

Sunday, 28th October 2012

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## Editorial

## Geneva: U-turns and hypocrisy

November 2, 2012, 8:06 pm

In March this year, the government fought quite a battle in Geneva against tremendous odds to defeat a US-led UNHRC resolution on Sri Lanka, but in vain. Eight months on, Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe has revealed in his address to the on-going 14th Session of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva that the Sri Lankan Army is probing some of the allegations of atrocities levelled against it. A five-member Court of Inquiry headed by a Major General has been appointed to look into observations made by the Lessons Learnt Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and alleged accountability issues raised by others, he has said. What a volte-face!

The Sri Lankan government has had to swallow its pride and do as it was told in Geneva last time. However, now that it has given in, whatever the reason, the question is who will probe the atrocities committed by the LTTE. Even the blatantly lopsided Darusman Report on Sri Lanka's conflict has blamed both the military and the LTTE for accountability issues but no effort has been made to hold the LTTE accountable for its terrorism. The human rights champions who have subscribed to the findings in that report and been breathing down Sri Lanka's neck ever since will be falling in their duty if they do not initiate an investigation into the LTTE's crimes such as using human shields, forcible conscription of children and adults, mowing down people who tried to cross over to the army controlled area during the closing stages of the Vanni war and so on.

The deplorable selectivity on the part of the UNHRC in defending human rights makes one wonder whether the UN policy as regards the countries not favoured by the West is that non state actors in armed conflicts could get away with their war crimes after receiving a mild rebuke from the UN and world powers. (The UN Security Council, it may be recalled, a few years ago skirted tough action that child right activists demanded against outfits like the LTTE for using child combatants.) Interestingly, the UN practises the very obverse of its Sri Lanka policy in respect of western allies like Bahrain, where it has stood by the King while turning a blind eye to the brutal suppression of political dissent. Mum's the word on its part as regards human rights violations the US and its allies are committing in Afghanistan!

The onus is on international human rights groups to ensure that the Tigers living overseas and championing the LTTE's cause openly are held accountable for what their military wing did in Sri Lanka. They are easy to identify and their involvement in aiding and abetting the LTTE is only too well known.

If the UN refrains from acting against terrorist groups involved in armed conflicts in spite of their heinous crimes against civilians and coerces only its member states that respond to terrorism militarily, into probing allegations of war crimes, then it will send the wrong message to the world: Terrorists are 'more equal' than sovereign states that are not in the good books of the West. Unless the UN abandons this policy and acts fairly the day may not be far off when no legitimate government wants to combat terrorism for fear of UN-sponsored persecution.

It is hoped that Sri Lanka's human rights delegation currently in Geneva for the UPR summit will ask the UNHRC bigwigs who are campaigning for an international war crimes probe against Sri Lanka's armed forces how they propose to deal with the LTTE's crimes. It is only the LTTE's military wing that got decimated and, we repeat, many of its leaders responsible for coordinating its terror network and raising funds for its war are openly running the outfit in several countries. They must answer for Prabhakaran's terrorism.

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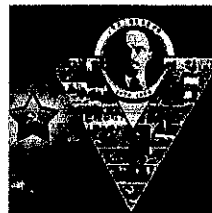
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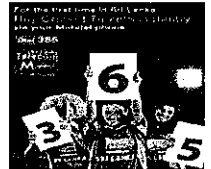
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