

## Editorials/Op-Ed

# Peace and the Tamil Tigers?

### TODAY'S EDITORIAL

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A successful peace accord cannot be reached in Sri Lanka until the financial support for the terrorist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam can be altogether strangled. The Tamil Tigers have one political goal: a division of the small island and the creation of a separate state. The Sri Lankan government, however, justifiably rejects this notion. The Tigers' pursuit of that goal, the last two decades of conflict and failed ceasefires have shown, trumps considerations of peace.

One major financial source for the Tigers are Tamil expatriates living in the United States, Canada and Europe, isolated from the violence that their money supports. Ostensibly charitable organizations -- the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization is a prominent example -- collect donations and channel the money to the Tamil Tigers and their war chest. These donations are sometimes made with the purposeful support of the Tigers, but -- alarmingly -- other times donations are coerced or extorted from Tamils living in the West, according to a Human Rights Watch report released in March. "Fundraisers for the LTTE and LTTE-linked organizations went from house to house, and approached businesses and professionals, demanding significant sums of money for their cause. In Canada, families were typically pressed for between Cdn\$2,500 and Cdn\$5,000, while some businesses were asked for up to Cdn\$100,000. Members of the Tamil community in the U.K., France, Norway, and other European countries were asked for similar amounts." Failure to pay led to harassment and threats.

The reliance of the Tigers on its "charitable" groups in the West like the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization should give the Tamil communities outside of Sri Lanka influence in the Tigers' objectives and tactics, the Human Rights Watch report argues, but that influence is "effectively neutralized by the LTTE's effective use of intimidation and extortion within the community." While true, the Tigers' financial dependence on the Tamil diaspora also gives Western governments the opportunity to help bring the Tigers back to the negotiating table. Restrictions on Tiger fundraising in the West was seriously hampered this year by bans in Canada and the European Union, and in the United States this year, authorities arrested several men in New York and Baltimore suspected of attempting to purchase weapons for the Tigers. This is the kind of crackdown that needs to continue.

To bring the Tamil Tigers into meaningful and lasting cease-fire agreement, and stop the violence that is besieging the small nation, it's fund-raising activities in the West will need to be stopped. As long as the Tamil Tigers have the support of funds flowing in from outside Sri Lanka, the group will be undeterred from pursuing its political agenda through violent methods.

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