

US wants to see 'LLRC gaps' filled domestically by Colombo

Tuesday, 20 December 2011

While Human Rights groups and Tamil parties in the island as well as the diaspora groups slammed the LLRC report by Rajapaksa-appointed Commission of Colombo, the US State Department said “the report has addressed a number of the crucial areas of concern to Sri Lankans” and saw the accountability issue as a domestic one without calling for international investigations. “We urge the Sri Lankan Government not only to fulfill all of the recommendations of the report as it stands, but also to address those issues that the report did not cover,” was the response by the US State Department as reported by New Delhi based Headlines Today on Tuesday.

Full transcript of the reaction by the US State Department as reported by Tejinder Singh, the Washington DC Correspondent of Headlines Today follows:

Q: Sri Lanka’s Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission has cleared the country’s army of deliberately targeting civilians during the final days of its war against LTTE. Do you have any comments? And where are they heading?

Victoria: Well, we appreciate the important work of the Sri Lankan Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission has addressed a number of the crucial areas of concern to Sri Lankans. In particular, the report recognizes and makes substantive recommendations in the areas of reconciliation, devolution of authority, demilitarization, rule of law, media freedom, disappearances, human rights violations.

And while we’re still studying the full report, I do have to say that we have concerns that the report, nonetheless, does not fully address all the allegations of serious human rights violations that occurred in the final phase of the conflict. So this leaves questions about accountability and – for those allegations, and so we urge the Sri Lankan Government not only to fulfill all of the recommendations of the report as it stands, but also to address those issues that the report did not cover.

Q: Has there been any official communication between Washington and Colombo?

Victoria: There has. Assistant Secretary Blake has been in contact with various Sri Lankan counterparts, as has our ambassador there. I’d also say that we’ve seen the government’s preliminary action plan, but we don’t think it really provides the kind of detailed roadmap that we had hoped to see for fulfilling all of the Commission’s recommendations. So those are the things that we are, in our private conversation, urging them to continue to work on, implementation of the recommendations in the report, and addressing those gaps that the report left.

Q: Are you looking forward to, or – in your discussions, have you put any time period, any kind of – that – it cannot just go on for next 10 years or 20 years?

Victoria: No, of course. But we’re looking in the first instance to a report – a response from the Sri Lankan Government to these concerns that we’ve expressed and that a number of Sri

Lankans have expressed, to hear what their proposed timetable, as I said, their proposed roadmap is for remediating these issues.

Q: Just to follow up, human rights groups in response to this report said that this is time for an independent, international probe into what happened in 2009. Is that the U.S. position? Does the U.S. think that there should be an international effort at this point? Or do you think the Sri Lankan effort is still – will suffice for the time being?

Victoria: Well, obviously, we've long said that it is better for Sri Lankans to take these issues themselves and address them fully. That remains our position, so now we want to see if the Sri Lankan Government will lead their country in the next step to ensure that there is full implementation of the recommendations that we have and filling in of the gaps. So let's see what they are willing to do going forward.

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