

Encountering ‘Death Counts’ in the Final Phase of the Eelam War

A Review Article by G. H. Peiris

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1. Preamble

Almost all recent media reports in the west on the impending United States resolution against Sri Lanka at the Human Rights Council ‘Periodic Review’ scheduled for next March state as a firmly established fact that 40,000 civilians were killed in the course of the final phase of the Eelam War. Most of these reports also imply that, in sponsoring such a resolution, US government is impelled by its conviction that the government of Sri Lanka is accountable for that colossal crime. In none of these reports is there a reference to the fact that even the Darusman Report, despite the blatant duplicity of its approach, and replete though it is with distortions, has never said that 40,000 Vanni civilians were killed during that phase of the war. What it did say was that the number of civilian deaths *could be as high as 40,000*.

But to the United States and its allies in Europe that are arrayed against post-war Sri Lanka trivia such as factual accuracy and fairness do not seem to matter. There is sufficient evidence in the confidential communications from their own official informants – diplomatic missions stationed in Colombo – that the Sri Lanka security forces exercised greater caution to avoid civilian deaths than their own armies have ever done in military offensives conducted outside the United States, and even there if one were to think of the 19th century. That appears to be of no consequence. What matters is ‘regime change’ – the need to evict the popularly elected government of Sri Lanka because it does not genuflect in the way minions of the international community are required to do, and a charge of ‘war crimes’ and ‘crimes against humanity’ is the only façade that could conceal the clandestine strategies being adopted to achieve that cardinal objective.

How the self-appointed global guardians of human rights help sustain the crumbling hegemonic global power arrangement is vividly illustrated in the media account of the ceremony held in London for the launch of Frances Harrison’s *Still Counting the Dead* (October 2012). Here are some extracts from the pronouncement reported to have been made on that occasion.

Eric Solheim – Norwegian politician who, in his role as ‘mediator’ in the Sri Lankan conflict, hardly ever bothered to conceal his commitment to promote LTTE interests during the last 10 years of the Eelam War.

"In Sri Lanka, the government was winning the war and victory was at hand. They had no intention of stopping. In January 2009, the government declared war. The call for the LTTE to accept an organized end to the war which included the LTTE handing over weapons, registering LTTE cadres and every single Tamil civilian supervised by international authorities — the UN, US, India, etc. was not heeded...If that happened, the lives of all the Tamil Tigers and Tamil civilians could have been saved. But, Prabakaran rejected this offer. If the LTTE agreed, the Sri Lankan government had no other option than to accept it. Though the LTTE leadership rejected the offer, it can never ever be used as an excuse by the government to indiscriminately bomb very dense Tamil areas".

Alan Keenan - International Crisis Group's Sri Lanka Project Director, according to whom 40,000 to 147,000 civilians were killed in the Vanni war.

"If you look at the other conflicts around the world where there have been many thousands of people killed in illegal ways, they don't generally get sorted out legally very quickly. There is a long game to be played, a frustrating game for all involved specially families of the victims, survivors, but I think, over the longer term, there are still options, there are still possibilities. What we need are those involved to produce documentaries like Channel 4, books like Frances Harrison's, Reports like my organization (International Crisis Group) can continue to produce....Together, cumulatively, with effective lobbying, we can keep the Rajapaksa regime and those associated with them on the defensive and ultimately, I think, as political developments happen within Sri Lanka and outside, there will be a moment when they are not reigning supreme as they are now, then these issues come back to bite them".

Yasmin Sooka, One of the 3-member UNSG 'Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka' and co-author of the Panel report which placed the upper margin of civilian deaths in the Vanni war zone at 40,000.

The government of Sri Lanka claims that they mounted a humanitarian mission to rescue the civilians from the LTTE. GOSL also claim that there were zero civilian casualties. "But we think that as many as 70,000 civilians died. I think LLRC did produce some valuable lessons but in terms of the question of accountability it is a big failure".

Callum Macrae, producer of the macabre Channel 4 documentary, 'Sri Lanka's Killing Fields'. (His fanaticism seems to make him forget that crude melodrama like his are produced by the hundreds at Hollywood, Bollywood, Kollywood and many other places all over the world).

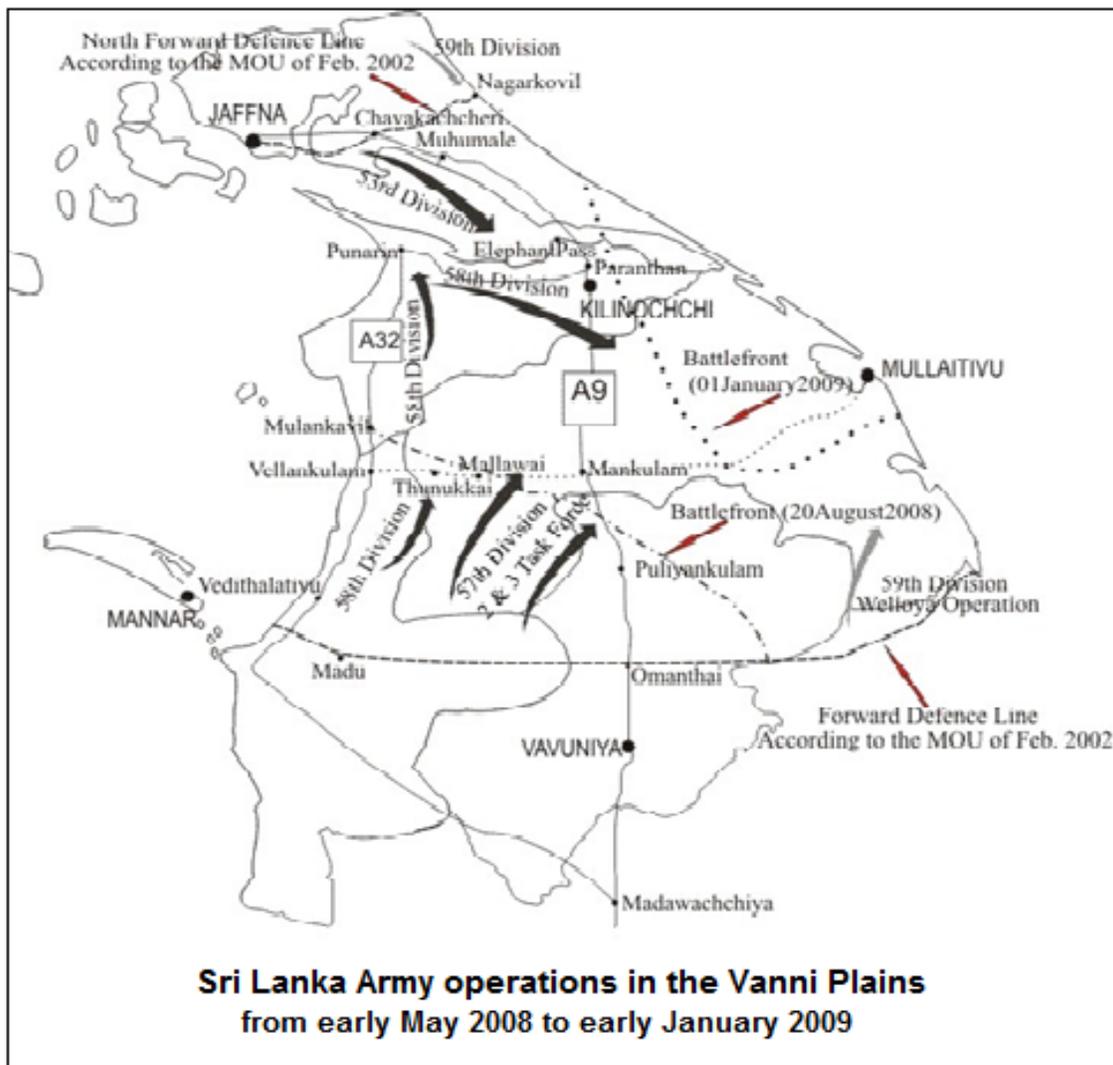
"We need to keep telling this story. Most importantly, we want to get this film by the end of January and launch it internationally in the build-up to the Human Rights Council. We want to show this film in Asian countries and African countries as well. We need to go to the Non Aligned nations and say this is a matter of human rights. This is a fundamental matter of international law. This is an issue the rest of the world has to take up. This will be ready for the Human Rights Council. Then we need to use this film to campaign to CHOGM at the end of the year in Sri Lanka".

Frances Harrison, BBC Correspondent who has had close contact with the Tiger leadership from about 2002 is the author of *Still Counting the Dead*. Reproduced below are only a collection of a few brief extracts – not the really spicy flights of imagination.

"Today marks three years since the end of the fighting in Sri Lanka. I would like to mourn the dead but still I do not know how many. Estimates range from 7 to 147,000. It is a shocking difference. How is it possible in this world of satellites, rolling news and internet we have no idea how many human beings really perished, even rounded up to the nearest thousand? ... Numbed to the sight of death, families were forced to abandon the corpses of their loved ones as they ran for their lives. A brave doctor who saved thousands of lives is haunted by the memory of the 150 patients he abandoned under a tree on the last day of the war; he can no longer stand the sight of blood and does not want to be a surgeon. It was a place where loving parents discussed suicide with their children, unable to tolerate the agony of dying one by one. A medic saw a baby born with

a bullet lodged in his tiny leg, shot while still in the womb. In the makeshift hospitals dying mothers screamed for their babies to give them one last feed – knowing the breast milk would be their last gift of life”.

To those of the west, mesmerized by this type of “truth”, what do numbers matter? Why count the dead even if you could devise a reasonably acceptable method of doing so, unless you just go on counting until you somehow reach a total which the Sookas, the Harrisons and the Macraes of this world say now it’s sufficient for our purpose? There are tens of thousands in Sri Lanka who mourn the dead – relatives and friends – but not with crocodile tears and not in pursuit of money, power and fame. We are intensely saddened every time we learn about the murder of countless civilians in, say, Vietnam, Cambodia, Libya, Iraq, Pakistan or Afghanistan – a process that will go on and on until the “world is safe for democracy”. We are also aware that, for certain mourners, the Vanni dead are very special (if not unique) in that there is plenty of diaspora largesse for those who invent death-counts or bemoan the absence of a count.



2. A Cross-Section of Estimates

Clarifications of Terminology

'Final Phase' refers to the period between early January and 19 May 2005 (i.e. from the time of eviction of the LTTE from the township of Kilinochchi that had served as their principal base since December 1995 until the final battle-field defeat of the LTTE).

The 'Vanni' is a geographical designation for a large part of the northern plains of Sri Lanka.

'Eastern Vanni' refers to the area which was under LTTE control at the commencement of the 'Final Phase' - roughly the territory east of the north-south aligned A9 Highway.

The 'War Zone' during the 'Final Phase' declined in extent from almost the whole of the 'Eastern Vanni' in early January to a tiny coastal strip by mid-May 2009.

The 'No-Fire Zones' (NFZs) announced by the Sri Lanka government were small areas within the 'War Zone' - the 1st NFZ declared on 20 January (26 km² located between Theravilkulam and Puthukudiyiruppu; a.k.a. 'Thēvipuram Safety Zone') and the 2nd NFZ (initially a coastal strip of about 10km² north of Mullaitivu town). The 'no fire' stipulation was ignored by the LTTE in the sense that the zones were used as bases for their armed hostilities.

The phrase 'Vanni Population' as used in this study refers to the inhabitants of the LTTE-controlled area (combatants and non-combatants) during the 'Final Phase' of the war.

I have examined seven important studies that focus (some of them, not exclusively) on the subject of civilian deaths in the parts of the Vanni lowlands that were under the control of the LTTE from early January to 19 May, 2009. They are (arranged in chronological order) the following:

UNIVERSITY TEACHERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS-JAFFNA/UTHR-J (2009) *Special Report No. 32 of 10 June 2009 & Special Report No. 34 of 13 December 2009*

DARUSMAN, Marzuki, SOOKA, Yasmin & RATNER, Steven R. (2011) *Report of the Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka*, a.k.a. '**Darusman Report**'/UNSG-PoE Report

GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA (November 2011) *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation*, www.slembassyusa.org/downloads/LLRC-REPORT.pdf

DEPARTMENT OF CENSUS & STATISTICS/DCS, SRI LANKA (2012) *Enumeration of Vital Events*, Ministry of Finance & Planning, Colombo

INDEPENDENT DIASPORA ANALYSIS GROUP/IDAG (2012) *The Numbers Game*

ROBERTS, Michael (2013) 'Estimates of the Tamil Civilian Death Toll during the Last Phase of Eelam War IV',

ENGAGE SRI LANKA (2013) *Corrupted Journalism, Channel 4 and Sri Lanka*, www.engagesrilanka.com

In addition, there are many shorter reports such as those by the United Nations Country Team (2009); Human Rights Watch/HRW (2009) *Displaced and Detained: The Plight of Civilians in Sri Lanka's Vanni Region; Report to the Congress on Incidents During the Recent Conflict in Sri Lanka*, submitted by the United States, Department of State (2009); records of 'monitoring' the conflict by the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs/UN-OCHA, Colombo; and similar documents published by the International Committee of the Red Cross/ICRC, Geneva. To these may be added the articles by reputed journalists like Reddy (2009) 'Final Hours - and Eyewitness Account of the last 70 hours of Eelam War IV,' that deserve serious attention.

It is almost universally admitted that there could be no exactitude in estimating the number of “non-combatants”/“civilians”/“Internally Displaced Persons – IDPs” entrapped by the LTTE in the course of its retreat across the eastern Vanni, and what proportion of that number lost their lives having been caught in the cross-fire (“collateral mortalities”) or, as frequently alleged, wilfully targeted by one or the other of the warring parties. The related gross estimates (some of which are tabulated below) vary from less than 2,000 to well over 145,000. There is also considerable diversity in the methods followed in the different computations. While some estimates are no more than components of the rabid post-war hostilities directed at Sri Lanka under the pretext of articulating humanitarian concerns,¹ others are based at least on a semblance of rational ‘methodology’ in the analysis of parameters relevant to the arrival at rough but plausible approximations. Even among these there are the products of agents provocateurs impelled by either sanctimonious prejudices or hegemonic geopolitical objectives.

Table 1 - Estimates of Civilian Deaths in the War Zone during the Final Phase of the Eelam War

Source & Date	Civilian deaths in the ‘War Zone’	Comments
		<u>(the estimates, except where stated otherwise, cover the period from 1 January to 19 May 2009)</u>
Rohan Gunaratne, 2011	1,400	Dr. Gunaratne, a well-known researcher who has written authoritatively on ‘internal conflict’, is quoted in Roberts (2013).
V. Shanmugaraja, 2012	2,500	Dr. Shanmugarajah served as a senior medical officer in the LTTE-controlled areas throughout 2008 and up to about 14 May 2009 at places close to the rebel headquarters. His estimate is mentioned in a legally valid affidavit.
U.S. State Department Report (October 2009)	7,700+	The report submitted to the US Congress (my source: the UK daily, <i>The Guardian</i> , of 16 December 2010).
U.N. Country Team (2009)	7,737/17,700	From early January to 13 May = 7,737. With extrapolated values for the days thereafter, the overall total has been increased to 17,700. In the light of the Indian journalist Reddy’s spot report according to which there were no civilians left in the LTTE-held 1.5km ² by May 15, this addition of 10,000 civilian deaths appears untenable.
Independent Diaspora Analysis Group (2013)	15,000	The report could be accessed <i>via</i> the website of the Institute of Conflict Management, Delhi.
Rajasingham Narendran	6-10,000	These three are Tamil professionals who have tended to adopt a ‘moderate’ stand <i>vis-a-vis</i> the Eelam campaign. Their estimates are evidently based on various orally conveyed and documented sources of information. (My source: Roberts) .
Muthukrishnan Sarvanandan	10,000	
Noel Nadesan	11,000	
Michael Roberts (2013)	10,000 -18,700	Prof. Roberts is a veteran researcher and author of many scholarly works on the Sri Lankan conflict (and other topics)
Institute of Conflict Management (Delhi)	11,111	Civilian deaths in the year 2009, presented in a tabulation titled ‘Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Sri Lanka, 2000-2014. Source: ICM – Terrorism Portals website
Department of Census & Statistics, Sri Lanka	7,400	All deaths “due to unidentified other causes” , said to be based on an official field survey (2011-2012).
‘Darusman Report’ (April	40,000	The report was prepared by the 3-member panel appointed by

2011)		the UN Secretary General. What the report says is that the civilian death toll could have been as high as 40,000.
UN Internal Review Panel (Nov. 2012)	70,000	Report states that the civilian death toll could have been as high as 70,000
University Teachers for Human Rights-Jaffna (2009)	20,000-40,000	The UTHR-J has regularly ‘monitored’ the Sri Lankan conflict & other conflicts and/or human rights since violation since the late 1980s
Alan Keenan (see IDAG website)	40,000-147,000	Keenan was the chief of the Colombo Unit of the ‘International Crisis Group’ (which has been fiercely hostile towards Sri Lanka headed by Gareth Evans, an anti-Sri Lanka campaigner.
Frances Harrison (Dec. 2012)	50,000-101,748	Harrison was a Colombo-based BBC correspondent (c. 2002-4) and has continued to be hypercritical of the government of Sri Lanka, demanding stern action against alleged ‘war crimes’

3. Computation Methods

The methods employed by the authors/institutions referred to above in their attempts to estimate the Vanni death toll during the final phase of the Eelam War could be placed in the following categories:

- Population Change Method - This has entailed the assumption that the difference between the estimated Vanni population at the commencement of the final phase and the total number of persons at the end of that phase (considered as being more accurately recorded at IDP camps, interment centres and hospitals etc.) provides an acceptable estimate of the number that died and the number ‘missing’.
- Injury-to-Death Ratio Method – This method has entailed the use of (a) the supposedly comprehensive data maintained at hospitals in the Eastern Vanni on treatment of the wounded, and (b) the scatter of information available on the number that died and the number wounded (over spells of fighting), for the purpose of working out a set of ‘injury-to-death’ ratios for different time-spans of the Final Phase, and then, the projection of such ratios over the entire period to generate an overall death-count.
- Sporadic Information Method – This method has entailed the use of a large bodies of “credible evidence” obtained from miscellaneous sources such as eyewitness accounts, writings by journalists, reports compiled by monitoring institutions outside the war zone (those such as the UTHR-J, TamilNet and the ICRC) which claim to have had networks of informants within the war zone, and, in a few instances, demographic data claimed to have been extracted from satellite images in the course of the war, to reach what those who have employed this method refer to as “credible estimates”.
- Satellite Imagery Interpretation Method - Satellite images are said to facilitate actual headcounts of the war zone population at various stages of the Final Phase, and (somewhat dubiously) to enable the making of a distinction between combatants and non-combatants in the process of counting. The impact of bombing and shelling on war zone targets and the placements and directions of fire of the heavy artillery used by the Sri Lanka army are also claimed to be revealed by satellite imagery.

- Post-Conflict Census Enumerations – Household headcounts conducted by government agencies designed mainly to elicit information on the war casualties obtained surviving from kith and kin.

In their application to the Vanni war these have not been mutually exclusive methods. Most of the estimates referred to in Table 1 have involved the use of more than one of these methods, the ‘methodological’ differences among them being mainly in the relative emphasis placed on one or another of the methods.

3.1. ‘Population Change Method’: Applications

A ballpark estimate relating to the Final Phase of the war that has remained undisputed at least in serious writings is that *the number of people who survived the war*, having escaped from the clutches of the LTTE at various times since early January 2009, or been evacuated by the ICRC-sponsored ‘mercy missions’, or captured by or surrendered to the Sri Lanka Army **ranged between 295,000 and 310,000**. Accordingly, if it is possible to identify a plausible estimate of the population in the LTTE-controlled area at the commencement of the Final Phase (from among those available – see the list presented below), the difference between the latter and the former number could be considered an acceptable estimate of roughly how many of the Vanni population perished (or considered “missing”) during this 139-day period.

Imelda Sukumar (Assistant Government Agent, Mullaitivu) estimated that the Vanni population by about **January 20, 2009** was about **360,000** [Source: Independent Diaspora Analysis Group (IDAG) *Report*, p. 20]

K. Parthipan (Assistant Government Agent, working in the LTTE-controlled area) reported on **3 March 2009** that the population of the area on **3 March 2009 was 330,000 and, on 29 April, 150,000**.

Human Rights Watch (an international non-government organisation), placed the estimate on civilians in the Vanni in **December 2008** at “between **230,000 and 300,000**”. (Source: ‘Sri Lanka – Trapped and Mistreated: LTTE Abuses against Civilians in the Vanni’ 15 December 2008)

Time news magazine (of **February 3, 2009**) reported that “as many as **250,000 civilians**” were being held hostage by the LTTE .

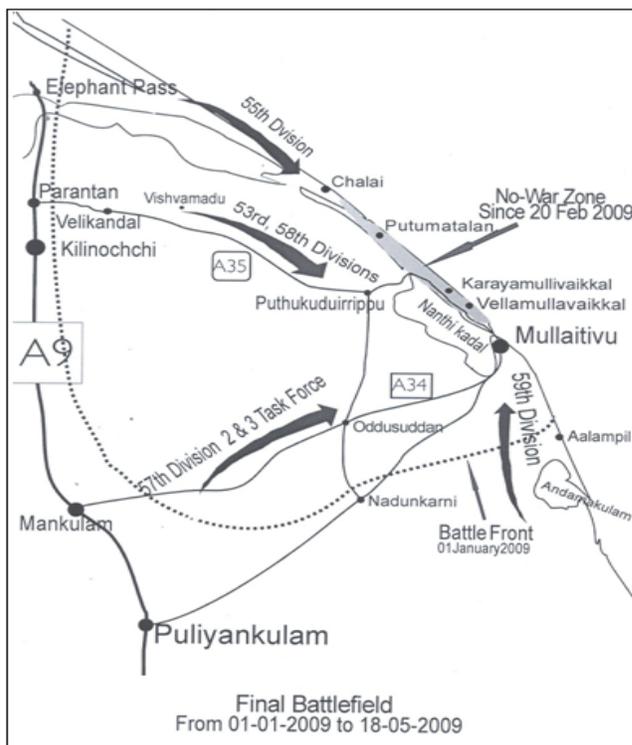
UN Country Team (report on the situation at the end of February 2009) 269,000 in the LTTE-controlled area on 28 February, and 36,000 on 25 February in IDP camps
UN ‘World Food Programme’ (WFP) estimated in **February 2009** that the population in the LTTE controlled area at that time was **250,000**
<http://www.wfp.org/stories/sri-lanka-vanni>)

University Teachers for Human Rights – Jaffna (UTHR -J), Special Report No. 34 of 13December 2006, Sections 5.1. & 5.2. – The UTHR-J placed the “original Vanni population” tally at about **365,000**

There are, however, no estimates of the size of the Vanni population in the immediate aftermath of eviction of the LTTE from its headquarters at Kilinochchi on 1-2 January 2009 –

The closest available to that point of time is a computation by Ms. Imelda Sukumar, the Government Agent of Kilinochchi District, which, in certain writings,² has been considered an acceptable ‘base estimate’ of the Vanni population in January for the purpose of tracing the subsequent changes.

From 1 January to the time of announcement of the 1st NFZ (20 January), 5 Divisions and 3 Taskforces of the Sri Lanka Army³ were in cautious pursuit of the retreating Tiger cadres that were herding along tens of thousands of civilians as both a human shield for their combatants and a disincentive to enemy artillery and bomb attacks. The landward warfront at this stage, though gradually shrinking in length, stretched over a distance of more than 70 miles – for the most part, over forested territory. In this chaotic demographic scene, despite the presence of a numerically large army on one side of the warfront (but largely confined to narrow corridors



along the A34 and A35 ‘highways’), and Tiger combatants numbering probably about 7 -10,000 on the other side, it would have been possible for a fair number of civilians, especially those not encumbered by infirmities or household ties, to escape from the war zone and ‘vanish’ into the wilderness of the adjacent parts of Trincomalee and Vavuniya districts – especially the interior of Trincomalee District where there is a thin scatter of Tamil hamlets.⁴

It is in the context of these considerations that the Government Agent Imelda Sukumar’s population estimate of 360,000 for January 2009 should be looked at, especially in the context of the fact that November 2008 (about 6 weeks *before* the fall of the

Tiger base at Kilinochchi), she had stated in an official communication that there was a population (including all IDPs from adjacent districts as well) of 360,000 “with me” (meaning, “within her area of authority at that time”). If this latter estimate, presumably made at the headquarters of district administration with the assistance of support staff, and on the basis of data extracted in ‘Householders’ List’ maintained by the *grāma niladhāri* (village officers)⁵ prior to the war-induced large-scale displacement of the Vanni people from their homes from about May 2008 (when the concerted offensive against the LTTE in the Vanni region began), was a fairly accurate estimation, *the actual size of the population in the LTTE-controlled of the eastern Vanni on 21 January could by no stretch of imagination have been anywhere near 360,000*. An inference that could be drawn from this deliberate or inadvertent error of the part of Ms. Sukumar is that official computations of the Vanni civilian population made from time to time

during February, March and April 2009 by her subordinates (especially the Assistant Government Agent, Mr. K. Parthipan) were featured by similar distortions attributable to similar impulses and compulsions.⁶ Thus, what all these considerations point to is that the ‘Sukumar-Parthipan’ estimates are not plausible enough to factor into equations that could generate an acceptable estimate of Vanni war casualties.

Had there been some source from which a more reliable estimate of the ‘Vanni population’ in January 2009 could be obtained, calculating the ‘Population Change’ between January and May 19th would have served as a feasible method of quantifying the Vanni death-toll during the Final Phase of the war. The inescapable fact, however, is that the other computations available, such as those by the ‘Human Rights Watch’ ‘UN Country Team’, ‘UN World Food Programme’ (referred to above) are unacceptable for the reason that, when matched against the numbers that are known to have escaped/rescued from the war zone, they appear as under-enumerations.

In the absence of a plausible estimate of the size of the Vanni civilian population in January 2009, the search for the death-count in the Final Phase of the war by employing the ‘Population Change Method’ has often tended to involve the arbitrary selection of a preferred ‘base-population’ value, the preference invariably depending on the size of the death-count which the estimator wants to achieve, from the viewpoint of either the objective with which the estimate is being made and/or personal convictions based on qualitative information including anecdote, gossip, rumour and partisan propaganda. This is illustrated, for instance, by the upward revision of the ‘UN Secretary General’s Panel of Experts’ estimate of “up to 40,000 civilian deaths” (in April 2011) to the ‘UN Secretary General’s Internal Review Panel’ estimate of “up to 70,000 civilian deaths (November 2012) – an obvious retaliation against the refusal by the government of Sri Lanka to agree to a UN-sponsored international investigation into alleged “war crimes”.

3.2. ‘Injury-to-Death Ratio Method’: Applications

The assumption on which the adoption of this method of estimating the Vanni death toll is based is that the number of persons wounded (and treated at hospitals and makeshift medical centres), and the number that died *during certain episodes* of attack (i.e. bombing raids, artillery shelling, firing with infantry weapons etc.) as reported by persons within the war zone and/or estimated by agencies outside, could provide a set of ‘injury-to-death’ ratios for different spells of the war from January to May 2009, thus facilitating a plausible estimate of the overall death toll for the entire period. The application of this method for estimating *civilian* mortalities has also entailed a supplementary assumption that, in the maintenance of records of treatment of the wounded, the medical personnel serving the Vanni population at this time did make a fairly accurate distinction between combatants and non-combatants, thus facilitating a fairly accurate estimation of an overall total of *civilian* deaths. (How the medical personnel could have done so, except in the case of the aged and small children, baffles imagination.)

The most detailed application of this method available so far is found in Section 4.4. (captioned ‘The Probable Truth’) of the monograph titled *The Numbers Game* compiled by a group of researchers calling themselves the ‘Independent Diaspora Analysis Group’ (IDAG). The “probable truth” arrived at by the IDAG through a seemingly complex method of

computation is that the total number of ‘*Vanni civilian deaths*’ during the final phase of the war was about 15,000; and that another 2-3,000 of the Vanni population remains unaccounted. Presumably, the latter – ‘missing’ – have been killed while fleeing from ‘NFZ 2’, or have surreptitiously crept out of the government-run IDP camps, or (in the case of LTTE combatants who survived) escaped incarceration by the Sri Lanka security forces.⁷ Projecting backward from their ‘injury-to-death computations’ and the reported number sheltered in IDP camps in early June 2009, the IDAG has also estimated that the total population (including LTTE cadres) in the Vanni on 10 January 2009 was between 339,300 and 343,300.

In contrast to the report published by the UNSG-POE (a.k.a. ‘Darusman Report’), the IDAG report is, indeed, a valuable (arguably the most valuable) contribution to an understanding of many things that happened during the ‘Final Phase’ of the Eelam Wars. There is, however, considerable doubt about the validity of the IDAG method of computing the ‘injured-to-killed’ ratios during different spells of the ‘Final Phase’ – the pivotal parameter of their overall civilian death-toll estimate.

The essence of the information furnished in Section 4.4. of the IDAG Report could be sketched out as follows:

- (a) Based largely on computations by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), the IDAG has estimated the number wounded and the number that died during *different spells from late January to early March 2009*, and derived the following approximate ratios of these two sets of numbers (Table 2).

<u>Time-span</u>	<u>Number injured</u>	<u>Number of deaths</u>	<u>Deaths as % of number Injured</u>
January 20-31	2,208	420	20%
February 1-28	4,056	1,814	45%
March 1-8	1,072	536	50%

Note: The IDAG has acknowledged that UTHR-J and TamilNet were the main sources of information for the UNOCHA, and that the UNOCHA’s representative in the Vanni at this time was a “political science graduate of the University of Jaffna” (whose personal dedication to duty and whose information have been authenticated by no less an outfit than the ‘UTHR,J’ (!)

Also note that January 20 was the date on which the 1st NFZ was announced.

- (b) The method followed by the IDAG for estimating the ‘injured-to-killed ratios’ *from early March to 19th May* has involved, *inter alia*, the recorded numbers of deaths and persons injured during 3 spells of armed confrontation during this time, referred to as ‘Case-Studies’ (Table 3).

<u>Case Study</u>	<u>Number killed</u>	<u>Number injured</u>	<u>Episode and Main Sources of Information</u>
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March 9-10	191-207	500+	Artillery shelling. Report by Lawrence Christy of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) and TamilNet
April 20	900-1,125	1,200+	This was immediately after the commencement of the outflow of Vanni civilians from the 2 nd NFZ. Estimates are based on miscellaneous sources including TamilNet informants, ICRC field staff, medical personnel et. al. working inside the NFZ. (Whether these 'eye-witnesses' accompanied the fleeing refugees has not been mentioned).
May 12	49	54	A section of the Mullaivaikkal treatment centre shelled on 12 May in the course of an intermittent artillery shell attack by the SLArmy over several days resulting in the death of about 54 and 48 wounded, as estimated by Dr. Vartharajah reported in several publications such as TamilNet.

Following the presentation of its estimates of deaths and the number wounded in these 3 episodes of attack, the IDAG has referred to several sets of additional information extracted almost entirely from TamilNet reports (supplemented with newspaper articles by the journalist D. B. S. Jeyaraj and 'Special Reports' released by UTHR-J) to reach the conclusion that *between 1 May and 18 May*, 6,082 **civilians** were injured, and a **total** (whether this total includes LTTE cadres in not stated) of 5,418 were killed.

Using the 'killed-to-injured ratios' shown in Tables 2 and 3 along with the additional information referred to above have the IDAG has derived a set of estimates on the numbers killed and the numbers wounded during the different time-spans of the Final Phase of the war and, based on those estimates, worked out the killed-to-injured ratios in each time-span as shown below:

<u>Time-span</u>	<u>Killed:Injured Ratio</u>
January 21-31	60:100
February 1-28	63:100
March 1-31	63:100
April 1-19	66:100
April 20- <u>31</u> (sic.)	75:100
May 1 -19	90:100

There are several reasons for questioning the validity of the IDAG methodology in its application to the Final Phase of the Eelam Wars. Perhaps the most obvious reason for scepticism relates to the impartiality/credibility of the sources of information. On close scrutiny an overwhelmingly large share of the raw data used by the IDAG appears to have been extracted from reports compiled by TamilNet and UTHR-J. No serious claim could be made that informants employed by organisations such as UTHR-J and TamilNet could have been impartial observers of the war zone, even if they were not supportive of what the LTTE was doing to the

civilians in the NFZs. Political commitments and compulsions apart, this was a time the primordial sentiments of many among those working in the NFZs would have made them think that only an external military intervention (like that of Vadamarachchi 22 years earlier) could avert an impending Armageddon for their people. (Needless to stress, they do not deserve to be criticised for this.) In addition, there are several compelling reasons to doubt the impartiality of certain other organisations such as the UNOCHA office in Colombo which are also cited by the IDAG in order to authenticate its information base. Indeed, the IDAG’s quote from a TamilNet report according to which a TamilNet informant in the war zone “... personally witnessed nearly 300 dead bodies while fleeing from the area” makes the entire story in the 2nd Case Study somewhat surrealistic.

The second issue pertains to the IDAG assumption that the 3 ‘Case Study’ scenarios could be projected over a wider time-span in order to derive ‘injured-to-killed’ ratios’. Apart from the well known short-term oscillations in the intensity of violence in this phase of the war, it is ‘common sense’ (based on what we have seen or heard of artillery/bomb damage or other explosions) that the proportion of the number wounded to the number of deaths varies widely depending not only on the type of weaponry used but also on many features of the target such as its population density and its physical form. It would sound almost banal to say, for example, that a shell falling on the confined space of a ‘hospital admission ward’ (at Puthumathalan Hospital, as several witnesses have claimed) crowded with wounded patients is likely to result in a higher proportion of ‘death-to-injury’ than, say a shell exploding over an open space with a thin scatter of people. This “common sense” finds confirmation in the two sets of data presented below (Tables 4 & 5).

Table 4

The data tabulated below are from a report furnished by Dr. Sathiyamoorthy and Dr. Shanmugarajah (Regional Directors of Health Services, respectively in the Districts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. The report is titled ‘**Victims of Shelling in Vanni**’. The two doctors claim that their report is based on information obtained from all hospitals in their respective areas of authority. The report could be accessed at www.scribd.com/doc/10556997/victims-of-shelling-in-Vanni

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place (location)</u>	<u>Number killed</u>	<u>Number injured</u>
1 Jan	Murusumodai area in Kilinochchi	5	28
2 Jan	Mullaitivu town	4	8
2 Jan	Puliyankumai in Kilinochchi Dt.	1	2
2 Jan	Murasumodai in Kilinochchi Dt.	2	9
4 Jan	Vaddakachchi-Kalmadu area in Kilinochchi Dt.	0	13

5 Jan	Kovilkudiyirippu in Mullaitivu Dt.	1	1
8 Jan	Vadakachchi in Kilinochchi Dt.	3	13
8 Jan	Tharmapuram in Kilinochchi Dt.	3	15
8 Jan	Kalmadu in Kilinochchi Dt.	0	3
10 Jan	Puthukudiyirippu Hospital, Mullaitivu Dt.	4	3
11 Jan	Theravil in Mullaitivu Dt.	0	8
11 Jan	Kallaru in Kilinochchi Dt.	0	2
13 Jan	Puthukudiyirippu, Mullaitivu Dt.	1	2
14 Jan	Manthuvil in Puthukudiyirippu, Mullaitivu Dt.	1	3
13 Jan	Thoddiyadi near Visuvamadu in Mullaitivu Dt.	3	15
14 Jan	Kaiveli in Mullaitivu Dt.	0	13
15 Jan	Suthanthirapuram in Mullaitivu Dt.	3	6
16 Jan	Kaiveli in Mullaitivu Dt.	2	2
16 Jan	Kombavil in Kilinochchi Dt.	0	2
16 Jan	Visuvamadu, Mullaitivu Dt.	0	1
16 Jan	Theravil, Mullaitivu Dt.	3	2

Table 5

Artillery and Bomb Attacks on Hospitals in the LTTE-controlled areas of the Vanni

Report published by Human Rights Watch*

8 May 2009

The report states that 30 permanent or makeshift hospitals have been attacked by the Sri Lanka armed forces since December 2008. It contains the following tabulation.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place (location)</u>	<u>Number injured</u>	<u>Number killed</u>
15-12-08	Mullaitivu General Hospital	2	0
19-12-08	Mullaitivu General Hospital	2	0
20-12-08	Mullaitivu General Hospital	Shell damage to premises, no casualties	
22-12-08	Kilinochchi General Hospital	Bomb damage, no casualties	
25-12-08	Kilinochchi General Hospital	Shell hit hospital grounds, no casualties	
30-12-08	Kilinochchi General Hospital	Shell hit hospital building, no casualties	
08-1-09	Tharmapuram Hospital – shell hits Tharmapuram “junction”, 7 killed, number injured not given		
13-1-09	Puthukudirippu Hospital	6	1
19-1-09	Vallipuram Hospital	6	0
22-1-09	Vallipuram Hospital	22	5
26-1-09	Udayaakaddu Hospital	40	12
31-1-09	Puthukuduyirippu Hospital	No casualties	
01-2-09	Puthukuduyirippu Hospital	5	2
02-2-09	Puthukuduyirippu Hospital	15	7

03-2-09	Puthukuduyrippu Hospital	“several”	2
05-2-09	Ponnambalam Memorial Hospital*	60 “casualties inside the hospital”	
09-2-09	Puthumathalan Hospital	Wall damaged, no casualties	
10-2-09	Puthumathalan (place not given)	‘Injured’ number not given	16
16-3-09	Puthumathalan Hospital	‘Injured’ number not given	2
23-3-09	Puthumathalan Hospital	15+	1
09-4-09	Puthumathalan Hospital	300+	23
20-4-09	Puthumathalan Hospital	“hundreds”	13
21-4-09	Valayanmadam Hospital	“more than 30”	5
28-4-09	Mullaivaikkal Health Centre	1	6
29-4-09	Mullaivaikkal Health Centre	‘Injured’ number not given	6
29-4-09	Mullaivaikkal Hospital	15	9
30-4-09	Mullaivaikkal Hospital	15	9
02-5-09	Mullaivaikkal Hospital	87	68

* Ponnambalam Memorial Hospital evidently catered only to the LTTE cadres

Notes on the Source: The ‘Human Rights Watch’ (HRW) has throughout being one of the INGOs most hostile towards the SL Government. Its leader, Gareth Evans, made an attempt in 2006 to establish a permanent unit of the HRW in Colombo in connivance with Ms. Rama Mani, the Head of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, but was thwarted by the government. Some of his writings indicate that he has a deep-seated prejudice against Buddhists, especially those participating in political opinion-making in Sri Lanka. The HRW has lobbied the US Congress for curtailment of aid to Sri Lanka.

What these two sets of data (Tables 4 & 5) confirm more than all else is the randomness (or stochasticity) of the ratio of the number killed to number injured in incidents of attack – a fact which makes the procedure adopted by the IDAG for working out the ‘Probable Truth’ intrinsically unsound. In addition what these sets of data suggest as corollary is that (a) the ratio of ‘killed-to-injured’ is likely to have been substantially lower than the related IDAG estimates, and therefore, (b) that its estimate of the overall death-toll is excessively high.

Thirdly, there is once again the ever-elusive issue relating to the ‘Principle of Discrimination’ enunciated in Article 48 of the UN Additional Protocol 1 of 1977 – and hence, the impossibility of separating the ‘non-combatants’ from the ‘combatants’ in the type of war fought in the Vanni in the early months of 2009 through a ‘Injury-to-Death Ratio’ method or, for that matter, through any other method referred to in the present critique. There is, in the use of this method, an untenable assumption that medical personnel and others who worked at the treatment centres were able to make the distinction between the LTTE cadres (for most of whom the T-shirt, the denim or the sarong was the only battle-dress available, especially at the concluding stages of the war) and the others. That is pure bluff. Without reiterating the obvious, it is sufficient to recall the statement made by one of the most passionate defenders of the rights of civilians entrapped in conflict situations, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan according to which:

“The changing patterns of conflict in recent years had dramatically worsened the problem of compliance with international law.... In situations of internal conflict, whole societies are often mobilised for war and it is well nigh impossible to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants”

3.3. The ‘Sporadic Information Method’: A Sample of Applications

Many published estimates of the civilian death toll in the Final Phase of the war have been based largely or entirely on miscellaneous sets of information either selectively extracted from other published sources or orally conveyed by “credible”/“authentic”/“reliable”/“authoritative” informants/eye-witnesses whose identity is seldom revealed. It is also of interest that the authors of these estimates – UTHR-J, TamilNet, ICRC, UNOCHA, UNSG-PoE to mention only a few – have tended at times to resort to the practice of citing each other in order to authenticate one or another of their guesses or claims.

3.3.1. University Teachers for Human Rights - Jaffna

Among the major studies that contain detailed probes into the unresolved issues concerning the Final Phase of the war (which I have referred to at the outset) those that have depended almost entirely on this method are the two ‘Special Reports’ Nos. 32 and 34 (titled, respectively, as *A Marred Victory and a Defeat Pregnant with Foreboding* and *Let Them Speak: Truth about Sri Lanka’s Victims of War*, published by the UTHR-J. In view of this, and also in the context of the fact that the uniquely voluminous writings by the UTHR-J have been used as sources by several others, I find it necessary to examine the way the UTHR-J has employed this method in these two reports.⁸

The following extracts from the UTHR-J reports are intended to convey an impression of: (a) the sources of evidence on which the UTHR-J has relied, (b) the vistas of specific events and episodes in the last days of the war re-created by compilers of the reports, based presumably on information that includes hearsay, rumour and personal anecdote which (with a few exceptions) are said to have been narrated by persons referred to only by pseudonyms, (c) the nature of the ‘quantitative information’ embedded in such narrations, and (d) that the UTHR-J has directed its attacks on both the government of Sri Lanka as well as the LTTE. A few of the UTHR-J reconstructions (which are not reproduced below), sad to say, are as melodramatic as the ‘Kollywood’ creations in Tamil Nadu.

“I (an unnamed informant) had moved to the church in Iranapalai. During February the Kfirs came on a bombing raid. I got into a bunker. A little later a 1000 kg delay bomb fell about 15 feet from my bunker and penetrated the ground. Fortunately, this bomb failed to explode. Later the LTTE came and dismantled it to extract about 600 kg of explosive...A few days later... the bomber dropped ‘air bombs’ (bombs that explode above the surface) in the field, killing about 15. About the same time a delay bomb (1 ton or 1000 kg) fell on a temple close by. I saw a goat, a man, a mat and some cooking utensils being thrown above the height of a coconut tree...These bombs when exploding use the ambient oxygen for combustion creating a vacuum, resulting instantly in a powerful blast of wind. The blast wrenches at the clothes and renders them in tatters, leaving the injured women partially exposed. Several girls had stayed in a bunker to avoid conscription gangs (This is one of many references by the UTHR-J to the conscription of civilians). The blast covered the bunker killing all of them”.

“From 21 to 29 January the Thēvipuram Safety Zone (i.e. NFZ 1) experienced intensive shelling by the Army which then was battling for Visuvamadu 3 miles to the west, resulting in astounding levels of civilian casualties. Civilians who faced intense shelling on 20 January said that it has become worse once the area was declared a safety zone the next day.”

“A teacher spoke (to the UTHR) of an instance where a man of about 50 was standing with a crowd when the army began shelling, killing many in the crowd and making others restive. The man appealed amicably to the LTTE commander standing nearby (saying) Thamby (brother) at least at this stage, you must let the people go. In a move apparently to suppress any desire in the crowd to leave, the (LTTE) commander pulled out his pistol and shot the man dead.”

“Confusion among LTTE ranks was also confirmed by Komathy. The LTTE also for the first time, on 14th May, announced that civilians who wanted to leave could leave. However, there were some instances after that where they had ordered would be escapees not to do so. We reported in Special Report No.32 that a large group of civilians, who went to a Palmyra nursery near Nanthikadal Lagoon before dawn on the 14th to cross to the other side or to Vattuvakkal to the south, were shot at by the LTTE killing about 500 of them. We (i.e. UTHR-J) have had further confirmation of this”.

“(At Puthumathalan), according to Dr. V. Shanmugarajah, (on 10-12 May) ... ‘a total of 430 ethnic Tamil civilians, including 106 children, were either brought to the hospital for burial or died at the facility after (the artillery) attacks’. (He added): ‘But the death toll was likely closer to 1,000 because many of those killed would have been buried in the bunkers where they were slain, and many of the gravely wounded never made it to the hospital for treatment’.

“Dr. Shanmugarajah had told the Associated Press on Sunday (10th May) that artillery fire killed at least 378 civilians and wounded more than 1,100. .. Civilians who came out gave figure around 2000 as the number of people killed as did TamilNet. Having accounted for 430 dead, Shanmugarajah’s estimate that the total is closer to 1000 was a cautious projection he was entitled to make as one with first-hand knowledge of the ground situation”.

“‘Kiruban’, not real name, (said) heavy shelling began again around sunset. In a group of about 1000 they began moving towards Irattavaykkal along the shore on Nanthikadal. The shelling caused several deaths in the crowd of people. Kiruban too saw hundreds of corpses on the way. He estimated that about 150 of those in the crowd got killed”.

“Thavamani (pseudonym) ... said that the shelling had been very intense until 19h May. From messages passed between bunkers in her area, she estimates that about 150 persons were killed by shelling in her vicinity. All those who were in Mullivaykkal at the latter end that we have spoken to, are agreed that countless deaths occurred during these days while the Army and LTTE were slinging it out at one another with no concern for the people. Odd testimonies coming from the security forces confirm that the area was awash with dead bodies”.

“Kannan, a family man from Visuamadu, escaping along the Nanthikadal shore (on 17 May), saw about 500 corpses”.

“After the final bash it (i.e. the government of Sri Lanka) announced on 18th May: ‘Despite the speculations of a bloodbath and a humanitarian catastrophe at the final military push Sri Lankan soldiers were able rescue about 70,000 people within the last 72 hours without causing any harm to the innocent’. In fact 29 000 civilians were transported from the battlefield to Chettikulam Zone 4 from 18th May and 1400 injured civilians to Padaviya Hospital. Civilians were coming out of the war zone until at least 20th May 2009. This means there must have been nearly 35 000 civilians left when the Government said on the 17th afternoon there were none”.

There are many other sets of similar “credible evidence” (space limitations prevent more being cited) claimed to have been elicited by the UTHR-J from persons given pseudonyms such as ‘Kailash’, ‘Gunam’, ‘Nick’, ‘Revathy’, ‘Rani’, ‘Maniam’, etc. or referred to as “a survivor”, “a senior community leader”, “a church worker” etc. all of which converge on the theme of Vanni civilians in large numbers being annihilated in indiscriminate attacks by the armed forces of the government or, in a few instances, by the LTTE cadres. (Note that in regard to the anonymity of the IDP informants in the war zone maintained by the UTHR-J, Drs. Vartharaja and Shanmugarajah are among the rare exceptions).

A comment on the content of these extracts

Although it is distasteful to make critical comments on the harrowing tales of human suffering, whoever relates the tales, it would be rank stupidity to discount the possibility that at least some of the stories recounted by the UTHR-J could have been fabricated. Indeed, the sworn affidavit of Dr. Shanmugarajah (dated 10 May 2012) which has received wide publicity, contains, among other things, a damning exposure of certain UTHR-J distortions, and throws doubt on the credibility of the entirety of its sanctimonious writings. In addition, what he has said about Ms. Gnanakumr Thamilvani – (*nom de guerre*, ‘Vani Kumar’) the pet witness of ‘Channel 4’ – sheds light on the realities concerning narratives on which such writings have been based.

One should also be conscious of the ease with which evidence could be manufactured retrospectively and with impunity in the prevailing peaceful ethos of the ‘North’ (former lackeys of the LTTE having regained their political respectability) for the purpose of authenticating such tales, so as to convince the gullible or strengthen those pursuing programmes of ‘regime change’ and ‘destabilisation of recalcitrant states’.

Further, it is precisely the harshness of UTHR-J exposures and criticisms of the crimes committed by the LTTE that provides a façade of impartiality to almost whatever it says about the government of Sri Lanka and others who refute its views. Since it is common knowledge the world over that the LTTE never hesitated to commit any heinous crime or any violation of civilized ethical norms,

publicizing even its most outrageous brutalities could make hardly any impact on the *status co* of its ‘external relations’. To the governments of Sri Lanka, in contrast, the outcomes of UTHR-J’s “exposures” are, as recent experiences demonstrate, entirely different.

This is probably why Prabhakaran who persisted to the very end with ruthless suppression of any dissent or any challenge to his hegemony, administering capital punishment even on certain persons of his own community for the display of inconsequential deviations from the prescribed path, permitted the UTHR-J (since the murder of Rajini Thiranagama, a founder member of the UTHR-J, back in the ‘80s when the LTTE had formidable rivals in Jaffna) to persist with its ‘good work’, totally unhindered. What should also be emphasised is that in both UTHR-J reports I have referred to there are strident calls for an “*independent inquiry*” into what happened at this stage of the war, just like what Marzuki Darusman, Navi Pillay, David Cameron or Ban Ki-moon demand. Needless to say, any inquiry that finds the government of Sri Lanka not guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity would *ipso facto* be biased or misconstrued!

What is of more direct relevance to the present study is not so much the general fact that the UTHR-J “exposures” were not confined to the alleged crimes committed by the SL Army, but the way the ‘Sporadic Information Method’ has been applied in its attempt to enumerate the Vanni civilian deaths.

The ‘Special Report No. 34, Sections 5.1 & 5.2 which is titled ‘The Population Game: Disappeared on Paper and Killed with Cannon’, contain the UTHR-J analysis of information pertaining to how many Vanni civilians were killed from early January to 19 May.

The analysis is prefaced by a vituperative criticism of the “government’s cavalier attitude to the lives of the trapped people” allegedly reflected in the official underestimations of the Vanni population throughout this period with the sinister intention of denying the inhabitants of the war zone an adequate supply of food. Here, we find no mention of the fact that several the UN agencies, the ICRC and the US embassy also underestimated the size of the Vanni population.

The UTHR then states that the surest way to find out how many died is to compare (a) the number of those who arrived in IDP camps with (b) an authoritative estimate of the original Vanni population (“original” refer to early January 2009).

There are, as shown earlier, no estimates of the size of the ‘Vanni population’ in the immediate aftermath of the eviction of the LTTE from its base at Kilinochchi on 1-2 January 2009 – certainly not any that are free of serious blemish. Yet, in what purports to be seen as a serious search for such as ‘base estimate’, the UTHR-J refers to the following computations that were available at the time of compilation of its reports:

- (1) The estimate by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees that in **November 2008** there were **230,000** IDPs in the Vanni.
- (2) The estimates by the Government Agent Imelda Sukumar of a Vanni IDP population of **360,000 in November 2008**, and by Assistant Government Agent Parthipan of a war zone IDP population of 360,000 in early March 2009.

- (3) The estimate by the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies that “currently (date not specified) Vanni civilians number about **300 000.**”
- (4) That in **January 2009**, “the UN spoke of **230 000 IDPs** on the move” in the war zone.
- (5) The ICRC estimate of a Vanni civilian population of **250,000 in January 2009.**
- (6) A statement attributed by the ‘International Crisis Group’ by the ICRC that there were **150000 people** in the NFZ2 in early March.
- (7) An ‘opinion’ that there were at least **330,000 civilians in the NFZ2 in March 2009** which a “senior government administrator” had expressed in conversation with a “senior community leader” who, in turn, had conveyed in to the UTHR-J.

Thereafter the UTHR-J which in one of its earlier writings had cast doubt on the authenticity of the estimates by the two government agents (items 2, above), takes the stand that the ‘Sukumar-Parthipan estimates’ are, after all, the best available, and proceeds to conclude (entirely on the basis of a comparison of the estimate for early March attributed to Parthipan with the aggregate of civilian survivors of the war) that the *Vanni civilian death-toll would be in the range of 20,000 to 40,000*. It was through the same type of contrived procedure, but with vague references to “credible evidence”, that the UNSG-PoE also arrived at an identical conclusion of the Vanni death-toll about two years later.

3.3.2. UN Secretary General’s Panel of Experts (UNSG-PoE)

Since the Report of the UNSG-Panel of Experts has already been placed under scholarly scrutiny in two vitally important publications – Marga Institute (2011)⁹ and IDAG (2013) – at a level of impartiality, thoroughness and force of logical reasoning which could hardly be matched, it is sufficient to state here that the UN Secretary General (UNSG) and the three “experts” handpicked by him should bear the brunt of responsibility for perpetrating a fraud that has brought into light the disreputable manner in which the United Nations bureaucracy functions at its highest levels. When questioned about the procedural propriety of appointing such a panel UNSG stated that there was a formal understanding between him and the government of Sri Lanka that the setting up of a panel entrusted the task of inquiring into the conduct of the war in its final stages was a sequel to an agreement between him and the government of Sri Lanka. When this was shown to be a falsehood, he responded with a statement which implied that he has the discretion to seek advice from any source. After the submission of the report to his office, however, it was not only leaked to the media in an obvious attempt to denigrate the government of Sri Lanka, but has also continued to be used at ‘Sri Lanka Periodic Reviews’ conducted by the Human Rights Council, not as a personal communication addressed to the UNSG containing a collection of unsubstantiated accusations replete with misinformation and contradictions, but as an well founded indictment that somehow carries the weight of formal sanction by the world body.

A glimpse of how the ‘Sporadic Information Method’ could be misused in ‘kangaroo court’ fashion is illustrated by the ‘UNSG-PoE’ in the following extract (Paragraph 137) with which the trio concludes their probe into the civilian death toll:

“In the **limited surveys that have been carried out** in the aftermath of the conflict, the percentage of **people reporting dead relatives** is high. A **number of credible sources** have estimated that there could have been as many as **40,000** civilian deaths. Two years after the end of the war, there is **still no reliable figure for civilian deaths**, but **multiple sources of information** indicate that a range of up to 40,000 civilian deaths cannot be ruled out”.

The ‘bold’ font (mine) is intended to highlight the sophistry and perversion which the three ‘experts’ had brought to bear upon their task. Let’s ignore the tediously repetitive references to unnamed “credible” sources on which their report almost in its entirety is based and accept the explanation that the secrecy regarding sources is intended to protect informants. But, confining ourselves to this small passage, what is the need for secrecy about the “limited surveys”? Who conducted the surveys? Where and on what samples were they based? Where in Sri Lanka can one find people who *do not* have “dead relatives”? What were the “multiple sources of information”? Surely, this is not the type of bluff that could sustain a prima facie charge of “war crimes”?

3.3.3. Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation / ‘LLRC’

The task entrusted to the LLRC could be summarised as one that entailed the conduct of an inquiry into “facts and circumstances” of the Sri Lankan conflict over the period from 21 February 2002 up to 19 May 2009. The Commission was requested to gather information on crimes committed (including violation of human rights) in the course of the conflict, identify those responsible for such crimes, and to draw from *the conflict experiences* lessons of relevance to preventing similar conflicts and promoting peace and harmony in the country.

What could be considered a synthesis of the Commission’s findings that relate to the subject of crimes committed in the final phase of the war is encapsulated in the following passage (Paragraph 9.42) of its report.

“During the public sittings and field visits to conflict affected areas, a large number of representations were made before the Commission alleging the violation of fundamental rights and freedoms of people affected by the conflict. These include abductions, enforced or involuntary disappearances, arbitrary detention, conscription of underage children, extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, violation of the freedom of expression, movement, association, freedom of religion, and the independence of the media etc. Representations were also made on issues pertaining to the rights of IDPs, and other vulnerable groups such as women, children and disabled. The Commission considers that its recommendations on these human rights issues are critically relevant to the process of reconciliation”.

Placing the LLRC Report under comprehensive critical scrutiny would extend beyond the scope of the present study. But since it has often been considered, albeit tenuously, as Sri Lanka’s official response to the allegations of ‘war crimes’ and ‘crimes against humanity’, and since one of the cardinal objectives of the present study is that of reviewing a key aspect of such

allegations, I find it appropriate to refer (as briefly as possible) to certain negative features of the LLRC investigations and the contents of its report.

Chapters 4 and 5 of the Commission report consist almost entirely of the evidence pertaining to the war zone gathered by the LLRC and presented in the form of hundreds of testimonies by persons from a wide range of social backgrounds such as civilian victims of the conflict; incarcerated LTTE suspects; military personnel including policy-makers; professionals in civil administration, social welfare services, journalism and law; activists in mainstream politics; religious leaders, and others who could be referred to as cognoscenti of Sri Lankan affairs. The deficiency in this component of the report is that, when considered in its entirety, one could find hardly any addition to the *generality* of the existing mass of information presented in various public statements and reports such as those published by the UTHR-J, TamilNet, UNOCHA, ICRC, Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence, except that the LLRC has, by accommodating information furnished by neutral and pro-government sources in its report, compiled a more balanced list of things that happened in the Vanni war zone. Another caveat that must be added to this criticism is that the LLRC post-war investigations *within Sri Lanka* have been of much wider scope than those claimed to have been conducted by any other person or institution. However, since it has all along been known that homicide, torture, plunder, enslavement, forced conscription, denial of fundamental rights etc. etc. were committed before, during, and after the war, both within and outside the war zone, any worthwhile addition to that knowledge by a Commission of Inquiry should have been in the form of conclusions relating to the overall scale of such crimes and the related culpabilities. The only synthesis of the empirical evidence so laboriously gathered and incorporated into the report with a measure of certainty is that the security forces of Sri Lanka did not deliberately bombard or shell civilian targets in the war zone.¹⁰ Even this falls short of what one could legitimately expect because, apart from a brief suggestion of doubt on the authenticity of the 'Channel 4' cinematography on extra-judicial execution of prisoners, and an even more superficial foray into the interpretation of 'satellite imagery' by the UNSG-PoE,¹¹ the commission has refrained from probing at depth many other allegations against the Sri Lanka army that have received worldwide publicity.

Another deficiency of the report is that its empirical component is a veritable hotchpotch of disparate snippets of information which has neither a coherent sequence nor a typological framework within which the information is presented. Even more important is the absence of a discernible connection between the narrative of 'information' gathered by the LLRC, the 'lessons' it has drawn from that information (except in the case of its information on inter-group cultural links and affinities in Sri Lanka), and most of its 'recommendations'. With the exception of a few recommendations for inquiring into and/or redressing victims of certain crimes allegedly committed in the course of the Vanni operations, and the need for payment of compensation to those who suffered losses (referred to in Chapters 4 and 5), there is hardly any link between the personal testimonies of witnesses, and the suggested remedial and preventive measures. Thus, the hard truth is that, while the overwhelming majority of the 'recommendations' could easily have been made even without engaging in an elaborate inquiry, given the ground realities that ought to have been found, a few in the list of recommendation should not have been made at all.

Of several examples that could be cited to illustrate this criticism, I refer to the following contents of the paragraphs that appear under the sub-title ‘The Need for Devolution of Power’:

The LLRC discourse on ‘Devolution’ starts with the statement:

Many persons who appeared before the Commission stated in clear terms that reaching a political consensus that will facilitate devolution of power to be of critical importance, to further the process of reconciliation after the ending of LTTE terrorism, which was the main obstacle against achieving such a consensus for a long time.

Note that devolution being considered an essential ingredient of ‘reconciliation’ by many people is a well known fact which hardly requires reiteration by a Presidential Commission. Had the LLRC been less subjective on this controversial issue, it would have also mentioned the equally well known fact that many people, probably the overwhelming majority of Sri Lankans, are opposed to the type of Province-based devolution provided for by the ‘13th Amendment to the Constitution’. A parrot-like repetition of a prescription for inter-ethnic reconciliation which certain governments in the west and by India, without an understanding of the ramified implications of such a constitutional arrangement, and, evidently, with no awareness whatever of the pros and cons of devolution as discussed on the basis of global experiences in several authoritative writings, is hardly the type of recommendation one would expect from a Presidential Commission.

To digress further from the subject of civilian war casualties, it is common knowledge that the ‘Commissions of Inquiry Act’ confers on Presidential Commissions a wide range of statutory powers. These include the powers to summon witnesses and, where appropriate, compel witnesses (regardless of their station on life) to submit documents in their possession that might contain relevant evidence. The concealment of the sources of information (which journalists sometimes claim as an inalienable right) is evidently disputable in law that applies to witnesses of Presidential Commissions. The LLRC procedures and its Report, however, convey the impression that the Commission preferred to depend on voluntary sources of information, leaving the decision of what to reveal and what to conceal at the discretion of the witness, a few instances of desultory cross-examination excepted. It is this approach – possibly impelled by a mindset that the Commission should attempt some reconciliation on its own (laudable?) – that probably accounts for *the* most glaring deficiency of the LLRC Report. To be specific, most of the allegations being made against the government of Sri Lanka at an international plane have their origin in Sri Lanka in the form of local informants almost entirely of the NGO sector and among former LTTE loyalists (including some presently in the national legislature). Especially since this phenomenon is of utmost salience to post-war ‘reconciliation’, the Commission could have exercised its statutory powers to unravel not only the mysteries of how these organisations function, why they flourish, what are their sources of external patronage, who constituted their claimed networks of information in the war zone, and what type of evidence they used to make some of the damning accusations against Sri Lanka.

Returning to the main concern of the present study, what should certainly be highlighted as a deficiency of the LLRC Report is the fact that it has refrained from a critical evaluation of the Vanni death counts that were available prior to the completion of its task. These include the UTHR-J ‘Special Reports’ Nos. 32 and 34, the ‘Darusman Report’ and the various estimates by UN-OCHA and the ICRC. That such an evaluation, impartial but incisive in approach, could have been made with the resources and statutory powers placed at the disposal of the

Commission is amply demonstrated by the far more useful study conducted by the IDAG a section of which I have already placed under scrutiny.¹² This omission on the part of the LLRC conveys the false impression that there is no evidence from the war zone which contradicts the absurdly high death-toll estimates, including the speculative upper limit of the count referred to in the Darusman Report and its upward revision by the ‘UN-SG Internal Review Panel.

3.3.4. Michael Roberts¹³

Unlike the reports compiled by the ‘UNSG PoE’ and the UTHR-J, the writings by Roberts demonstrate both the possibilities and the limitations of the ‘Sporadic Information Method’ in its application to situations such as that of the Vanni war zone, and how a committed scholar with no axe to grind and no political cause to promote, could weigh a mass of information gathered from a miscellany of sources, and arrive at reasonably plausible findings (not that I agree with all of them) without being judgemental and obdurate. Having placed several estimates by others under critical scrutiny, Roberts has opted to base his own estimate mainly on information conveyed to him by three persons on whose judgement and impartiality he has implicit trust. He also finds some corroboration of that information from the estimate derived by the IDAG through the ‘Injury-to-Death Ratio Method’. In placing his own estimate within such a wide range of numerical values – 10,000 and 18,000, i.e. with a deviation of $\pm 28.25\%$ from the median value – he has correctly implied that, in any quantification of this type, the margin of error is necessarily hazy. In using this method, Roberts has not ignored or concealed evidence that does not conform to preconceived conclusions (as the UNSG Panel has so often done), he is conscious of the ‘Rashomon Effect’ on cognition of events and incidents by eyewitnesses; and, in contrast to ‘fly-by-night’ experts who never hesitate to pontificate on Sri Lanka, he has an incisive understanding of the country’s grass-roots realities, acquired through long years of personal experience and research. My only reservation about his estimate stems from the fact that although he (more than other writers on this subject) has stressed the impossibility of separating the combatants from non-combatants especially in the chaotic finale of the war, his tally seems to somehow gloss over that difficulty.

3.4. Satellite Imagery Interpretation Method: Applications

There are several sets of satellite image-based estimates of the war zone population that are of relevance to the subject of the ‘Vanni civilian death toll’. The estimates so derived by the UN Country Team (referred to in p. 4, above) were: 36,378 in IDP Camps on 25 February, and 267,618 in the NFZ2 on 28 February. Again, based evidently on the same methodology, the UNOCHA placed the total population in the war zone (whether the total includes the combatants is not clear) on May 6, 2009 at approximately 70,000 to 80,000.¹⁴

Evidence gleaned from satellite imagery has been accorded an important place in the ‘Darusman Report’ as well, providing what the readers of the report are expected to understand as irrefutable evidence of bombing and artillery shelling by the Sri Lanka army of localities (mainly hospital premises) in the war zone inhabited largely or exclusively by civilians. Since the damaged hospitals are named (listed below), and the exact dates of such bombardment are

given in the report, it has been possible for me with the guidance of Professor P. Wickremagamage of the Department of Geography, University of Peradeniya – the pioneer of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) studies at the university – to attempt a verification of the bombing and shelling and the resultant damage so reported.

Udaiyarkaddu Hospital
Vallipuram Hospital
Puthukudiyirippu Hospital
Ponnambalam Hospital
Puthumathalan Hospital
Mullaivaikkal Hospital

The method I followed (which could, in fact, be replicated by anyone who has at least an elementary understanding of satellite imagery) was to use the sets of satellite images (different sets available at about fortnightly intervals) covering the hospital sites referred to, and to ascertain whether there are visible differences in the ‘landscapes’ before and after a specific episode of attack dated in the Darusman Report, devoting minute attention to the sites marked with small red or yellow circles in the satellite images presented in the report in order to indicate ‘craters’ on the ground and damaged roofs of buildings attributable to exploding bombs or artillery shells.

There were limitations in this attempt at verification such as partial cloud and canopy cover in the images downloaded by me, or the difficulty of identifying the exact location of the Ponnambalam and Mullaivaikkal hospital premises. But subject to these limitations, the images that were examined by me did not provide confirmation of shell or bomb damage as alleged in the case of the overwhelming majority of sites flagged with circles in the satellite images reproduced in the ‘Darusman Report’ – that is to say, at the sites indicated, there was no discernible difference between the image of a date before the alleged bombing/shelling episode and the image of the same site after the alleged attack. There were, at the Udaiyarkaddu and Puthumathalan hospital premises a few spots that showed damaged roofs and what looks like small craters and patches of burnt vegetation on the ground within about 200 meters of the hospital buildings which might have been caused by explosions. That apart, there is no evidence to substantiate the allegation that the hospital premises referred to or their vicinity suffered intense damage from barrages of bomb and shell explosions. While not claiming any expertise in the field of satellite image interpretation, the impression I gained from this amateur exercise of verification is that there is “credible evidence” to warrant an impartial inquiry into the credibility of the satellite image evidence cited in the Darusman Report. I am, of course, conscious of the possibility that with the required expertise available to the government of Sri Lanka, the evidence claimed by the UNSG Panel of Experts has already been placed under careful scrutiny.

In the context of the claim made by the UN Country Team that ‘UNOSAT Quickbird’ and ‘Worldview’ satellite images which sourced its population estimates (which I have cited earlier) were of sufficiently high resolution to distinguish even a single person on the ground (presumably to the extent of facilitating the making of a distinction between combatants and

non-combatants), I find one aspect of the claimed potential of satellite imagery as records of monitored evidence from the Vanni war zone somewhat intriguing. Namely, given the fact that the area would have been under constant satellite vigil, why is it that these or any other satellite fail to capture images depicting “hundreds of rotting corpses” or “up to 500 dead or mortally injured civilians” strewn over the open surface of the seaward sandbar of Nandikadal lagoon rimmed by the shallow marsh. Was it because there were no such appalling scenes to capture? Or maybe they are yet to be published as illustrations in horror stories from ‘Channel 4’. The same puzzle comes to mind when one looks at the hundreds of photographs of remarkably high quality that depict scenes of human suffering in the 2nd NFZ and in the course of the civilian exodus in April and May 2009.¹⁵

3.5. Census Method: Applications

The conduct of questionnaire-based field investigations intended to generate quantitative information on almost any socio-economic or political phenomenon encounter two main problems – one, referred to as ‘sampling errors’ (those arising from the possibility of the persons questioned by the investigators being adequately representative of the population to which they are considered to belong), and ‘non-sampling errors’ (a euphemistic reference to the inaccuracies in the information given by those questioned to the investigators). In an intensely traumatised civilian population such as that of the Vanni war zone, there is a high probability of the data generated through the investigation being affected by both these categories of error. For, while even the coverage of all existing households in such as survey (100% sample) might not constitute a representative sample of population that has suffered losses through deaths and out-migrations, there would also be a high propensity of distorted data being furnished by the informant which is attributable to causes such as memory lapses, fury and grief about the losses, fears about possible consequences of being truthful, political compulsions, expectations relating to compensation, and how the questions are posed by the investigators, etc. Even if these two forms of ‘error’ could somehow be minimised, there would also be the unavoidable impact of the objectives of the survey on the manner in which the field data are processed and presented. It is with a clear understanding of the limitations that are inherent to the ‘Census Method’ that the efforts hitherto made to quantify the Vanni war damage through large-scale census-type surveys should be looked at.

3.5.1 Census of War Casualties by the government of Sri Lanka

About 2 years after the end of the Vanni war the government of Sri Lanka conducted a census in the 5 administrative districts of the Northern Province with the announced objective of achieving an accurate enumeration of the dead and the wounded in the course of Eelam War IV (i.e. from the commencement of military operations to liberate the northern plains of Sri Lanka from LTTE control in May 2008 up to the final demise of the LTTE leadership in May 2009). According to the report of this census (titled, *Enumeration of Vital Events*, published by the Department of Census and Statistics), while there was a total of 22,329 deaths in the 5 districts of

the Northern Province during the 5 years preceding the end of the conflict (i.e. the period often referred to as ‘Eelam War IV’), about 7,400 died due to fighting from June 10th 2008 to May 19 2019. It appears in retrospect that the government itself did not place much significance on this enumeration.

Sri Lankan Tamil political groups in and outside the country either ignored this census or responded to it with cynicism. The latter was reflected in the response of the London-based ‘Tamil Information Centre’ (TIC) according to which the government should “expand its census back to the time of the first political killing of Government Clerical Services Union (GCSU) Member and the clerical officer of the Department of Health and Sanitary Services, Velupillai Kandasamy” (in 1947),¹⁶ adding that, “since then, thousands of lives, Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim, have been lost to violence both in the long-term armed conflict in the context of Tamil national struggle, in the context of the JVP uprising in the 1970s, and in political assassinations”. The TIC warned that “...the government should not take this census only to counter the figures of civilian deaths being quoted by various NGOs and the UN”, and pledged that it will be conducting its own census of deaths that occurred in the course of the Eelam Wars.

One of many LLRC recommendations (Paragraph 9.37b) is that the government should: “Conduct a professionally designed household survey covering all affected families in all parts of the island to ascertain firsthand the scale and the circumstances of death and injury to civilians, as well as damage to property during the period of the conflict.” This incredibly tall order (which implicitly rejects the census data generated by the government earlier in the year) leaves hardly any room to doubt that none of the Commissioners have had any experience of what it is really like to generate reliable information through field investigations, especially those that attempt to quantify happenings four or five years old.

The government began implementing this recommendation in 2013. The Director of the Department of Census and Statistics was reported to have said: “We have devised a questionnaire after consultation with a steering committee which comprises experts in their relevant fields and all stakeholders (and that the survey) carried out in 14,022 *Grāma Niladhāri* Divisions island-wide deploying 16,000 officials to collect information, was completed by December 20th.” In the North, according to the Director, one enumerator handled every 500 households while in the South every 1000 households were questioned by one. The survey procedure, he said, “entails the gathering of information on all the circumstances of a death and that the census officials have been instructed to check documents in possession of the bereaved family in order to ascertain the authenticity of their claims”. The results of the survey are expected to be announced in March 2014.¹⁷

It was probably a minute glimpse that I had of what could well have been the implementation of the LLRC recommendation when the *Grāma Niladhari* of the area in which I reside (Kandy) arrived at my home and made a recording of my response to the question of whether anyone in my household was killed or wounded by war-related violence of the past few years. I, in turn, came to know from him that all *Grāma Niladhari* of ‘Four Gravets and Gangawata Korale’ (i.e. Kandy) have been instructed to fill a questionnaire with information from each household in their respective areas of authority and that his own task involves the coverage of more than 600 households within a month during which he has to perform his

routine office duties as well. A request for “evidence” of war-related deaths and injury from me did not arise. It is possible that in the main war-affected areas a far more concerted effort was applied to this survey.

The announcement of this census, coinciding as it did with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Colombo in November 2013, had a mixed reception. For instance, the Commonwealth Secretariat unreservedly welcomed it, stating that it has the potential of contributing substantially to reconciliation efforts. The ‘Tamil National Alliance’ (TNA, main coalition of Tamil political parties in Sri Lanka), in contrast, dismissed it as a political gimmick.” The TNA, as everyone knows, is replete with experts in gimmickry.

ENDNOTES

1. Among the better known writings and public statements of this type are Frances Harrison’s book (2013) and the incredible statement by Yasmin Sooka: "But, we think that as many as 70,000 civilians died" (in the course of the Vanni war) reported verbatim in an account of the ceremonial launch of Harrison’s book. Does the “we” refer to members of the ‘Darusman Panel’? Which is the estimate Ban Ki-moon should pick – that of Sooka, the member of his ‘Panel of Experts’, or Sooka the Harrison fan?
2. UTHR-J, Special Report No. 34.
3. Divisions 53 and 58 were approaching the Nandikadal area from a northwesterly direction along the A35 ‘highway’, Division 57 along with Taskforce 2 and 3 were approaching the same area from the west along the A34 ‘highway’. Meanwhile, the Divisions 55 and 59 were converging on Nandikadal, along the coast, respectively, from the north and the south.
4. In speculating on this possibility (especially in the early weeks of January when the battle-lines were yet to harden, and many parents were in desperation to save their adolescent children from being conscripted by the Tigers) it is necessary to bear in mind that the Tiger cadres were themselves spread out thinly over certain stretches of the LTTE lines of defence, and would not have had the capacity to seal the territory under their control against civilian escapees – mostly those of the peasantry not alien to forest environs (chēna cultivators).
5. Note that the distribution of food rations among the IDPs, a function with which the grāma niladhāri were intimately associated, was based largely on ‘Householders’ Lists’ of their respective areas of authority. Note also that, especially in the circumstances that prevailed, it would have been tempting to these lowly-paid employees of the government to inflate the ‘Householders’ List’ population aggregates.
6. A consideration of utmost relevance to an understanding of these circumstances was that, while the few government officers working in the LTTE-controlled areas were also under intense intimidatory pressures of the ‘Tiger’ cadres, the LTTE, becoming increasingly dependent on the survival of its leadership on an external rescue operation, was pursuing a policy of magnifying the ‘humanitarian crisis’ in their area – a policy served by exaggerating the size of the civilian population of the No-Fire Zones. For a detailed demonstration of why the ‘Parthipan estimates’ (which the UN Secretary General’s Panel of Experts considered as being “credible”) should be discarded is found in the IDAG Report: pp. 14-16.
7. According to government records that have remained unchallenged, about 11,000 former LTTE combatants surrendered or were captured by the security forces. By the end of 2013 roughly 92% of this total was reported

to have been released from government custody, following programmes of rehabilitation expected to facilitate their re-entry into civilian life. The others – suspects of serious crimes – are either convicted prisoners or still held in internment camps awaiting trial.

8. The UTHR-J was formed in 1988 (about one year after the Indo-Sri Lanka Pact and the advent of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force to the ‘North-East’ of the island) by a group of university dons. Foremost among its objectives was that of “challenging the external and internal terror engulfing the Sri Lanka Tamil community”. One of its founders, Dr. Rajini Thiranagama, was assassinated, probably by an LTTE suicide bomber in 1989. Since that time Professor Rajan Hoole has been the most articulate person among its activists. The UTHR-J reports contain harsh criticisms of the two belligerent parties of the Eelam Wars. A few of its reports deal with alleged human rights violations by the government in matters that are not directly related to that conflict. These are undoubtedly intended to convey the impression that the UTHR-J preoccupation with human rights is not confined to those of the Sri Lankan Tamil community and, more generally as part and parcel of its thematic political concerns, to demonstrate to the world the perfidy and the villainy of the government of Sri Lanka.
9. In its review of the UNSG-PoE Report, the Marga Institute has underscored the following facts: (a) The UN Secretary General’s claim that his appointing a ‘Panel of Experts’ to probe into violation of human rights during the final phase of the Eelam war was a sequel to a joint commitment on the part of the Government of Sri Lanka and himself is a falsehood, (b) The impartiality of the three panellists handpicked by the UNSG appears in serious doubt because of the existence of evidence that prior to their being empanelled they were prejudiced against the Government of Sri Lanka and (c) The main conclusions arrived at by the panel do not find adequate support from evidence obtained from impartial sources.
10. Paragraph 9.6 reads: “On consideration of all facts and circumstances before it, the Commission concludes that the Security Forces had not deliberately targeted the civilians in the NFZs, although civilian casualties in fact occurred in the course of the crossfire. ... It would also be reasonable to conclude that there appears to have been a bona fide expectation that an attack on LTTE gun positions would make a relevant and proportional contribution to the objective s of the military attacks involved”.
11. The inconclusive nature of the LLRC foray into the issue of hospitals in the war zone being shelled (paragraphs 9.10 – 9.14) is attributed to the “non-availability of primary evidence of a technical nature”.
12. What I refer to here are: (a) the document titled IDAG publication titled ‘Use of Cluster Bombs in Sri Lanka: Fiction rather than Fact’, which refuted a story believed to have originated in an e-mail written by Allan Poston, UN landmine expert, referred to in an Associated Press news release (28 April 2012), and given wide publicity by the pro-LTTE blogs ‘TamilNet’ and ‘Groundviews’; and (b) the IDAG (2012) *Numbers Game*.
13. In Section 1 of this study, I have mentioned only one of many publications on the Sri Lankan conflict authored by Michael Roberts. Some of these could be accessed at Thuppahi’s Blog (his personal website)
14. When placed against the fact that about 89,000 persons were known to have come out of the conflict zone to be given shelter in IDP camps during these few days, the UNOCHA estimate provides strong support to Muralidhar Reddy’s assertion (see, p. 2, above) that, by 15 May, there were no civilians left in the small locality (1.5 km²) to which the LTTE hardcore was confined, and emphatically contradicts many accounts claimed as eyewitness evidence in the UTHR ‘Special Report No. 34’.
15. See, for example, the photographs reproduced in Reuters (2009) and Roberts (2013b).

16. The late Mr. Kandasamy was killed in the course of a confrontation at the Galle Face Green in Colombo between the security forces and a large group of left-oriented trade union activists in 1947 – a few months before Independence. He, a member of the Communist Party at that time, has often been remembered by the ‘Old Left Parties’ in Sri Lanka as a martyr of the working-class struggle.
17. The contents of this paragraph are based on an announcement in the official website of the Department of Census & Statistics, Colombo

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