

Dr. Paikiasothy Saraavanamuttu is the director of Center for Policy Alternatives. CPA is an internationally recognized independent, non-partisan organization in Sri Lanka, that conducts research on public policy and offers critiques and alternatives. Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu was in Canada giving special seminars on Sri Lanka at the University of Toronto.

The Open Discussion with Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu was held on November 18, 2009 at CWVHR center. The following is a summary of his thoughts.

Dr. Sariavanamuttu began with an account of the current situation in Sri Lanka. After the decisive victory by the Sri Lankan government over the LTTE, the Sri Lankan government is dismantling any hope for multi-ethnic, multi-religious Sri Lanka, and embarking on majoritarian imposition. People are labeled as with us or against us, and this leaves no room for discussion or debate. The Sri Lankan government policies privilege the Sinhalese community over minorities. This is especially evident in the “land grab” of the North. The current events do not contribute to peace, reconciliation or unity. This will sustain and reproduce causes for conflict.

He said Sri Lanka must seek out truth. There is no reconciliation without truth, and no unity without reconciliation. Truth, accountability, and justice will be very difficult to attain. The Sri Lankan government’s denial of any human rights violations contributes to culture of impunity.

The diaspora faces tough questions. How are you going to contribute to peace? How is the Diaspora going to seek out truth about human rights violations by the LTTE. The Diaspora's transnational government initiative is misguided. “Did anyone talk back home?”. What about backlash, and who bears the burden. How can Diasporas relate to people back home? Who sets the agenda?

Recording of human rights violations, and the work of CWVHR is “extremely important”. It is very difficult to do this in Sri Lanka. It is important to collect comprehensive and robust database, quietly and systematically. This is a service and a contribution, and results will be immediate. This process must happen with full awareness of the context. Do not alienate

people, and do not capitalize on their heart. Record all sides human rights violations, and know what you are going to do this with data. We need to know our past in order to move on.

CWVHR has many dimensions. The involves uncovering uncomfortable truths. In recording the human rights violations by the LTTE, what are you going to do with this. The truth about violence and violations within the community, and by LTTE must be uncovered.

Is there a chance for rule of law, proper functioning justice system, and good governance in Sri Lanka?

The constitution gives absolute powers to the president, and he can not be held accountable by anyone. The constitution has to change. A federal government for all of Sri Lanka will improve the government for all, including the Sinhalese in the South.

What is that you want to Do?