



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Geneva

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Sri Lanka protests Screening of Channel 4 documentary in UN premises in Geneva

The Sri Lanka Permanent Mission in Geneva has made formal protest against the screening of the latest Channel 4 documentary film "No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka" organized by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and FIFDH at the Palais de Nations in Geneva on 1st March 2013. In a letter addressed to Ambassador Remigiusz Achilles Henczel, President of the Human Rights Council, Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN Ravinatha Aryasinha said "Sri Lanka views this film, as well as the timing of its broadcast as part of a cynical, concerted and orchestrated campaign that is strategically driven, and clearly motivated by collateral political considerations".

Noting that this is the screening of the third part of a much disputed film series by Channel 4, whose narrative remains discredited, uncorroborated and unsubstantiated, he said such actions would clearly undermine the status of Member States, the work of the Council and leaves it vulnerable to politicization. It noted that ECOSOC Resolution No. 1996/31 of 25 July 1996 that stipulates the consultative relationship between the United Nations and NGOs provides at Paragraph 57(a) for the suspension and withdrawal of consultative status of NGOs, inter alia, specifically where such an organization either directly or through its affiliates or representatives acting on its behalf, clearly abuses its status by engaging in a pattern of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN including unsubstantiated or politically motivated acts against Member States of the UN incompatible with those purposes and principles.

Ambassador Aryasinha who recalled the founding principles of the Human Rights Council of ensuring impartiality and fair play upon which the Council was established and that governs the methods of work of the Council, observed that it is the paramount duty of the Human Rights Council to ensure that NGOs are not facilitated in perpetrating unsubstantiated and politically motivated acts against countries in the Council, in any manner.

He further observed, that at a time when Sri Lanka is vigorously pursuing a process of reconciliation following three decades of conflict inflicted by LTTE terrorism, it is disturbing to note the efforts on the part of entities based

overseas with links to rump elements of the LTTE, as well as certain NGOs with ECOSOC accreditation, in facilitating such programmes containing unsubstantiated material that is morphed and diabolical. This approach not only provides members and observers of the Council with an extremely distorted and unbalanced view of Sri Lanka, but also serves to adversely impact the ongoing comprehensive reconciliation process in Sri Lanka. It also serves to strengthen the rump elements of the LTTE seeking refuge in the West, who use the propaganda value derived from the screening of such films, as a tool to intensify their fundraising and recruitment activities, thereby undermining the process of reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Noting that the failure of the Council to deal with such a situation would be perceived as a process that is encouraged by the Council which contravenes the governing principles of the UN Charter and the work of the Council within its stipulated mandate. Ambassador Aryasinha added that the use of one's premises and the conduct of activities in such premises is a liability to be taken upon by the authority having control over such premises, and that clearly, any explanation that the use of premises once handed over to an organization that seeks to engage in such unwarranted activity cannot be a basis to relieve an institution from its responsibility over such activity. It said such conduct based on administrative convenience is unacceptable.

Ambassador Aryasinha requested the President of the Council to circulate its communication as an official document of the 22nd session of the Human Rights Council in all official languages, and also to keep the OHCHR Secretariat informed.

Sri Lanka Permanent Mission
Geneva

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