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### The largest hostage rescue in the world's history

Professor Sunil J. Wimalawansa

Hostage takings have been reported sporadically, throughout the world.

However, none was even closer to the recent captivity of approximate of 250,000 of civilians by the Tamil Tiger terrorists (LTTE) in the north eastern jungles. Over the past few days over 100,000 hostages were rescued by the Sri Lankan Forces - the largest number of hostages rescued in such a short period, anywhere in the world.

LTTE is banned world-wide as a terror outfit for their work on suicide bombings, child soldiering, organized crime, and unlimited human rights violations. In addition to the billions of rupees in property damage, LTTE violence has consumed over 140,000 lives; the majority had been women and children. Three decades of government-initiated and third party mediated negotiations as well as peace discussions were failed. Terrorists have constantly violated all ceasefire agreements. The final turning point towards defeating terrorism in Sri Lanka was attained in mid-2008, after three years of careful and strategic planning by the Government. LTTE terrorists never anticipated such a rapid advance of the military, which has now completely encircled them.



It is important to note that in spite of the military disadvantages of it, to-date, the Sri Lankan government continues to supply food, water and medicine to the terrorist held areas. Up to now, about 180,000 civilians have been fled safely from the terrorist's captivity. To safe guard these civilians and to establish a safe route for them to escape

LTTE prison, in concurrence with the UN, a no-fire zone (a safe haven) was established by the Government. Many who attempted to escape were shot or maimed. The UN and other agencies, and those civilians who survived from the captivity confirmed that terrorists used them as human shields, forced them to fight with them and to participate in suicidal missions.

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In addition to the strategic ground and naval blockade of weapons supply, destruction of its naval hardware, the fall of LTTE is also in part due to sheer exhaustion and the lack of confidence in its leadership.

Nevertheless, some of these terrorists have managed to escape by intermingling with civilians, and are currently engaged in sporadic attacks on civilian targets in the rest of the country, to divert attention from the battle front in the North. Meanwhile, the government has initiated a massive USD 150 million humanitarian programme to care for the IDPs with the assistance from the UN and others.

#### Battle hardened

Under the direct supervision of the Army Commander and the Defence Secretary, three major army divisions surrounded LTTE terrorists in an area of about 200 sq km. Due to successful army advances, this area has now been reduced to less than 18 sq km - a relatively thin strip of land consisting of the no-fire zone. Battle hardened ground troops have been supported by Special Forces and the Air Mobile Brigade, as well as an

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- Logo with Sinhala text "අපි ඔබ සමඟ"

increasingly sophisticated Navy who have developed the skills to carry out targeted, small group operations minimizing collateral damage. Meanwhile, terrorists keep on resorting to the inhuman practice of suicide bombing and use of civilian, human shields.

The Government had repeatedly requested the terrorists to surrender, to end this siege. However, LTTE leadership has opted not to do so, and have ordered them to fight to death. This decision had already led to the demise of most of the LTTE terrorist's leaders. Those remaining few hundred fighters, half have been assigned to protect its leader; another example of the self-centered leadership style of the LTTE.

It is only a matter of days, before the Tamil Tiger Terrorists are completely eliminated. Hence, there is no reason for the continual suffering inflicted upon these hostages by the Tamil Tiger terrorists.

Many governments and leading agencies including the UN have repeatedly requested the Tigers to release their captives unharmed; but these terrorists have refused to do so.

All key players including the four Co-chairs, India, the UN as well as independent groups like the Crisis Group, and envoys like Lakdar Brahimi and Lord Neseby, etc., have said that the quickest and most humane way to end conflict now is to release the hostage, for LTTE to disarm and surrender its cadres and for the Government to consider fair trial for cadres. Recent interviews by the Chair of the UK-all party MPs, Lord Naseby and the UN under-secretary, Sir John Holmes, also confirmed this.

The UN Secretary General has refused to call for a ceasefire. He welcomed the Government's recent approach of two no-hostility periods, further facilitating the safe rescue of trapped civilians. Yet, LTTE has unequivocally stated that they will not release civilians from their hostage. Therefore, a ceasefire would make no difference to detained civilians. Ceasefire would only allow terrorist an opportunity to re-arm and re-group, which can lead to further hostage taking, and causing chaos, death, and misery. If anyone currently suggesting a ceasefire, they must be reacting to misguided information provided by the LTTE-related paid lobbyists.

The majority of Tamils in Sri Lanka lives happily and successfully, outside North and the North-Eastern areas, and do not want a separate state (so-called Eelam). It is ironic that there is a recent worldwide sudden rush of destructive behaviour by small groups of Tamils who are pleading with their governments to impose a ceasefire in Sri Lanka. Who are these suddenly emerging protestors, and why are they protesting now? Accumulating evidence suggest that they have little interest towards the trapped hostages or their safety. Moreover, there does not seem to be any sincerity of these self-serving, sporadic protests by a handful of Tamils in various countries. The main interest appears to be to save the LTTE leadership. Many of expatriate Tamils protesting abroad seem to be the ones who have been donating significant amounts of money to this terrorist group. They suddenly realised that their long-term investment will soon disappear without any chance of return for their investments.

#### **Entities**

Currently, the Sri Lankan government is rightly proceeding with the help of its armed forces to free thousands of Tamils held in captivity by the LTTE. Sovereign Sri Lanka can handle its internal affairs, and it is unwarranted and unwise to interfere with its national security issues by outside entities. Recent liberation of over 30,000 captives in a single day, from the world's largest hostage taking, further demonstrates its capabilities to handle the situation.

Terrorism and the violence will never succeed. The Government will soon effectively eradicate the LTTE terrorism. In spite of the carnage they created over a three decades, LTTE has miserably failed both domestically and internationally, wasting hundreds of lives and infrastructure worth billions of rupees. The LTTE has also disappointed its worldwide - thousands of financial donors who fueled this misery.

Those who funded this war with selfish expectations for major favors in the future from the LTTE regime must now be deeply disappointed. This has now led to the recent sporadic protests by Tamil expatriates. The civilized world will never condone nor reward terrorism, child soldiering, or hostage taking.

**Courtesy: defence.lk**

