



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Geneva

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24th February 2013

H.E. Remigiusz Achilles Henczel

President

Human Rights Council

Excellency,

Screening of the Channel 4 documentary film "No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka"

I have the honour to bring to your urgent attention an issue of grave concern to the Government of Sri Lanka in relation to an invitation circulated by the ECOSOC accredited NGO, Human Rights Watch on 22nd February 2013 on the screening of the Channel 4 documentary film "No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka" organized by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and FIFDH Geneva in Room XXIII of the Palais de Nations on 1st March 2013.

The Government of Sri Lanka wishes to make the following submission with regard to the proposed screening of this film in the UN premises on the sidelines of the 22nd session of the Council:

1. This is the screening of the third part of a much disputed film series by Channel 4, whose narrative remains discredited, uncorroborated and unsubstantiated.
2. The consistent position maintained by the Government of Sri Lanka on the initial channel 4 film and its first sequel has been articulated in several statements and press releases issued including by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka on 16 March 2012. (A dossier containing this information is annexed).
3. It is pertinent to note 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. In terms of the said resolution, a ground for suspension would, inter alia, include

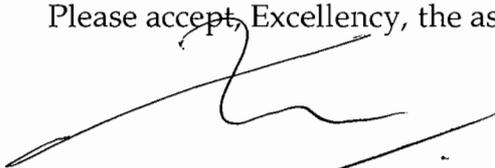
specifically where such an organization either directly or through its affiliates or representatives acting on its behalf, clearly abuses its status by engaging in a pattern of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN including unsubstantiated or politically motivated acts against Member States of the UN incompatible with those purposes and principles.

4. The film that is to be screened is the third of a series facilitated by ECOSOC accredited NGOs, and the second of a series broadcast in the UN premises, to coincide with the Council sessions where Sri Lanka is deliberated. (The screening of the second channel 4 film "Sri Lanka's Killing Fields" in the UN premises was organized by Amnesty International in June 2011 to coincide with the 17th session of the Council.) This would therefore be the third occasion which again coincides with the sessions on Sri Lanka, which is clearly part of a pattern of acts that are politically motivated and containing unsubstantiated material, and would clearly undermine the work of the Council and the status of its Member States.
5. In this context, it is the paramount duty of the Human Rights Council to ensure that NGOs are not in any manner facilitated in perpetrating unsubstantiated and politically motivated acts against countries in the Council. It is apt at this point to draw attention to the founding principles of the Human Rights Council of ensuring impartiality and fair play upon which this Council was established and that governs the methods of work of the Council.
6. The timing and the venue of this screening clearly demonstrates that it is aimed at influencing the debate in the Council on Sri Lanka. It is therefore our earnest view that the Council should not facilitate such a process that undermines its own work and the engagement of its members with the Council, and leaves it vulnerable to politicization.
7. 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.

8. 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.
9. The Government of Sri Lanka is therefore of the view that this film, as well as the timing of its broadcast are part of a cynical, concerted and orchestrated campaign that is strategically driven, and clearly motivated by collateral political considerations.
10. Considering the above circumstances the Government of Sri Lanka strongly protests the use of the premises of the UN for the screening of this film. It must be noted 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. 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. Such conduct based on administrative convenience is unacceptable.

I would appreciate if you could kindly circulate/publish our communication as an official document of the 22nd session of the Human Rights Council in all official languages, and also keep the OHCHR Secretariat informed.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Ravinatha Aryasinha
Ambassador / Permanent Representative

24 February 2013