

Press Release

June 23, 2010

CWVHR welcomes UN Appointed Panel on Sri Lankan Human Rights Abuses

The Centre for War Victims and Human Rights(CWVHR) welcomes the formation of the three-member panel, appointed by the U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon of UN to advise him on how he should be proceeding with the investigation on violation of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law during the last stages of war on Tamils in 2009.

CWVHR congratulates the three panelists who have been working on human rights and humanitarian laws issues in various countries. They have contributed significantly on the subject.

The three members of the panel are Marzuki Darusman, former Attorney General of Indonesia and a member of the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights and, most recently, served as one of the three commissioners of the U.N. commission of inquiry into the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and he will be the chair-person, along with Yasmin Sooka of South Africa who is the executive director of the Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa and served as a commissioner on the South African Truth and

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Reconciliation Commission. She also served on the international commissioner on the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And Steven Ratner of the United States,

who is a professor at the University of Michigan Law School, was a former member of the U.N. Group of Experts for Cambodia, whose work laid the basis for the Khmer Rouge trials.

Appointing this panel has taken over a year and still there are concerns raised with regard to responsibility of the panel as well as its authority. The committee members would not be able to travel to Sri Lanka and would not be able to interview the perpetrators of the crime.

Many International and local Human Rights groups including CWVHR have in their possession Video and Photographic proofs, Personally Affected victims and relatives with details and sworn affidavits in the thousands to prove the crimes committed by the Sri Lankan state and other para- military groups.

The Sri Lankan state is very unhappy on the appointment of UN Panel and challenging the authority of U.N. Secretary General to investigate their human rights abuses, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide of the Tamils. Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Gamini Lakshman Peiris said the appointment of the panel would be "unprecedented"

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"This is politically unacceptable to Sri Lanka and at this stage would be premature"

Sri Lankan Government is confident that, with the help of China and Russia, the Security Council of UN would never approve such investigation formally and would be same with Human Rights Council as it has the support of representatives from the Asian and African Countries

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CWVHR believes and hopes that the panel would face all the possible challenges and provide a space for the values of International law and human rights and pave the way to prosecute the perpetrators of the crimes in Sri Lanka.