

Statement by Callum Macrae

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In 2009 the international community failed tragically to prevent the terrible massacres, war crimes, rapes and executions which marked the end of Sri Lanka's civil war.

In doing so it betrayed a fundamental principle of the UN: That if a state fails to protect its own people against war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing or genocide, (or, even worse, it is itself responsible for *committing* some or all of those crimes), then the international community has a duty to intervene.

Just over a year ago, the UN Human Rights Council—this time in *line* with those principles—concluded that because the Sri Lankan government of Mahinda Rajapaksa was clearly neither willing nor capable of carrying out its own genuine independent investigation into those crimes, the council itself would need to institute such an inquiry.

For the first time in five years the Tamils of the North and East began to believe that a process of truth and justice might be possible.

And when the people of Sri Lanka voted out the corrupt, nepotistic regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa that felt like progress too. The new government of Maithripala Sirisena did indeed move to combat corruption and restore the rule of law.

But as today's important report makes only too clear, the changes in the South are not reflected in the North. Sri Lanka still has more disappeared than any country in the world except Iraq. Only the most token plots of stolen lands have been returned. And the new government has reinstated and promoted army commanders accused of direct command responsibility for war crimes. Even with the best will in the world this is not a government which is capable of running a credible domestic inquiry into the crimes of its own forces and its own officers, let alone mounting a judicial process which would have that essential quality: the trust of the victims.

In that sense nothing has changed since the UN set up the enquiry a year ago. Talk of a new domestic inquiry misses the point completely. The fact is the international inquiry has been *completed*. It will be presented in September and then the Human Rights Council must start the process of establishing a judicial process under international UN control to ensure justice is done.

Callum Macrae, a multi-award-winning film-maker and writer, is the producer of No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka which has won several awards including The Audience Awards at the Nuremberg Film Festival; Watch Docs in Poland; and the Human Rights award at the Festival des Liberties in Brussels. For two years running, Callum has been named as one of the top three UK directors by Broadcast Magazine. CallumMacrae can be reached outsider.tv@btinternet.com; +44 7860 256 127.