

Response to a Colombo based Journalist
by Justice C.V.Wigneswaran, M.P..
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Question:- Venerable Karawilakotuwa Dhammathilaka Thero has said without solving the problems of the 'Disappeared' there cannot be reconciliation among the several communities in Sri Lanka. What is your view on that?

Response:- I do not know what exactly was said by the Venerable Thero. But his statement as reported in the press appears true. What is significant about the "disappeared" is that they were made to 'disappear' surreptitiously and covertly. Only some who were involved in their disappearances would be privy to what happened. If such persons privy to the disappearances of innocent human beings wield political power their conscience would prick them constantly. They would either take a violent view of what took place or a conciliatory view knowing what has been done was wrong.

When one takes a violent view, such a person would justify his or her conduct saying that those victims deserve their fate because they were Terrorists or Separatists or Evil persons!. In such a person's mind Tamils and Muslims for example are Terrorists and Terrorists are Tamils and Muslims only! As far as the Tamils were concerned there couldn't have been innocent Tamils who disappeared at the end of the War. They were all separatists or terrorists. Therefore making them disappear was justifiable. Indeed it was a heroic act to make them disappear! There would be other justifications for others viz. non Tamils.

If they took a conciliatory view they would feel sorry for their impetuous acts and try to resolve the problem of the disappeared. Ven. Thero has said not only should the powers that be who perpetrated the disappearances should issue death certificates to those affected and pay compensation but the powers that be must regret and ask for forgiveness for their foolhardy activities. They must assure that such disappearances will not happen in the future.

Since it is a Venerable Buddhist Priest who has said this, let me recall a story in the Buddha's life. While travelling with his retinue preaching, Thevadatta his relative who did not like the Buddha in order to kill or hurt the Buddha, rolled a boulder

down a hill. It rolled down and caused a stone to hit the heel of the Buddha and the Buddha was hurt. Ananda, his disciple while dressing his wound asked the Buddha how could such pain afflict the Buddha after he had attained Parinibbana stage. The Buddha laughed and informed him long time ago in one of his earlier births the Buddha had been merely watching gleefully fish caught and struggling to live on the land. That had caused Karma and the Buddha had to pay for that temporary joy he underwent quite unwillfully so many births earlier. Karma does not leave you without punishing you for your activities that bring pain to living beings. Regretting is a way of reducing the severity of the punishment one is destined to undergo. But ye shall reap what you sow!

Therefore the powers that be, must make amends first for the wrongs done by them.

Even if the perpetrators decide to regret and make amends I doubt the relatives of the disappeared would accept such regret, death certificates and compensation. The only way to please them would be to grant the freedom that the Tamils in the North and East have been asking for over 70 years and allow the Tamil speaking people of the North and East to rule themselves uninterfered by the Sinhalese politicians.

Therefore I would add to what the Venerable Thero has said by saying the powers that be must settle the Tamil political problem first for all times by giving self government to the North and East and ask for forgiveness from the relatives of the dead for causing the willful death of their dear ones, pay compensation and issue death certificates if this country is to progress.

Justice C.V.Wigneswaran, M.P.