access and Cross Servicing Agreement' with the US government allowing it to use Trincomalee harbour for military purposes. The war against our people started in the same year – in the East - and US trained military launched the terrible assault on our people. According to a UN team appointed by Ban Ki Moon, 70,000 Tamil people were killed by the Sinhala armed forces during the last few months of the war which ended on the 18th May 2009.

I believe deeply that it was not the Tamil side that broke the peace and initiated the war in 2007. The Tamil Diaspora in Switzerland made massive efforts to rebuild the war-ravaged infrastructure and provide humanitarian assistance during the 2002 – 2007 period. The last thing that we wanted was endanger all that we had helped to build. We and our brothers and sisters who perished are the victims of the war and not its instigators.

I urge the Swiss authorities not to use the EU's ban of the LTTE as a guide in the prosecution of the members of the WTCC. The EU ban had a key role in undermining the peace process and laying the conditions for the terrible war. The EU ban was arrived at through coercion. It is part of the problem, and is fundamentally unjust. Switzerland should continue with the even-handed position that it took towards Tamils at the beginning of the peace talks.

Name:

Address:

Signature:

Phone number:

Email Address:

Date:

The names and the contact details of those who sign this petition will only be for the eyes of the Swiss courts and will be handled with utmost confidentiality by the IMRV Bremen and the monitoring organisations.

Internationaler Menschenrechtsverein Bremen e.V (International Human Rights Association Bremen)

IMRV Bremen,

Kornstr. 31

28201 Bremen, Germany.

Fax: 0049 421 68 437 884, email: imrvbremen@gmail.com, www.humanrights.de