



**Congressman Brad Sherman
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Las Virgenes and Malibu**

Member of US Congress Committee on International Relations

1 September, 2000

The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madame Secretary,

A year ago, several of my colleagues and I wrote to you about the human rights abuses in Chemmani, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. I urged you to request that Sri Lanka accept international experts in the exhumation of mass graves. I am happy to note that Sri Lanka did finally accept two international forensic observers to be present during the excavations and analysis of the skeletal remains of the civilians who were killed and buried by the soldiers of the Sri Lanka army. I thank you for your efforts.

I am disappointed, however, that even though the likely perpetrators of the crime were named by those who were convicted of the original Krishanthi rape and murder case, no case against these perpetrators was brought to court.

I am also dismayed that the excavations were prematurely stopped before the whole area was excavated despite the findings that violence caused the deaths of those who had been found. Further extrajudicial killings of Tamil civilians by the Sri Lanka government are being reported daily in the District of Batticaloa in the East of the Island. Though the coroner and the legal system identifies the killings as murder by government forces and issues arrest orders the police do not conduct inquiries or bring any of the perpetrators to justice

Over the years many Tamils have been arrested on suspicion, and detained for years without ever being accused of any crime in a court of law. In an article in the prestigious British medical journal The Lancet, a researched study, " The Sexual Abuse of Men in Detention in Sri Lanka," (published on June 10, 2000) provides the details of torture and sexual abuse of the detainees by the arm) and prison guards. The government of Sri Lanka has not taken any action in this matter.



Instead of working to change the behavior of the armed forces that persecute many Tamils, the government has resorted to undemocratic methods in controlling information. The press is barred from the areas of conflict by direct and indirect coercion.

The United States should do its utmost to ensure freedom of the press in Sri Lanka.

For the past six years President Chandrika has pursued a policy of conducting a war while holding out the promise of a political solution. While she has pursued a brutal war in which the main casualties were Tamil civilians, she has failed on her promise to deliver any constitutional reforms that could ensure the democratic rights and dignity of the Tamils. Further the dynamics of the politics among the majority Singhalese makes a fair solution to the democratic aspirations of the Tamils remote. Given this record I believe a more proactive role by United States is warranted.

First, I would like to urge that all training, and arms sales to Sri Lanka be suspended to send a strong message to the Sri Lankan government and its people that continuing the war will not solve the problem nor gain the support of the US.

Teresita C. Schaffer, former Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Director of the South Asia Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote in the South Asia Monitor, June 1, 2000, that,

"the only chance [for a solution] would lie in a much more radical approach to power sharing. A loose confederal structure, with some kind of explicit recognition of the Tamils as a collective group within it and with stronger guarantees of their inclusion in power at the national level, might be more successful"

On June 9, 2000, the Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, Benjamin Gilman wrote to you about the continuing human rights abuses in Sri Lanka. He further urged that,

"The US should make it clear that we would support all options including secession to be discussed in the negotiating process of resolving the differences."

The democratic process in Sri Lanka has deteriorated during the past twenty years mainly because of the continuing war and the political activity of Singhalese extremists.

The United States has an opportunity make Sri Lanka a model and help it to evolve, by negotiating, two autonomous democratic political structures within a system acceptable to both parties, where ethnic communities can coexist peacefully on the Island. The US should be firm in its message to the government and the opposition, that if negotiations are not forthcoming immediately, they should be prepared to conduct a referendum of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

This can be done with the assistance of the United Nations similar to the referendum in East Timor. Thus, in the absence of a negotiated settlement, the Tamil people could



determine whether they want a confederation or a separate state as endorsed by the Tamil people in the last democratic elections held in 1977 in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

Again, I thank you for your past efforts and urge the Administration to work along these lines to deliver a peaceful solution that all the peoples of Sri Lanka can accept.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Sherman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "S".

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress