



A senior official from the British Mission in Geneva at the United Nations Human Rights Council has denounced Sri Lanka's speech which sought to attack UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay.

In his address to the council, Minister of Plantation Industries, Mahinda Samarasinghe said "the bona fides of the High Commissioner's objectives may be called into question" and accused her of a "lack of objectivity". Previously the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence also published articles attacking the High Commissioner's credibility.

In a blog post, Senior Human Rights Advisor for the UK Mission human rights team Bob Last stated that,

"The Sri Lankan delegation seems to be going to great lengths to keep itself at the front of people's minds. The unpleasant verbal attack on the High Commissioner by the Sri Lankan Minister was ill-judged and had no place in the Human Rights Council.

The attempt to block the premiere of 'No Fire Zone' , the latest film on the final stages of the 2009 war, got short shrift from the Council President and only served to ensure a full house for the film."

It was grim viewing but important for council delegates to see as the further in time we move from the conflict, the harder it will be for Sri Lankans to achieve justice for the violations which occurred.

After the film a Sri Lankan Member of Parliament from the Tamil National Alliance made a poignant statement quoting Arthur Schopenhauer: every truth passes through three stages before it is recognised. In the first it is ridiculed; in the second it is opposed and in the third it is regarded as self-evident. Let's hope that the Council's attention can help the process of truth telling about the conflict in Sri Lanka as a much needed first step towards reconciliation."

At the opening of the Council Session, Last also blogged,

"Sri Lanka will come up for another resolution this March aimed at promoting reconciliation and accountability in the country. The charged atmospherics around the resolution last year felt like the diplomatic equivalent of Lord of the Flies with a massive Sri Lankan government presence sparing no efforts to persuade countries not to vote in favour of the US resolution."

"Sri Lanka failed last year and won no friends through its heavy handed approach. Many diplomats were genuinely appalled by the threats made to those Sri Lankan human rights defenders brave enough to travel to Geneva to describe the situation back home."

"Let's hope we can avoid a repeat performance this year."

Courtesy - Tamil Guardian