

Western diplomats attack the LTTE. (1993, November 7). *The Sunday Times*.

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“Changing or shifting goal posts whenever solution nears”

By Keith Noyahr

Western diplomats lashed out at the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam ~~this week~~ charging that the LTTE had been negotiating with the government in bad faith and “moving the goal posts every time a solution was to be reached.”

At a meeting of the diplomatic community in Colombo, the donor representatives expressed regret at the way the LTTE negotiated the release of the Prisoners of War and the opening of the safe passage for civilians to and from the Jaffna peninsula, which informed sources said has been called off ~~this week~~.

A spokesman for the UNHCR said the deal to open the Sangupiddy ferry to provide a safe passage was on the shelf and the negotiations were off and “we are back to square one with the LTTE making fresh demands.”

The Government, in late May, agreed that the forces would not arrest civilians crossing the ferry and the LTTE okayed it as a condition to opening the Pooneryn causeway.

After this agreement, the government ^{early July,} a fortnight ago, agreed on the modalities of opening the safe passage while the LTTE invited the UNHCR ~~early last week~~ to discuss the issue.

But the LTTE was adamant and told the UNHCR envoy Dr. Peter Nicolaus that four more demands had to be met before the opening of the causeway. The LTTE

objected vehemently to the army checking civilians inside “Tamil Eelam” and the army deciding on who was a civilian and who was a Tiger and demanded that these two demands had to be met.

The third demand by the LTTE was that the government should enter into a tripod agreement and recognise the LTTE as a group waging a regular war as recognised by the law of nations. Diplomatic sources said what the Tigers wanted was that three parties, the LTTE, government and the UNHCR — should sign one agreement. They said this was not the intention of the government which wanted to enter into an agreement with the UNHCR which in turn should have a separate agreement with the LTTE.

The fourth demand was that a phased approach be taken where the first step would be to allow only merchants, traders and non-governmental organisations to bring goods through the Pooneryn causeway. The LTTE had said that later at an unspecified time the LTTE would decide when a regular unrestricted passage could be made to and from the peninsula.

It is learnt that the LTTE is not keen on the opening of the ferry, as it makes quite a lot of money by allowing civilians to cross the Kilali lagoon.

The LTTE is believed to be making almost US\$ 100,000 a month through this exercise.

Diplomats point out that it was evident by the way the LTTE negotiates that it was not interested in a safe passage for the civilians.