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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Jeunesse Etudiante Tamoule, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



The Nomination of Sarath Weerasekara as Minister of Public Security an example of Sinhala racial discrimination politic against Eelam Tamils.

Sarath Weerasekara's long standing association with Sinhala ultra-nationalist forces is well known. In May 2005, during the ceasefire, Sinhalese extremist forces erected a Buddha statue in eastern port city of Trincomalee, triggering ethnic and religious unrest in the area. As the University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR - Jaffna) later revealed in their Special Report 29, Rear Admiral Weerasekara, who was the then Commander of Eastern Naval Area, had been a key player in inciting and promoting communal enmity during the turbulent days.

The UTHR report said: "...the PNM (Patriotic National Movement) and JVP were behind the erection of the illegal Buddha statue in the sensitive area of Trincomalee, a city predominantly inhabited by ethnic Tamils. The Navy's Eastern Commander Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekera openly identified with the provocation."

Weerasekara's controversial role in the East was further exposed by the 'Sunday Times' defence columnist who wrote: "President Kumaratunga ordered the Ministry of Defence to investigate a report from a state intelligence agency that Rear Admiral Weerasekera extended support to the group reportedly responsible for placing Lord Buddha's statue. He is alleged to have addressed this group, a team of three wheeler drivers offering a transport service and assured them he would ensure the statue would not be removed."

The report revealed that after, "the appearance of the statue of Lord Buddha in the Trincomalee town in the early hours of May 15, Rear Admiral Weerasekera is alleged to have spoken at a gathering of three wheeler drivers. A state intelligence agency had accused him of telling the gathering that he would make sure the statue was not removed. This statement, the agency said, had exacerbated feelings among groups responsible for placing the statue.....President Kumaratunga asked the Ministry of Defence to conduct an inquiry into the allegations. On the Ministry's orders, Vice Admiral Sandagiri had called upon Rear Admiral Weerasekera to explain his conduct within six days."

Subsequently, Weerasekara was removed from his position in the East and "given the newly created post of Deputy Chief of Staff."

2006: Civil Defence Force Director General

In 2006, Sarath Weerasekara was appointed as the first Director General of the Civil Defense Force (CDF), Under Weerasekara's command, new training courses were introduced including 'one month basic training under army and navy instructors and provided with new desert camouflage uniforms'.

Hate Speech

On 19th of September 2005, Sarath Weerasekara wrote an article to "The Sunday Times" criticising Sinhala filmmakers who were making anti-war films. He specifically named four filmmakers as unpatriotic. He accused them of, "supporting the diabolical false propaganda campaign being carried out by the terrorists against the Sinhalese".

He further emphasised that "if there is a film on war and it scoffs at the soldier, insults his wife and tends to demoralize the soldier, such films indirectly contribute towards fulfilling the terrorists' objectives" and that "it amounts to treason and should be dealt with severely."

On September 25th, elaborating his point further in the Sinhala language, Weerasekara in an incitement to violence wrote an article to 'Sunday Divaina' newspaper, in which he said that the "film producers should be labelled as terrorists and hanged."

In 2017, during a panel discussion on Derana TV, when confronted by a panelist about his statement, Weerasekara reiterated his position and justified his stance regarding a young

Sinhala film maker, Vimukthi Jayasundera, who won the Caméra d'Or in 2005 for his film "The Foresekan land".

During an interview in June 2020, when he was asked to clarify his statement, he recapitulated his stance saying that there cannot be a middle position when a country is fighting terrorism.

An ultra-nationalist

Weerasekara's open association with extremist Sinhala elements, such as the JVP backed Patriotic National Movement (PNM) and Manel Mal (White Lily) Movement (MMM), while being a serving military officer, further confirms his long standing ultra-nationalist inclinations.

Politics

Rear Admiral Weerasekara contested the parliamentary elections in April 2010 from Ampara district and entered parliament as a member of the United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) led by Mahinda Rajapaksa. During his campaign, he was accused of threatening a senior journalist in Ampara, on April 4, 2010.

Wasantha Chandrapala, a well-known area correspondent of several mainstream media institutions, was threatened by Weerasekara over the phone, saying:

"you better know that I am good for good people and worst for worst people, I do whatever I say. You journalists better remember that.....I tell you one thing Chadrapala, I am not like other (...). Keep that in your mind... Don't come to play your games with me. Be careful."

On the same day night, Chandrapala's house came under attack and he filed a formal complaint at the Ampara police station.

Anti Tamil National Alliance

On December 18, 2013, Weerasekara called on the government to ban the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). While addressing parliament, he said:

"We have done a foolish thing by not banning the TNA, which we should have done soon after defeating the LTTE. In the second world war, after Hitler was defeated, his Nazi party was banned. Once Mubarak was ousted from power, his political party was banned. After Pol Pot was murdered in Cambodia, his party was totally annihilated. But we, after defeating the LTTE, foolishly failed to ban the TNA. What we should have done is to bring formal charges against them for aiding and abetting terrorism and put them in prison. Else, just like we rehabilitated 11,600, we should have rehabilitated them and released them to the society. Today we are witnessing the consequences of our failure to do exactly that."

Anti-NGO - Anti Human Right Defenders

On 7th September 2017, while being interviewed on Hiru TV, Weerasekera said:

"Traitors are the ones who betray their country....If someone is trying to divide the country and take the war heroes who defended the country to a war crimes tribunal on false charges, they should be treated as traitors.

Hence, in my opinion, the present rulers, the NGOs who live on Dollars and Sinhala federalists are traitors. If we come to power again and form a government, we will take them to courts on the charges of treason, and hang them like any other country would do."

Intimidation and Threats against Tamil Human rights Activist in Geneva

Sarath Weerasekara has continuously attended UN Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva along with the members of ultra-nationalist Sinhala diaspora group, the Sri Lanka Global Forum. He has openly condemned and issued thinly veiled threats against Tamil human rights activists who have been attending Geneva sessions for 'committing treason'. For instance, in March 2018, before leaving for Geneva, he addressed a press conference organised by Patriotic Professionals Forum in Colombo.

During the press conference he denounced the Office for the Missing Persons (OMP) and branded the members of the OMP as traitors. While specifically highlighting the individuals associated with the OMP.

With his team he also intimidated and harassed many Tamil Human Rights activists, and make campaign against Eelam Tamils who attended to the Human Rights Council session.

For last 6 years, over 21 members who participate to Human rights Council Session, had treats from his team and intimidations, demands of ransoms.

He said to tamil Human Rights activists “He is from India and he won’t get any troubles, Don’t forget your family are still in Sri Lanka”

Many of Tamil Rights activists were victims of him and his team on social media and other singhala medias.

Views on Devolution

His opposition to any kind of democratic reforms is clearly expressed though his position against 13 Amendment and 19 Amendment to Sri Lanka's Constitution. In July 2020, speaking to Daily Mirror he said:

"Democracy has prevailed even without the 19A....I don't think repealing the 19A will challenge democracy. With this Amendment in place, all NGOs have started ruling the country in the pretext of appointing various commissions."

Ironically, Weerasekara has been appointed as the State Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government despite his vehement opposition to any kind of power sharing agreement with the Tamils, including the 13 Amendment under which the Provincial Council system was introduced in 1987.

Conclusion

Sarath Weerasekera is a longstanding close confidante of the President who was actively involved in the Genocidal war against Eelam Tamils. He has made clear his opposition to any devolution of power to Tamils, expressed a desire to outlaw the main Tamil democratic political party, has revealed virulent antagonism to prominent Sinhalese human rights defenders in Colombo, and advocated violence towards those whose views he opposes.

Gouvernement en Exil du Tamil Eelam, GLOBAL TAMIL MOUVEMENT, ASSOCIATION DES CHRETIENS TAMOULS POUR LA PAIX ET JUSTICE, Centre Bishop Rayappu Joseph pour la Justice et la paix, ASSOCIATION DES ANONYMES ET PERSÉCUTES DU GÉNOCIDE TAMOULE, Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka & International Truth & Justice Project, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.