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## 'All Sides Must Be Investigated For Real Reconciliation To Begin'



**Father S.J. Emmanuel**

**The Sunday Leader's Faraz Shauketaly spoke to Head of the Global Tamil Forum, Father Emmanuel, asking him to comment on the UN Advisory Panel Report. Excerpts:**

**Q: What is your reaction to the UN Advisory Panel's report to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon?**

**A:** We have seen a leaked report. We are at the first stage. It is an opportunity to find out the truth and to start a process of true reconciliation. The Report advises that an enquiry be held to hold both the Sri Lankan Government and the Tigers accountable. There has been a lot of emotional reaction from both sides – the Sri Lanka government and the Tamils. We Tamils of course welcome the report as being an objective one. It is an attempt to find out and bring out the truth so that justice can be done and a true reconciliation process can begin.

**Q: Do you think that a report such as this could be detrimental to the reconciliation process?**

**A:** A true reconciliation process begins with finding out the truth. The Sri Lankan government has also said that it can be detrimental. Knowing the truth as far as we can is the start so that a real reconciliation process can start. Justice includes accountability on both sides and we are all for reconciliation that's what we all want.

**Q: Some say that by asking for this type of enquiry and reports, it is a case of sour grapes because the Tigers lost the battle. What do you say about that?**

**A:** It is true that the battle was lost but that is not the end. Despite signs of victory euphoria there has been no signs of a real reconciliation process that includes justice and accountability. The people in the war zones are still suffering, the names of those under incarceration have not been released, there is colonisation going on – so the real reconciliation is not there.

**Q: What can the government do to assuage the fears of these people and what exactly can they do?**

**A:** For the last two years we have been watching closely what is happening at the ground level. The displaced have been promised many things but the delivery is not there. The displaced have not yet found their homes. Some are still in camps, surrendeers are still inside without their names being released. There is small development taking place by the form of colonisation taking place.

**Q: You are talking of colonisation in terms of the homes that are being built to house the Army?**

**A:** Yes, there is an increased militarisation, they are making special permanent military camps even though they say the war is over.

**Q: Have you yourself been back to Sri Lanka since the war ended?**

**A:** No, the last time was soon after the tsunami of 2004. It is my home and I hope to be able to visit again soon.

**Q: Do you really and truly believe not just from this Report but from first hand knowledge that there were war crimes committed by perhaps both the SL Army and the LTTE?**

**A:** Yes, there is more and more evidence surfacing. We also have evidence. We are talking of credible allegations. The evidence must come out.

**Q: Your evidence is of crimes committed by the armed forces? What about the claim made by the former MP from Mullaitivu who says that over 600 persons were killed by the LTTE?**

**A:** Such allegations must be investigated. Justice demands that. We must find the whole truth, not just one side. It is wrong for the government to react from the one side, they must think of the Tamil side too. The LTTE too must be investigated.

**Q: Is all this designed to discredit and to remove the President of Sri Lanka?**

**A:** Not at all, this is not a personal issue, it is to do with the reconciliation process of the whole country. Justice and accountability and finding out the real truth from all sides.

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