

# When war criminals champion human rights

The United States of America is going hell for leather to score a diplomatic win in Geneva. Some victory it desperately needs—even against a tiny state like Sri Lanka—having suffered a bloodied nose at the hands of Russia and China over Syria the other day. It is also reeling from a thundering slap it received last October in Paris, where the UNICEF accepted Palestine as a full member regardless of its protests and threats. It is all out to have a resolution against Sri Lanka passed in Geneva.

The basis of the US-led war crimes witch hunt against Sri Lanka is a report—popularly known as the Darusman Report—by the UNSG's advisory panel on Sri Lanka's accountability issues, claiming that over 40,000 people died during the final stages of the Vanni war. But, the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) has placed, in its latest report, the number of people killed during that period at 8,649. The DCS has done a scientific study with the help of many Tamil speaking officials in the Northern Province where the final battle took place whereas the Darusman report has merely based its conclusions on anecdotal evidence purportedly ascertained from some persons whose identities will not be revealed for a period of two decades!

As for the process of appointing the UNSG's panel and preparing its report, the methods the US and its allies employed constituted the very antithesis of democracy. They coerced Ban Ki-moon dependent on their support to secure a second term into appointing a panel, handpicking a trio prejudiced against Sri Lanka and having a report prepared according to their whims and fancies. They are now campaigning aggressively to press charges of war crimes against Sri Lanka on the basis of that report!

This, the US and its cronies are doing, having torpedoed a UN document—better known as the Goldstone Report—on alleged war crimes Israel committed against Palestinians and a statement by UNHRC chief, Navy Pillay condemning ruthless crackdowns on democratic protesters in

pro-western Bahrain.

The US pretends that its anti-Sri Lankan campaign in Geneva stems from its concern for human rights. But, whether a country that fought a bloody civil war to defend its territorial integrity at the expense of about 700,000 lives; unflinchingly wiped out two heavily populated Japanese cities with nuclear bombs; carried out a countless number of napalm, chemical and cluster bomb attacks and massacres in Vietnam etc; enabled Saddam Hussein to acquire chemicals which he used on civilians; supplied him with crop-spraying helicopters deployed in the genocidal Anfal campaign, where chemical attacks were mounted on Kurds *et al* and imposed sanctions on Iraq, killing hundreds of thousands of children besides adults, will be able to convince the world that it is a respecter of human rights is the question.

Besides, there are many other issues that should be raised in Geneva as regards America's human rights track record. Victims of the deadly defoliant, *Agent Orange*, used by the US forces to eliminate the forest cover during the Vietnam War are still clamouring for compensation. Over ten thousand people who were thrown out of their own country by the US to build a military base in Diego Garcia have been denied their right to return to their native land since early 1970s. Victims of torture committed by CIA etc have been prevented from seeking justice in US courts. Perpetrators of massacres in Iraq have been allowed to walk to freedom. Those who lynched Gaddafi in full view of the global media have gone scot free. President Obama and his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gloated at the execution of

an unarmed bin Laden in captivity, without making any effort to stop that grave war crime.

Therefore, before campaigning for human rights elsewhere, the US must improve its own human rights record which stinks to high heaven. *Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thy own eye?*

The US ought to act on the revelations former Head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Nobel Laureate, Mohamed ElBaradei has made in his book, *The Age of Deception, Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times*. Says he of the illegal Iraqi invasion: "*The harshest reality of the Iraq War and its extended aftermath—an*

*aspect that has been disturbingly minimised in Western media reports—is the Iraqi civilian loss of life. Estimates have ranged as high as eight hundred thousand Iraqi deaths during the first three years of the war. This does not count the millions maimed or*

*wounded, or the millions displaced from their homes and stripped of their livelihoods.*" ElBaradei denounces sheer brute force the coalition unleashed against Iraq thus: "*The United States and its allies promoted an ethos of violence and cultural division that harkened back to an earlier era of human history.*"

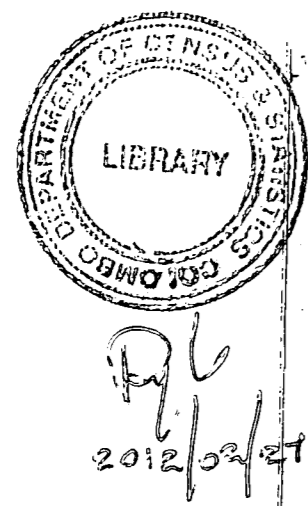
ElBaradei poses some very pertinent questions as regards the Iraqi war: "*Should the United Nations request an opinion from the International Court of Justice as to the legality of the Iraq War? If the answer is that the war was in fact illegal—and moreover, if consideration is given to the massive civilian casualties incurred—should not the International Criminal Court investigate*

*whether this constitutes a 'war crime' and determine who is accountable? Should Iraq request reparations at the International Court of Justice, or another forum, for the damages incurred during a war launched in violation of international law and on the basis of falsehoods?"*

If the United Nations Human Rights Council, Navi Pillay *et al* are genuinely desirous of promoting human rights, as we have been arguing in these columns, they must find answers to ElBaradei's aforesaid questions at the on-going UNHRC session in Geneva on a priority basis. It is incumbent upon the Human Rights Watch, the Amnesty International, the International Crisis Group etc championing human rights the world over to call for action against the US and the UK on the basis of ElBaradei's revelations if they are not to prove right their critics who accuse them of dodging the issue of war crimes committed by powerful nations who fund them, and of allowing themselves to be used as 'human rights shock troops' by the West against the developing world.

Meanwhile, that the US and its allies have no moral right to crusade against war crimes does not mean the Sri Lankan government should have the freedom to do absolutely nothing about what is alleged to have happened during the war and the much-needed post-war reconciliation. The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) has recommended a sensible action plan, which must be carried out forthwith. Colombo has reportedly requested that the UNHRC resolution at issue be postponed till next October. It should be given time until then to implement the LLRC recommendations. The US and its allies waited thirty long years without doing anything to help Sri Lanka get rid of terrorism and there is no reason why they cannot wait a few more months.

It behoves the UNHRC members to prevent the US, the UK and their cronies responsible for heinous war crimes and human rights abuses from using the anti-Sri Lankan resolution as a red herring.



## The Island

Published by Upali Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd. 223,  
Bloemendhal Road, Colombo 13. Tel: 011-2497500, 011-  
2497571, 011-2497572, 011-2497573 Fax: 011-2497543  
www.island.lk / E-mail:  
prabath@unl.upali.lk

Tel: 011-2436892 Fax: 011-2344252, 011-2497543

Advertising Dept.

Circulation Dept.

Tel: 011-2497568, 011-2497519, 011-2497580 Fax: 011-2334564

Monday 27th February, 2012