The Uncorrupted Truth

A detailed rebuttal of “Corrupted Journalism: Channel 4 and Sri Lanka”

Callum Macrae
“No Fire Zone is one of the most chilling documentaries I’ve watched.... Many of the images are truly shocking....”

“This documentary raises very serious questions that the Sri Lankan government must answer about what it did to protect innocent civilians. Questions that strengthen the case for an independent investigation. Questions that need answers if Sri Lanka is to build the truly peaceful and inclusive future its people deserve.”

David Cameron, British Prime Minister
A detailed rebuttal of “Corrupted Journalism: Channel 4 and Sri Lanka”

Channel 4’s coverage of the final months of the civil war in Sri Lanka and its exposure of allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity have reverberated around the world.

Its coverage of the war between the separatist rebels known as the Tamil Tigers, and the government of Sri Lanka included reports by Channel 4 News, two multi-award winning TV documentaries, *Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields* and *War Crimes Unpunished*, and a 90 minute feature documentary *No Fire Zone*. The coverage has been cited as particularly influential by the UN, was praised by the British Prime Minister and even saw its production team nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

But this journalism has not been popular everywhere. At the end of 2013 an organization called *Engage Sri Lanka*, which says its mission is to promote trade between the UK and Sri Lanka, published a hefty 222 page book called *Corrupted Journalism: Channel 4 and Sri Lanka*, which professed to demonstrate in considerable detail that Channel 4’s journalism was variously unfair, inaccurate, biased and shoddy. It is not known who funded the publication, the authors are anonymous, and no address is given for the publisher. *Engage Sri Lanka* and their offshoot, *Sri Lanka Media Watch* appear to have only an online existence on two websites and a Twitter address which spark into life whenever there are broadcasts or publications which are critical of the Government of Sri Lanka. So far they have issued pamphlets which are critical of Channel 4’s reporting, and of books by Gordon Weiss, the former UN spokesman in Sri Lanka, and Frances Harrison, former BBC correspondent in the region.

*Corrupted Journalism* first appeared just before the controversial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Sri Lanka in November 2013 and was widely distributed at CHOGM and to journalists, academics and diplomats in the UK. It is also available online and extracts have been published in several pro-government Sri Lankan newspapers and websites.

To most people the word “corruption” has a clear meaning. A corrupt sportsman, for example, is one who game-fixes in exchange for payment; a corrupt council official is one who accepts a bribe to look sympathetically at a planning application. By this common meaning, the *Corrupted Journalism* alleged by the anonymous authors of this book will be interpreted as journalism whose message is skewed or distorted in exchange for financial gain.(1) This is possibly the most serious charge that could be levelled against a journalist and we reject it absolutely. It is not true.

In this detailed rebuttal we examine every major point raised by the anonymous authors of this book. In every case we show that the charges are wrong, misleading – or simply unfounded. We demonstrate that critical facts are omitted or distorted, and that their serious accusations have no basis in fact.

So we don’t just reject the criticisms, we demonstrate that they are utterly without foundation. In every case our responses are carefully sourced and evidenced.

We will continue to tell the unbiased, uncorrupted truth – as is our duty as journalists.
The Uncorrupted Truth

Introduction & Chapter One

Before dealing in detail with the specific allegations in *Corrupted Journalism* it is worth making a general point about the approach of the anonymous authors.

A key part of their *modus operandi* is to misrepresent what we say – then spend significant amounts of time and space attacking that misrepresented view.

It is a technique they use repeatedly. For example most of the first chapter of *Corrupted Journalism* concerns the undoubted crimes of the Tamil Tigers, or LTTE. At the same time the authors disregard our clear criticisms of the LTTE and even suggest we are at best apologists for the Tigers.

In chapter one, for example, they say that in describing the Tigers we “preferred the term “army” disregarding the material fact that that the LTTE was first and foremost a terrorist organization”.

And they add:

“It is not unnatural to assume that a viewer of the programme may well have thought of the British army when Channel 4 referred to the LTTE as an “army”. It is a gross misrepresentation to infer that the average LTTE terrorist is somehow on a par with British soldier”.

In fact we make no comparison or even reference to the British army. Here is how we describe the LTTE in *No Fire Zone*:

“The Tigers used child soldiers and forcible conscription to create a ruthless army - funded by elements of the Tamil Diaspora and a partially criminal international network. Militarily they were prepared to use terror tactics against civilian and military targets, including the use of suicide bombers.”

Those lines of commentary are accompanied by pictures of child soldiers and archive footage of a suicide bomber exploding himself in the middle of a group of civilian athletes and members of the public.

In the first documentary *Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields*, we also make a solitary use of the term “army” in relation to the LTTE: “The Tigers themselves were a brutal army – often conscripting child soldiers and pioneering the use of suicide bombing.”

Our single use of the word in the second TV documentary *War Crimes Unpunished* is:

“The Tamil Tigers were a brutal but effective army fighting for the creation of an independent state of Tamil Eelam. A war in which they were prepared to use conscription, child soldiers, and even - as in this attempt to kill a government minister - suicide bombers.”

Our description of the Tigers could not be clearer. The description of those sequences by the anonymous authors of *Corrupted Journalism* could not be more misleading.
A Question of Timing

In the introduction to Corrupted Journalism the authors state: “In Channel 4’s first 60 minute long programme LTTE human rights abuses ... received 49 seconds of air time.”

Of course these films never set out to be histories of the conflict – they just cover the last four months. But even so - and rather surprisingly in a book supposedly criticising our accuracy – these figures are simply wrong. The film is actually 49 minutes long, not 60. In excess of 135 seconds was devoted to describing the LTTE, their history and their activities, of which over 50% was devoted specifically to LTTE human rights abuses.

But there is a more important point. The crimes of the Tigers are not in dispute - but a government such as the Sri Lankan one, which claims to adhere to international humanitarian law and the legal conventions of war, is held to a higher standard.

Our films present carefully authenticated evidence of crimes committed, but still denied, by the forces of the government of Sri Lanka. The undoubted crimes of the Tigers cannot be used to justify the crimes of the government’s forces.

Historical Fact – or Partisan Assumption?

Another general problem with Corrupted Journalism is the frequency with which partisan assumptions are presented as historical fact. An example is its description of the events which followed the death of 13 Sri Lankan soldiers in a 1983 Tiger ambush, as “inter-communal violence”.

In reality this “inter-communal violence” was a seven day-long anti-Tamil pogrom organized and carried out by government supporters – some of whom had been supplied with electoral rolls to identify Tamils (the ethnicity of the Tamils was clear from their names). As many as 3000 Tamil civilians were massacred, thousands of shops and homes were destroyed and somewhere between 100,000 and 150,000 Tamils made homeless.

Corrupted Journalism’s misrepresentation of historical fact is an important issue. It was exactly such misrepresentation – for example the portrayal of an organized pro-government anti-Tamil pogrom as some kind of spontaneous inter-communal flare-up - which played into the hands of the Tigers and allowed them to present themselves and the “armed struggle” as the only real defence the Tamil civilians had.
A Case of Misrepresentation

But *Corrupted Journalism* consists of a lot more than generalities. Its 222 pages lay out – in apparently specific and carefully evidenced detail – a catalogue of what it describes as inaccuracies, misrepresentations and evidence of bias. The problem is that when this list is examined in any detail, it is *Corrupted Journalism* which is distinguished by consistent inaccuracy and misrepresentation – beginning with the introduction.

“No Channel 4’s professionalism and ethics were also called into question in the footage it screened. In both of its programmes (referring to the two TV docs), Channel 4 misrepresented film footage.”

They say we “presented film of a heavy artillery gun being fired as that of the Sri Lankan army, when in fact it was footage of an LTTE artillery piece in action”, and in a footnote they add: “this footage appears at minute 25.30 against claims of government shelling in the first film”.

This claim is initially perplexing as there is no such footage anywhere near that time code. There is however a graphic sequence in the second film (at 25.20) in which a soft-focus image of an artillery piece is included as part of an abstract montage, although the subject under discussion at that point is a US attempt to persuade the government of Sri Lanka to agree a cease-fire, and not, as *Corrupted Journalism* suggests in its footnote, “against claims of government shelling”.

As *Corrupted Journalism* points out we also use this footage at different moments elsewhere in both films, but at no point do we suggest it is a government gun. That would be absurd in any case – the men firing it are quite clearly wearing the Tigers’ distinctive striped camouflage fatigues.

We first use the footage at 1.53 in the first film as the first shot in a sequence which introduces and explains what the LTTE was. The sequence also includes images of LTTE fighters, including battle sequences and child soldiers. The commentary says:

“For more than twenty five years the LTTE or Tamil Tigers fought for the creation of an independent state in Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka. They saw it as the only answer to decades of sometimes violent anti-Tamil discrimination by governments sympathetic to the Sinhalese majority.

“The Tigers themselves were a brutal army – often conscripting child soldiers and pioneering the use of suicide bombing.”
It is untrue to suggest, as *Corrupted Journalism* does, that in that sequence we “presented film of a heavy artillery gun being fired as that of the Sri Lankan army”. The footage then appears again at 14.11 where the commentary refers specifically to “The remaining Tamil Tigers”.

They do present one example of “inaccuracy” in the introduction which is correct, though it doesn’t refer to any of the deeply serious charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes or atrocities. They point out that we mistakenly refer to Gotabaya Rajapaksa as the Defence Minister, when in fact his brother the president is technically the Defence Minister and Gotabaya is the Defence Secretary. This was an error, though hardly one that undermines the serious and carefully evidenced thrust of our documentaries. It was also the only inaccuracy in any of the three films.

**The “Fog of War”**

The authors of *Corrupted Journalism* highlight the difficulties of reporting from the war zone during the final months - what they call “the virtually insurmountable difficulties in ascertaining simple facts about what happened in the last few weeks and months of the conflict.”

It seems that they hope that by so doing they can undermine the credibility of our journalism. Their problem is that they don’t want to admit that the reason it was difficult to get information about what was happening in the war zone was that the government were deliberately preventing anyone finding out what they were doing there.

For example they quote Ravi Nessman, then the Bureau Chief of Associated Press in Colombo, as saying: “This is a very difficult story to cover as a journalist. The war zone is a black hole... We can’t get up there.”

But they don’t quote what he went on to say a few moments later.

> “We’re barred from going in, most aid workers are barred from going in... From what we’re able to get from doctors up there who are the very few people with telephones that still work, from some of the witnesses who’ve fled, some civilians who’ve left, is that the government appears to be shelling in this very small area with tens of thousands of civilians, and that seems to be causing a lot of civilian casualties”. (3)

The fact is that despite the efforts of the government to keep the events in the No Fire Zones secret, the evidence has continued to emerge ever since and we have played a significant role in bringing that to the attention of the world, as the UN’s Internal Review into its role in the Sri Lanka crisis has acknowledged.

> “The broadcast of a British Channel Four film– Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields – on 3 June 2011 during the Human Rights Council’s 17th session in Geneva in a side event within UN premises is reported to have been particularly powerful in informing Member States of the violations reported to have taken place.”

But our findings have also been separately confirmed by the UN Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka appointed by Ban Ki Moon:

> “The Panel found credible allegations associated with the final stages of the war. Between September 2008 and 19 May 2009, the Sri Lanka Army advanced its military campaign into the Vanni using large-scale and widespread shelling, causing large numbers of civilian deaths. This campaign constituted persecution of the population of the Vanni. Around 330,000 civilians were trapped into an ever-decreasing area, fleeing the shelling but kept hostage by
the LTTE. The Government sought to intimidate and silence the media and other critics of the
war through a variety of threats and actions, including the use of white vans to abduct and to
make people disappear.

“The Government shelled on a large scale in three consecutive No Fire Zones, where it
had encouraged the civilian population to concentrate, even after indicating that it would
cease the use of heavy weapons. It shelled the United Nations hub, food distribution lines and
near the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ships that were coming to pick
up the wounded and their relatives from the beaches. It shelled in spite of its knowledge of
the impact, provided by its own intelligence systems and through notification by the United
Nations, the ICRC and others. Most civilian casualties in the final phases of the war were
caused by Government shelling.

“The Government systematically shelled hospitals on the frontlines. All hospitals in the
Vanni were hit by mortars and artillery, some of them were hit repeatedly, despite the fact that
their locations were well-known to the Government. The Government also systematically
deprived people in the conflict zone of humanitarian aid, in the form of food and medical
supplies, particularly surgical supplies, adding to their suffering. To this end, it purposefully
underestimated the number of civilians who remained in the conflict zone. Tens of thousands
lost their lives from January to May 2009, many of whom died anonymously in the
carnage of the final few days.”

A Question of Sources

In the introduction the authors attach significant importance to their two main sources – referred
to throughout the book. One is Gordon Weiss, the former UN Spokesman and author of “The
Cage: The Fight for Sri Lanka and the Last Days of the Tamil Tigers”. The other is a Sri Lankan
group of academic commentators, based in the Vanni, “University Teachers for Human Rights”.

Corrupted Journalism references Gordon Weiss at least 80 times – though the quotes they use
are highly selective. Not once do the authors quote any of his devastating indictments of the
government – quotes which also reinforce much of what we say. In particular they ignore what is
his overall conclusion.

“I went to Sri Lanka as a supporter of that state’s essential right to protect its sovereign
territory, and I left with much the same view. However, I believe that the tactical choices that
the Sri Lankan Army was directed to make, and which contributed to the deaths of so many
civilians, warrant a credible judicial investigation of the kind that the Sri Lankan state, in its
current guise, is no longer capable of mounting.”

They also don’t mention that Weiss was eventually unceremoniously expelled from Sri Lanka by
the government because they didn’t like what he was saying.

The pattern is the same with the quotes from papers by the “University Teachers for Human
Rights” and those associated with them – who they reference over 50 times. But if the authors
of Corrupted Journalism uncritically accept what the UTHR say about the Tigers, should they
not also accept what they say about the government forces - comments which are also entirely
consistent with our films.

“The State systematically marginalised and restricted the operation of international organisations,
subverting their efforts to humanise the conduct of the war and secure reduced casualties… the
Government blatantly lied about the real number of civilians trapped in the zone, and the number
killed by their disproportionate use of force in the form of intense shelling and bombing”.

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“A government cannot descend to the level of criminals even in dealing with criminals. The Government and a country lose their dignity and legitimacy when they subject anyone who is defenceless to barbarous treatment”.

“Defence Secretary Lt. Colonel Gotabhaya Rajapakse Rtd. appeared to believe that it was his right to make up rules of war as suited his whims ....All hospitals were hit and one would look in vain for any traces of restraint.”

“What we have witnessed over the years is an open licence to kill suspects and well over a thousand Tamil civilians have been killed by the present government’s killer squads. There is little left to the imagination on what would have happened to prisoners on the battle field”.

“All those whom we have talked to who were in the final safe zone, are agreed that places where civilians gathered and sighted from UAVs, often for collecting rations and handouts, were regularly targeted for shelling”.

None of these quotes are included in *Corrupted Journalism*.

**FOOTNOTES**

(1) The authors try to legally justify the use of the word corrupted in the title by the inclusion in the body of the text of an archaic definition of the word: “destroyed in purity, debased, vitiated by errors or alterations.” They describe this as the Shorter Oxford Dictionary’s definition of the word. Actually it is the dictionary’s fifth definition of the word. The one before that is “To induce to act dishonestly or unfaithfully; To make venal; To bribe,” which is of course the normal contemporary use of the word. Indeed the most recent web version of the Oxford Dictionary’s gives – as its first definition of the word: “having or showing a willingness to act dishonestly in return for money or personal gain.”

(2) Gordon Weiss – who the authors quote selectively, described these events thus: “Chilling photographs show thin Tamil men, stripped of their clothes, cowering before machete-wielding mobs of Sinhalese, or waiting with tyres around their necks for the terrible moment when they would be set alight by their tormentors. Black July, as it is known, has become a sort of Kristallnacht in the collective memory of Sri Lanka’s Tamils, a government-orchestrated pogrom that burned families out of their homes, and drove them from their country. One direct consequence was a flood of thousands of Tamil recruits to a ragtag guerrilla outfit of several dozen men who called themselves the Tamil Tigers.

(3) PBS interview - transcript here: http://transcurrents.com/tc/2009/02/kohona_says_its_best_for_mia_t.html

Chapter Two

The Allegations

This chapter summarises the key accusations in the first two films, quite accurately because the authors are actually quoting a Channel 4 press release.

The authors do not deal with these serious issues, but instead set out to discredit our key witnesses, beginning with a paragraph that is wrong in every single important respect.

“Channel 4’s main witness in the first programme, presented as independent, was subsequently revealed to have been a LTTE member during the period in question. Channel 4’s first programme also carried claims made by yet another unidentified witness that a group of women and girls were raped and then taken away, with the implication that they were then killed: the witness, who claimed that she and her daughter were part of that group, does not explain why they were not similarly taken away. Channel 4 also presents another unidentified witness who claimed to have a portfolio of photographs of dead LTTE leaders taken on a senior officer’s camera. He does not show them.”

We start by looking at their first claim - that Vany Kumar, the young British Tamil woman whose family emigrated to the UK from Sri Lanka to escape government orchestrated anti-Tamil violence of 1983 – is in fact an LTTE member.

The authors of *Corrupted Journalism* present not a single piece of concrete evidence to support their claim. They are in fact simply repeating unsubstantiated claims made by Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa in an interview with an Indian current affairs programme, *Headlines Today* (1) – and in a Sri Lankan government propaganda film called *Lies Agreed Upon*.

In that same interview Gotabaya said: “She (Vany) was talking about the rape. How can she talk about the rape when she was so safely - a person, so attractive a person.... She was not raped, she was not killed. How can she talk like that?”

This logic was summed up by the Indian anchor at the end of the interview:

“Gotabaya Rajapaksa there, laughing off allegations of war crimes, saying how can a pretty woman level allegations of other women being raped.”

He paraphrased Gotabaya’s position as: ‘If my officers were indeed raping women, why didn’t they rape her?’ and concluded: “That is the most absurd logic ever.”

It is, however, exactly the same offensive logic that the authors of *Corrupted Journalism* use in the second sentence of that remarkable opening paragraph, when they ask why the mother and daughter who were raped were not also taken away and executed.

“The witness, who claimed that she and her daughter were part of that group, does not explain why they were not similarly taken away.”

The third interviewee that *Corrupted Journalism* attempts to discredit is the “unidentified witness who claimed to have a portfolio of photographs of dead LTTE leaders taken on a senior officer’s camera”. They claim he doesn’t show any of these photographs, but that is simply untrue. Several of the photographs referred to are subsequently shown in the programme.
Another example, just a few lines later, is this.

“The witness Channel 4 presented, Vany Kumar, claimed that the government would then use the ICRC coordinates for hospitals to target the buildings. Kumar claimed that the doctors present in these medical points subsequently asked the ICRC not to pass on the coordinates.”

In fact the claim that doctors present in these medical points “subsequently asked the ICRC not to pass on the coordinates” was not made by Vany Kumar at all. It was made by Gordon Weiss, who was then the UN’s official spokesman in Sri Lanka and the man who Corrupted Journalism so frequently cites as a reliable witness.

**Selective Quotes**

A feature of Corrupted Journalism is the frequent use of quotes which when checked against their source, turn out to have been taken out of context, or completely misrepresented. A good example is their use of an extract from a review of our film in The Independent.

In Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields we reported that one of the worst aspects of the shelling was the way one shell was so often followed some minutes later by a second shell in the same. As one survivor explained this meant they could not go to the aid of the injured for fear of being caught in a second attack. We added: “To terrified civilians it seemed government forces were determined to maximise casualties.”

We illustrated this with distressing images of two young girls being held back inside a bunker by a tearful woman who was trying to stop them running to aid their mother who had just been terribly wounded by a recent shell.

The authors of Corrupted Journalism were disparaging about this claim – and cited the review in the Independent as justification:

“These claims couldn’t even persuade a British television reviewer, let alone any potential court or jury. The British newspaper The Independent noted that: “Nothing you saw in the first half of the programme could conclusively prove [the GPS] charge, or confirm the belief that the Sri Lankans would pause after one shell and then fire another to kill the rescuers.”
But they don’t quote the rest of the review. To do that would reveal that the reviewer was in fact pointing out that it was our film which was convincing and the government’s denial of culpability which was implausible.

Here is what the next lines of the review said:

“(The government of Sri Lanka’s) only workable strategy with the film that followed, though, was to dismiss it as a fake, since it incontrovertibly showed Sri Lankan soldiers executing prisoners in cold blood. It hadn’t looked fake to Channel 4’s technical analysts, and I don’t think it would have looked fake to any viewer outside the Sri Lankan High Commission. “These are our state property. Let’s shoot,” said an off-camera voice, as bound prisoners were murdered. “Is there no one here with the balls to shoot a terrorist?” yelled another soldier, impatient with his colleagues’ irresolution in front of three kneeling prisoners. Most horrible of all was the ogling trophy footage of dead women stripped naked: “I really want to cut her tits off,” someone muttered, “if no one was around.” The Sri Lankan government’s only response to these disgusting documents has been to question Channel 4’s “standards and fairness”.

So what was in fact a ringing endorsement of our journalism, was used to suggest our claims “couldn’t even persuade a British television reviewer.”

**An Iron Grip. The LTTE and the Civilian Demonstrations**

*Corrupted Journalism* deals with at some length with the demonstrations by civilians outside the UN base. The authors reasonably suggest these were mounted with the approval of the LTTE. Certainly, as the UN worker Benjamin Dix pointed out in our film, *No Fire Zone*, LTTE had “an iron grip over that area”.

But to imply, as *Corrupted Journalism* does, that the civilians were not genuinely terrified about the prospect of the UN leaving — and that these demonstrations were not genuine is wrong. As Weiss told us: “The Government regarded the UN as impediments to their conquest of the Tamil Tigers. “They intended to remove independent witnesses to what was coming.” If Weiss was aware of that you can be sure it was terrifyingly clear to the civilians trapped in Kilinochchi.

In Frances Harrison’s important book *Still Counting the Dead: Survivors of Sri Lanka’s Hidden War*, she suggests that the Tigers were also keen to keep the UN there to act as a cover for a tactical withdrawal of some of their heavy weapons and certainly Dix remembers the sound of heavy weapons leaving the town that night. But it is also true that the tactical withdrawal continued long after the demos — and did not conclude until the end of the year, some three months after the UN had left. The significant issue here though, is that the demonstrators genuine fears turned out to be tragically well-founded — and for that reason the inclusion of the footage was entirely appropriate.

**FOOTNOTES**

(1) Interview with Gotabaya Rajapaksa http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBEqq0bGURg#t=191 php/rajapaksa-promotes-instigator-of-channel-4-protests-to-cabinet/
Chapter Three
Channel 4’s Witnesses

It is perhaps significant that almost half of this chapter – ostensibly devoted to a further examination of the credibility of our witnesses – is actually an attack on a report broadcast by the Australian channel ABC which has nothing to do with Channel 4 and features none of our witnesses.

The main thrust of the remaining pages is a further attempt to discredit the testimony of Vany Kumar. This is done for the most part not by addressing her evidence, but attempting to cast doubt on her credibility and suggest she was a secret Tiger.

Their first charge is that she operates under a series of seemingly sinister aliases.

“Channel 4’s prime witness goes by at least four other names,” they say, before revealing that those four names are virtually identical. Damilvany Kumar, Damilvany Gnanakumar and Damilvany Gananakumar are all variations on the same name – in the same way that someone named Robert Miller might also be known as Rob Miller, Robbie Miller or Bob Miller.

The spelling variations (in one case just by one letter) are even less surprising when it is considered that the names are phonetically transcribed into the Roman alphabet from the original Tamil text - and that it is a convention within Tamil culture to abbreviate both first and family names.

The fourth “alias” they quote, “Dr Tamilvani”, is actually from a Youtube video posted by someone who misspells her name – and wrongly says she was a doctor. (1)

One hates to think what they make of the fact that she has now remarried and has another name.

Corrupted Journalism next points out that when Channel 4 News interviewed Vany shortly after she got back to the UK in September 2009, they said: “we are unable to vouch for the independence of her testimony.” They imply there is something sinister about the fact that we did not make such a disclaimer when we interviewed her for Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields.

That is hardly surprising. The timescale of a daily news bulletin means that although her evidence was clearly important and credible and worthy of broadcast, it was sensible to sound that cautionary note pending further investigation. The timescale of our subsequent films allowed us to make further checks and gather an enormous amount of corroborating evidence which meant such a disclaimer was neither necessary nor would it have been accurate.
Flimsy Evidence

The next piece of evidence presented to cast doubts on Vany’s credibility relates to the fact that she calls her cousin, (whose family she stayed with in the Vanni), her brother. In fact it is absolutely conventional in Tamil culture (and indeed in many other cultures) to call your cousin “brother”. The authors also attach apparently significance to the fact that she left her family in the UK without letting them know. Again the explanation for this – that she had separated from her husband – was far from sinister. (2)

Indeed in No Fire Zone, which as a feature documentary allowed us the luxury of greater length, Vany is able to explain in some detail the circumstances of her journey, following the failure of her marriage.

VANY: The relationship did not last long, but, Tamil Community is very strict about separation and divorce. Soon as I graduated, I thought I need a break; I need to go somewhere else, to get away from the personal issues. So I decided to go to Sri Lanka to stay with my brother. I’m calling him brother but he’s actually my cousin. But it’s just a cultural way of calling somebody.”

Footnotes and Misrepresentations

Corrupted Journalism makes much play of its copious footnotes (625 in total), of which it says:

“This study might be seen as drawing excessively on footnotes and references. This has been a deliberate policy. In attempting to assess a situation as polluted by propaganda as that of exactly what happened in the Vanni in the course of 2009, it is essential to document as many of the sources addressing, and claiming to address, the issue as possible.”

In fact as we have already noted many of the footnotes refer to articles, reviews, videos and documents leaked by Wikileaks which when studied turn out to have been seriously misrepresented by the anonymous authors of Corrupted Journalism. Often this involves a curious subterfuge whereby something completely untrue is slipped in with something true. Indeed in this very section that happens twice.

For example in the section dealing with government shelling of hospitals the authors write: “Weiss notes that the LTTE shelled their own civilians and hospitals.(CJ Footnote reference 138)

But any reader who follows footnote 138 to the cited pages of Weiss’s book would discover that while Weiss did indeed say the LTTE had shelled civilians, there is no mention of the LTTE shelling their hospitals. That is just invented.

They also say, for example, that “The Guardian revealed that Kumar provided “a running commentary to the outside world from behind the lines”. 135

This is presented as evidence in support of their claim that Vany was “coordinating LTTE foreign media and propaganda work”.

But in fact the Guardian piece referenced in footnote 135 actually says: “Gnanakumar was one of a small group of medics treating the wounded and providing a running commentary to the outside world from behind the lines”.

It is undisputed (and explicitly acknowledged by Corrupted Journalism), that that Vany was only working in the hospital for the last three weeks or four weeks. Up until then she had told us she had been hiding in bunkers like almost everyone else.
The “running commentary” was provided – and had been provided for weeks – by the doctors who were quoted by foreign media on a regular basis. Vany features in only one interview from the war zone - a telephone conversation with the Guardian on the hospital doctors’ Sat phone – hardly the work of an “LTTE propagandist”. And what makes the whole “propagandist” claim even more absurd is what she said in that conversation:

“The government or the LTTE, they have got to do something, and if not, I can’t imagine what will happen next. Both parties have got to have a ceasefire. I think the international [community] has to either come into the country or get both parties to stop the fighting and start thinking about the civilians living here. Every single person living here asks why the international [community] is not doing anything.

I really want to come to the UK but I don’t know. I’m talking to you now, but maybe tomorrow I’ll be dead.”

So in her one interview with a foreign newspaper this “blatant apologist for terror and murder”, this “trained fighter” and “LTTE propagandist” appealed to both the government and the LTTE to “stop the fighting and start thinking about the civilians living here.”

The fact is that Corrupted Journalism’s attempted character assassination of this young woman is demonstrably untenable. The “evidence” they cite in their footnote actually proves no such thing. Perhaps even more tellingly, when they make specific claims such as that relating to Vany’s alleged training as an LTTE fighter – the ubiquitous footnotes providing “sources” are suddenly glaringly absent.

Instead they resort to attempt to smear by association – naming some senior members of an international political and cultural Tamil youth group with branches in 12 countries, known as the Tamil Youth Organisation, who were charged under terrorism legislation. There is no reference or evidence offered that Vany even knew these individuals.

Anaesthetics

It is significant that in a chapter attacking Vany’s credibility very little reference is actually made to her testimony. The one issue they do take up is her description of the desperate medical shortages she observed during her time volunteering in the makeshift hospital in the last three weeks of the war.

These shortages have been corroborated by several sources including the UN. In our films the most senior of the doctors in the NFZ, Dr Thurairajah Varatharajah, testifies in video footage from the No Fire Zone about the government’s refusal to supply adequate medicine.
The hospital administrator also describes the desperate shortage of blood and antibiotics explaining that these are: “just some of the reasons that in this situation we find that death has become normal - and in big numbers.” Just a few days after that interview is recorded he too is killed in a government shell attack on the hospital. He had continued to work at every stage and in every temporary hospital since they were first evacuated from Kilinochchi.

In the last few weeks of the war anaesthetics ran desperately short. There is ample evidence – including photographic evidence – or operations performed without general anaesthetics Vany explained this in more detail in No Fire Zone when she described one operation thus:

“This seven year old boy came inside and his left leg was just hanging and arm as well just hanging into pieces. One side, the left side of him, was just completely damaged and we were thinking: “What are we going to do? What is there for us to do here?” There is no general anaesthetic at this point and local anaesthetic was very limited.”

As a result even local anaesthetics were diluted and used when out of date. These would have been virtually useless in a situation like this.

Dr Varatharajah has confirmed the desperate shortages in an interview he recently gave to an Indian TV station in which he explained that while they had some local anaesthetics they could have saved thousands more with proper medicines and general anaesthetics.
In addition we have in our possession extremely distressing video images – too awful to include in the film - of two young children who were brought into the temporary hospital with limbs blown off. They are conscious and screaming and there is no indication that anyone is able to give them the general anaesthetic they urgently need.

Vany has seen this footage and confirmed that these are in fact different incidents to the one she witnessed, demonstrating that what she described was no isolated incident.

But despite this welter of evidence Corrupted Journalism claims that Vany’s testimony is not true.

To justify this claim they rely on the testimony of just one of the doctors, Veerakathipillai Shanmugarajah, who was among the five brave doctors from the war zone who were taken captive at the end of the war, held for several months by the Sri Lankan Government’s Criminal Investigation Department, and threatened with years in jail if they did not retract everything they had said from the war zone.

We will deal with those events in more detail in the next chapter, but it is worth pointing out that Dr Shanmugarajah is alone in his current description of events. Other doctors – now safely out of the country – tell a different story – and one which is consistent with what they all (including Dr Shanmugarajah) described when they were trapped inside the no fire zone.

Indeed the most senior of the doctors in the NFZ, Dr Thurairajah Varatharajah, who is now resident outside Sri Lanka, has confirmed in an interview with an Indian TV station that what he said from the war zone was accurate and that he was forced to lie by the government when he came out.

This chapter of Corrupted Journalism ends: “The credibility of Ms Vany Kumar in any British court of law on so many levels would be laid bare in a matter of minutes.”

That is, we submit, rather the reverse of what might happen. It is the credibility of the unfounded, incomplete and misleading claims in Corrupted Journalism which would actually survive no longer than a few seconds under the scrutiny of a British court.

FOOTNOTES

(1) “Interview with Dr. Tamilvani: Eye witness to Bloodbath on Mullivaikal Beach 1 of 3”, YouTube, uploaded by lovetamilelam, 29 August 2011, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf84CIleFRC>.

(2) This is confirmed by a Guardian interview which Corrupted Journalism actually refers to in another context, which records: “She had just completed a biomedical degree at Greenwich University, but her short-lived marriage was on the rocks and she decided it was time to make a clean break. She left the house, telling no one where she was going” http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/15/sri-lanka-war-on-tamil-tigers
Chapter Four
The Doctors

The way the brave Tamil government doctors who remained in the war zone were treated in the aftermath of the war remains one of the most shameful episodes in the government’s international propaganda war. The apparent willingness of the anonymous authors of Corrupted Journalism to endorse that behaviour should be a source of serious concern.

The inaccuracy begins from the very start when Corrupted Journalism says that five doctors were present throughout – naming the five who were later held in captivity by the Criminal Investigation Department and paraded at the Ministry of Defence organized press conference where they were forced to recant.

In fact there were at least six doctors who were there throughout – of which four were at the press conference. According to the University Teachers for Human Rights – the source so often selectively quoted by Corrupted Journalism - one of the five paraded in the MOD offices in Colombo was actually an LTTE doctor.

“Alltogether there were actually five arrested doctors, though the other two, Sivapalan and Illancheliyan, had hardly spoken to the media from the Vanni. Yet placing the former, who worked for an LTTE-run facility, alongside the government doctors who spoke to the media pre-judged the government doctors as LTTE mouthpieces.”

After several hundred words describing the undisputed ruthless control the LTTE exerted over any dissension, Corrupted Journalism goes on to say that “it goes without saying” that there was an LTTE intelligence unit supervising the doctors and adds “The LTTE also placed Vany Kumar and others to monitor them.”

In reality the claim that Vany had this role is particularly implausible. She it was, after all, who had publicly called on the LTTE and the government to “stop the fighting and start thinking about the civilians”!

More “Selective Quotes”

This section also quotes Rajan Hoole of University Teachers for Human Rights saying “The possibility that the doctors could have been under LTTE pressure to lie was perhaps to be expected.” – but typically fails to include the rest of his quote. Here it is in full.

“The possibility that the doctors could have been under LTTE pressure to lie was perhaps to be expected, though there is no evidence that they did lie while on duty. At the same time, the government coercing these individuals into being tools for its ends, holding them to public ridicule, has made them victims deserving of everyone’s sympathy.” (1)

In the same article Hoole wrote: “…in general, what the doctors said about the conditions faced by civilians has been well corroborated.”

Of course Corrupted Journalism airbrushes those quotes from history – because they directly contradict everything they are trying to contend in the rest of the chapter.
The “Sham” Press Conference

The chapter’s key “evidence” begins with this sentence:

“On 8 July 2012, following the LTTE’s defeat, the five Tamil doctors held a press conference in Colombo.”

This is an extraordinary rewriting of history. For a start the date of the press conference is wrong by a full three years – but more importantly the press conference was not by any stretch of the imagination “held” by the doctors.

The doctors had been imprisoned by the Criminal Investigation Department for weeks and threatened - as we now know from Dr Varatharajah - by years in jail if they did not comply. The conference was organized and staged by the Ministry of Defence.

Since Corrupted Journalism is happy to rely on selective quotes from the article by UTHR’s Rajan Hoole mentioned above – which was published in Himal one month after the press conference – it would perhaps be appropriate to go to that article for a description of the press conference itself.

“The doctors came out of the LTTE zone on 15 May, with the first group of civilians to leave the area, when a round of third-party negotiations had purportedly reached an understanding on the LTTE’s surrender. The doctors were promptly arrested, though there appears to be no real evidence of criminal misconduct. After about 54 days of detention, the doctors were produced before the press on 8 July, rehearsed and looking healthy – not in court but rather at the Defence Ministry.

They were accompanied not by lawyers but by ministry handlers, one of whom seemed to reprimand one of the doctors for stating that he was a prisoner, pointing out that he was looking quite well.”

“At the Defence Ministry event, the doctors explained that the LTTE had forced them to lie about casualties, and that only around 750 civilians had actually been killed. This was in stark contrast to the 7,000 or more given unofficially by the UN and the 10,000 estimated by the diplomatic community. Dr Varatharajah also said that only 600 to 650 civilians had been injured from January to 15 April. During that same period, however, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports having transported, by sea, nearly 5000 injured.”

In fact even these estimates have had to be significantly revised upwards as more information has emerged – though still no accurate figures are available. Ban Ki Moon’s UN Panel of Experts has suggested the death toll could be as high as 40,000, while the UN’s internal review noted that some evidence suggested it could be 70,000 or even higher. The fact that no corroborated or fully evidenced figure has been produced four years after the war, is itself an indictment of the government, though even the government – whose officials forced the doctors to say that only about 750 civilians had been killed - now concedes that as many as 7000 died.
So the only thing we know for certain is that this government – whose reputation Corrupted Journalism is so keen to defend – has lied consistently about the number who died. It is worth remembering that on the day before the official end of the war, the 17th of May 2009, Mahinda Samarasinghe the then Sri Lankan Minister for Disaster Management and Human Rights, told the world’s media: “Soldiers saved all the Tamil civilians trapped inside the war zone without shedding a drop of blood.” (2)

But for another independent description of what happened at the controversial MOD press conference with the imprisoned doctors we can turn to someone who was there – Associated Press’s Bureau Chief in Colombo, Ravi Nessman. This is from his report. (3)

“No government officials were at the news conference at the Defence Ministry’s press centre to answer questions about why the doctors were being detained, how much longer they would be held, whether they were pressured to recant and whether they would be charged with any crime.

“The moderator introduced himself as a freelance journalist and two men in white shirts and ties sitting off to the side appeared to be giving him directions. When one of the doctors acknowledged he was currently imprisoned, a journalist for the state media berated him, saying he was well fed, clean shaven, wearing a tie and had a decent haircut, so he couldn’t be a prisoner”.

Later Nessman, talking to then UN spokesman Gordon Weiss, who quoted him in his book, The Cage, said:

“There was no credibility to their testimony. They looked scared, nervous and rehearsed. They were taking directions from two guys in white shirts who sat off stage. It made me sick to watch, knowing what they had been through already.”

Afterwards, as we noted in No Fire Zone.

“They were taken back into captivity. We now know they were threatened with years in jail if they did not comply. They have now been released, but still cannot speak out.”

Dr Shanmugarajah

In the period that followed only Dr Shanmugarajah seemed to maintain his public pro-government position, for a time at least – even standing in 2010 for a pro-government Tamil party – the rump of a former armed group, EROS. It is reported that he gained less than 100 votes from the Tamil electorate.

However even he – according to the BBC – now says he “no longer wishes to discuss casualty figures”.

There are two other issues raised in the chapter which are worth commenting on. The first is a statement:

“The University Teachers for Human Rights also revealed that Dr Shanmugarajah had tried to escape from the conflict zone, was apprehended by the LTTE, beaten and taken back to the no-fire zone.”
In fact this is based on the same article by Rajan Hoole of the UTHR which was published back in 2009 while Shanmugarajah was still in captivity and therefore could not be contacted for verification. The article, which makes it clear that the information comes second-hand, says; “Dr Shanmugarajah told a friend that he was captured while attempting to flee, beaten and then watched by an armed LTTE guard as he carried out his duties.”

Published in good faith at the time by Hoole, the story has not been subsequently corroborated. Certainly Shanmugarajah makes no mention of it – as you might expect him to do – in his “affidavit” produced for the government and reproduced uncritically in the back of Corrupted Journalism.

**Another Propaganda Ploy**

The other issue raised in this chapter is a series of allegations about “forged” papers allegedly published and falsely attributed to the doctors. The key incident they describe was in January 2009 - early in the final offensive - when AP’s Ravi Nessman published an article based on an appeal which appeared to come from Dr Thurairajah Varatharajah, the most senior doctor in the war zone. The letter claimed that 300 people had been killed and 1000 injured in heavy shelling and fighting in Suthanthirapurum within the newly declared No Fire Zone and desperately appealed to the government and aid groups for medicine and blood transfusions for those injured.

But according to Corrupted Journalism Varatharajah subsequently denied that the latter came from him, allegedly saying it was “done by destructive elements with sinister motives who want to embarrass the government,” people who Corrupted Journalism identify as “LTTE propaganda teams”. As a result AP withdrew the story.

There is of course a logical problem here for the authors of Corrupted Journalism. Because if this version of events is true then Dr Varatharajah is completely free to speak out from in the No Fire Zone and denounce the LTTE as “destructive elements with sinister motives.” But read on and you will find that Corrupted Journalism reports with equal conviction that the doctors were so scared of the LTTE they had to say exactly what the LTTE told them to say – in particular about how many died.

However an examination of Corrupted Journalism’s source for this particular tale – as identified in their footnotes - provides a more plausible explanation. Dr Varatharajah’s apparent denial of responsibility for the letter turns out not to have come directly from him at all. Instead the source is an article in the Sri Lankan MOD website which quotes an un-named “Sri Lanka government Health Ministry official” who in turn claims that Dr Varatharajah had phoned him to say that he did not issue the letter. It was this government official who claimed that Varatharajah had said the letter was: “done by destructive elements with sinister motives who want to embarrass the government.” (4)

So what is the truth? All we do know for certain is that the description of constant shelling of the No Fire Zone at Suthanthirapurum at that period – resulting in very large numbers of deaths and injuries – has been vividly and independently described and corroborated by a Peter McKay – a UN official who was trapped in that very area after arriving on the last overland food convoy. His testimony is backed by evidence and photographs. (5) Whoever wrote that appeal – its contents appear to have been completely accurate.

(2) http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20322098

(3) AP wire report http://www.huffingtonpost.com/huff-wires/20090708/as-sri-lanka-civil-war/

(4) “Associated Press kills story about civilians deaths after realizing they were subjected to a hoax” http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?name=20090129_01

(5) McKay’s devastating testimony and photographs are featured in some detail in No Fire Zone – and also helped inform the UN’s own subsequent examinations of the events at the end of the war
Chapter Five
The No-Fire Zones in the Vanni

This chapter appears to be based on the premise that the undoubted crimes of the Tamil Tigers can be held somehow to justify the crimes of the government.

The man who was British Foreign Minister at the time, David Miliband – put it this way in our film War Crimes Unpunished:

“The fact that the LTTE were using civilians as human shields - which in some cases they were, which is itself a war crime - doesn’t justify the shelling of those sites and those individuals. Democratic governments are held to higher standards than terrorist organisations and they needed to be adhered to.”

The authors of Corrupted Journalism simply ignore most of the devastating evidence that government forces deliberately targeted civilians. They completely ignore, for example, the fact that five days after the government of Sri Lanka had assured the international diplomatic community that they would not forcibly invade the No Fire Zone they had themselves declared around Puttamattalan – they did exactly that: splitting the No Fire Zone in half at its most densely populated area, massacring at least several hundred civilians and destroying a makeshift hospital.

Instead once again they simply hide behind the crimes of the Tigers - crimes which are not in dispute, but cannot by any stretch of the imagination be used to justify the wholesale massacre of tens of thousands of civilians by government forces.

A good example of that is the incident which they do devote some space to – but again they entirely misrepresent: the shelling which followed the declaration of the first no fire zone.

The Testimony of Peter McKay

The credible and independent witness we have to the circumstances and reality on the ground in the first No Fire Zone is Peter McKay, the UN worker who became trapped in the no fire zone with Convoy 11 - the last UN food convoy into the war zone.

It is worth remembering that part of the reason McKay was delayed in the war zone and became trapped by the shelling was that he had been trying unsuccessfully to evacuate his Tamil UN staffers and their families. The LTTE had refused to let them go - and when Mckay tried to smuggle
them out in returning empty vehicles in the convoy, the LTTE discovered them after a search.

When that happened Mckay refused to leave without them. It is abundantly clear that Mckay is no apologist for the Tigers – the very reverse in fact, and his testimony can be relied upon to be truly independent. His testimony is also corroborated by photographs, video evidence and can be verified by the people he spoke to during the incident. Yet Corrupted Journalism chooses to ignore his evidence as described in our film War Crimes Unpunished – and presented personally by him in No Fire Zone.

Instead they present their own version of events, riddled with factual inaccuracies, ignoring evidence of war crimes by the government and padded out with descriptions of Tiger crimes which are not in dispute.

It may be worth noting at this point that perhaps unsurprisingly the authors of Corrupted Journalism actually ignore what many independent observers of the last few weeks of the war have come to regard as the most serious offence committed by the Tigers: a deliberate policy which contributed to the death of many, many civilians.

This was that they made two fatal assumptions. First they assumed that the government of Sri Lanka would probably not be ruthless enough to systematically shell and massacre civilians on the scale they did. And secondly they believed that if that did happen, then the “international community” would intervene. They were catastrophically wrong on both counts.

The vast majority of Tamil civilians in the North East – particularly in the first few weeks of 2009 - still believed that the Tigers represented their best defence against the indiscriminate violence of the Sri Lankan armed forces. They may not have much liked them in many ways by then, but they trusted them. The LTTE betrayed that trust.

By initially persuading – and then forcing civilians at gunpoint - not to leave the killing fields of the government’s grotesquely mis-named no fire zones, the LTTE were complicit in creating the circumstances which allowed government forces to massacre them on the scale they did.

However Corrupted Journalism – with its refusal to acknowledge any fault on the part of the government – could not afford to entertain that version of events.
Mistakes

Perhaps because of that, even their most basic attempt to describe the chronology is inaccurate. Sometimes the mistakes are just silly and sloppy – for example when they talk about shelling near the town of PTK then add:

> With regard to the UN convoy’s previous location close to Udayarkattu, the International Crisis Group also noted that from 17 January onwards: ‘Over the next few days incoming and outgoing mortar and artillery fire intensified. The LTTE were launching shells from close to PTK into government-held territory, and incoming shells from the security forces were striking in PTK’.

This is just factually wrong. The convoy did not go near Udayarkattu (in the no fire zone) until several days later. The ICG is describing shelling by the LTTE in the town of PTK which was not inside the No Fire Zone.

But even the key section contains a factual mistake – quoted uncritically from an MOD source.

> “From the beginning in January 2009, the LTTE moved its cadres and weapons into areas that had been declared No Fire Zones”

In fact the NFZ was not declared until 20th January. What happened from the beginning of January is that the SLA pursued the LTTE – preceded by several hundred thousand fleeing civilians – eastward from Kilinochchi along the A35 in the direction of PTK, where the LTTE also had significant forces and were also being threatened from the south and east.

What then happened was that the No Fire Zone was declared – and the civilians encouraged to gather – precisely in the area that was the focus of the heaviest fighting – and where large numbers of LTTE forces were gathered – facing the SLA forces to the south, west and east. Of course Corrupted Journalism does not raise any questions about why the government chose this location.

Among those who gathered in this No Fire Zone was the UN convoy leader, Peter Mckay. This is what he said about the location in our film.

> “There’s a crucial point to be made about why the Sri Lanka government declared the no fire zone within the effective range of all of the weaponry being used by the Sri Lankan military to fire in that direction.

> There is only one intent and that is because you don’t really care whether or not you’re going to kill the people that are located in that safe zone or more importantly you are actively targeting them.

INTERVIEWER: Do you believe that is what was happening?

MCKAY: Yes.

Mckay then emphatically repeated that verdict: “Yes!”
There is no doubt that the Tigers made no effort to remove their artillery from the No Fire Zone which had been unilaterally declared by the government. There is no doubt that they continued to fire that artillery from within the zone which was now packed with civilians and that this too was used as an excuse by the SLA to return fire. That is not in dispute and it is misleading of Corrupted Journalism to suggest otherwise. But it is even more misleading of Corrupted Journalism to ignore the evidence of government culpability: the evidence that the targeting of civilians was deliberate.

Command Responsibility

In particular the authors of Corrupted Journalism ignore the centrally important evidence presented in both No Fire Zone and even more explicitly in the second of our TV documentaries, War Crimes Unpunished, suggesting direct command responsibility at the highest level of the Sri Lankan armed forces command. Evidence that senior commanders had knowledge of or ordered the shelling of a No Fire Zone packed with innocent civilians.

In No Fire Zone we explain that when Mckay’s convoy arrived in the no Fire Zone they spoke to the LTTE police and notified both the UN headquarters and the government forces of their GPS co-ordinates. McKay explains what happened next:

“We communicated those co-ordinates to the Sri Lankan Forces that this was the area that the UN had set up their operations in and could they refrain from targeting this particular area.

“Three or four hours later in the evening we sustained a barrage of mortar attack coming from the South across the forward defensive line into the no fire zone and into the food distribution centre. After the first few shells that landed I went outside the bunkers in order to try and get a, establish, a communications link with the satellite in order to call Colombo to ask, request that, the Sri Lankan military redirect its fire away from us because these, these, ordnance were landing precariously close to our position, you know, within five to ten metres of where we were camped. As I was outside trying to make the communications I was kind of crouched between some of the forty-four gallon drums and sandbags and the body of a young woman landed on top of me. As some of the shells came in the explosive force had thrown her and landed kind of on, on, me.

“She had been decapitated and most of her torso and her legs had been, er, torn apart by, obviously, a fair amount of shrapnel that had gone through her when the shell struck.

“It was dark, it was frightening, there was shells incoming all over the place, and there was a lot of screaming and a lot of chaos. I kind of pushed the body off me and continued to try to establish the link. And I kind of had a sense that I was just waiting to die. That this, my luck was going to run out, soon.

Mckay did eventually establish contact – and what happened next represents vital evidence is establishing responsibility for the shelling. This is how we described the next events in War Crimes Unpunished.

“Government spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara denied government responsibility – blaming Tigers who sometimes did have units adjacent to the civilians. But a confidential internal UN report records that their staff in the field were in no doubt where the shelling came from: “The probability of shellfire originating from Government of Sri Lanka forces is considered 100%.”
We also revealed that there was further evidence to confirm that.

“As the shells rained down on Uddiyakattu, UN workers made frantic calls from the no fire zone to the Australian High Commissioner and UN officials in Colombo asking for the shelling to stop. The UN workers were told these requests were passed on directly both to Army Commander Sareth Fonseka and Defence Minister Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Shortly after these calls the shelling shifted slightly away from the UN bunkers, but it continued to rain down on the no fire zone. In a sworn statement dealing with the incident Peter Mackay, described how the shelling was re-targeted.

“Now the closest shells landed 100 metres from us, indicating that they could control the fire when they wanted to.”

This was of particular significance, because it suggested that the Defence Minister and Army commander had now at least direct knowledge of the shelling of the no fire zone. It was ordered away from the actual UN bunkers, but there was no end to the shelling of the no fire zone. It also suggests the attacks killing civilians were accurately targeted.

**Ignoring the Evidence**

*Corrupted Journalism* simply ignores all this evidence, returning instead to its safer theme of the LTTE’s failure to move their weapons out of the No Fire Zone before using them. The authors quotes University Teachers for Human Rights describing how this encouraged return fire into the no fire zone.

“The UTHR documents that witnesses noted that the LTTE was “shelling from among the civilians at advancing troops” and that this provoked a response from the army, resulting in civilian deaths.”

But when UTHR turn their attention to the nature of the government’s return fire they are less keen to quote them.

“In almost all instances not involving direct combat, the Army’s return fire was directed at civilian presences, something it would have known from UAV information. Modern detection systems for hostile artillery have a circular probable error of about 0.45% of 18 range. This roughly means that detection of hostile fire 6 ½ miles (10 km) away could be measured to a working accuracy of 50 yards (45 m). This is again a probabilistic measure, inadequate for firing at enemy positions among civilian concentrations. LTTE had its large artillery guns usually in isolated places. Civilians on their own kept well clear of LTTE mortar positions. Witnesses report the LTTE firing mortars from among them, but they were usually out of sight or at a distance outside the error in detection systems. In general they were far enough to avoid danger to civilians, if civilian safety had been one of the Government’s aims. The Government had the technology to avoid hitting civilians; the fact that it did so almost daily points to a deliberate intention. Several witnesses consulted by us confirm that one shell from the LTTE or even its firing small arms into the air brought indiscriminate return shelling multiplied scores of times”.

“Despite the Army shelling Suthanthirapuram generously, the LTTE’s nearest artillery position was in a patch of jungle north of Thevipuram, about a mile east of the places shelled”

It should not be forgotten that these observations come from an organisation uncompromising in its criticisms of the Tigers.
The Hospitals

The final substantive issue in this chapter concerns the shell attacks on hospitals where again the authors simply focus on the uncontested behaviour of the rebel LTTE which at best showed a cavalier disregard for the safety of hospitals. Once again they ignore the flouting of international laws of war by government forces.

They quote the UTHR:

“A senior educator familiar with the [PTK] hospital told us that the LTTE largely disregarded the ICRC’s request not to drive or park its vehicles in front of the Hospital, as these could be spotted by UAVs leading to shell attacks.” University Teachers for Human Rights reported further that “[t]he ICRC had in fact asked the LTTE not bring their vehicles and weapons near PTK Hospital, but to no avail. Some of the hospital ambulances had also been taken over by the LTTE, whose leaders were using them to move around.”

Although none of this amounts to a suggestion that the LTTE were actually firing from within the hospital, the suggestion that they used ambulances for military purposes is, if true, very serious. But having made that point, Corrupted Journalism then pointedly ignores the UTHR when they also highlight the government’s consistent flouting of their obligations under international law.

Apart from temporary medical centres being hit, the Ponnambalam Memorial Hospital was bombed on 6th February 2009 and Puthukudiyiruppu (PTK) hospital was hit thrice by government artillery fire on 1st February, killing nine civilians on the spot. There was no LTTE fire from inside the hospital. But even if in the extreme case that the LTTE had turned the hospital into a fortress, Article 14 of the Geneva Conventions indicates what a civilized party should do prior to firing:

“The protection to which civilian hospitals are entitled shall not cease unless they are used to commit, outside their humanitarian duties, acts harmful to the enemy. Protection may, however, cease only after due warning has been given, naming, in all appropriate cases, a reasonable time limit and after such warning has remained unheeded.”

Here too we see an absence of rules of engagement issued by the Defence Ministry. The civilians were given no warning, nor were any alternative locations named for them, before the Government shelled hospitals and safe zones it had designated, without respite.
In a Sky interview the government Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa appeared to admit the government was breaking the law when he specifically justified shelling PTK hospital – not on the grounds that it was being used by the LTTE – but simply on the grounds that it existed outside the government-declared No Fire Zone.

Here's how Sky reported it – and some quotes from the interview with Gotabaya. (1)

**SKY REPORTER:** The aid agencies say a hospital packed with wounded has been repeatedly shelled, killing some patients and injuring many more. The defence Secretary has told us that right now everything is a legitimate target if it's not inside the safe zone the government has created. And the only hospital (in the area) is outside that zone.

**GOTABAYA RAJAPAKSA:** Nothing should exist beyond the No Fire Zone.

**INTERVIEWEE:** So just to be clear... if this hospital is operating... outside the No Fire Zone it's a legitimate target?

**GOTABAYA RAJAPAKSA:**...yes.

(1) A copy of the report - first broadcast on Sky can be seen on Youtube [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKmM2qg95R0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKmM2qg95R0)
Chapter Six
The Sri Lankan Army and Civilians

At the heart of this chapter is an attempt to suggest that it was through no fault of the government that between 300,000 and 400,000 civilians ended up trapped in the No Fire Zones which were to become the focus of government shelling.

This is difficult, given that the authors themselves make it clear in chapter 5 that the Government of Sri Lanka deliberately encouraged the civilians to gather in these unilaterally declared No Fire Zones.

“In a clear attempt to minimise civilian casualties, the government declared several “no-fire zones”. The Government of Sri Lanka declared the first demilitarised, “no-fire zone” (NFZ 1) in January 2009. This zone was a 22 square-mile safe area for civilians north of the A35 road between Udayarkattu junction and the Manjal Palam (Yellow Bridge) in Mullaitivu district. This declaration was communicated to citizens in the region through leaflet drops by the Sri Lankan air force and through notification to the International Committee of the Red Cross.”

Having established that it was indeed the government that encouraged civilians to gather in the NFZs, the authors have a problem by chapter 6 when dealing with our evidence that these zones were then targeted by shelling and civilians started dying.

As a result they tie themselves in logical knots, attempting now to suggest that actually it was the Tigers who were responsible for their presence there.

“There is no doubt, however, that government artillery, mortar and small arms fire killed and injured civilians in the no-fire zones. The government admitted this, and circumstances within the conflict zone, most notably the enforced presence of hundreds of thousands of civilians, made civilian casualties inevitable. Rather than exploring this objectively, or even admit that the civilians were present because they had been forced to accompany the LTTE, Channel 4 chose instead to make a number of claims about the Sri Lankan armed forces and their interaction with the civilian population in north-east Sri Lanka, accusing them of displacing civilians and then deliberately targeting them”. (Our emphasis).

There is no doubt that once in the No Fire Zone the LTTE is guilty of preventing those civilians who wanted to leave from doing so. But the authors of Corrupted Journalism cannot claim the government had no responsibility for their being there in the first place – indeed they encouraged that.

As for responsibility for the original exodus that preceded the announcement of the No Fire Zones the reality of course was complex – best described by Corrupted Journalism’s frequently cited source - University Teachers for Human Rights. (1)

“Every family’s modest desire is to stay with their plot of land, sow, reap and raise their family. Displacement of people should be contemplated only under dire circumstances. The people would not have followed the LTTE’s retreat without the cannons of the advancing Army pounding remorselessly.”
**Erratic Figures**

Next the authors of Corrupted Journalism claim that our figures on the numbers of civilians trapped in the war zone are “surprisingly erratic”.

This is their evidence:

“Jon Snow first claims that between 300,000- 400,000 civilians were involved. He then states that ‘By the end of January 2009, the remaining Tamil Tigers and as many as 400,000 civilians were now trapped by Sri Lankan government forces.’”

The claim that these two figures are “erratic” is somewhat bizarre - especially given the paucity of accurate information from the war zone. In fact “between 300,000- 400,000“ is perfectly consistent with “as many as 400,000”.

Our figures are a lot more precise and accurate than the figures from the government. Even Corrupted Journalism admits this in this very chapter.

“...the government initially thought there were fewer civilians in the area than was the case: it (now) accepts that about 300,000 civilians were being held by the LTTE.”

Corrupted Journalism does not point out why the government said there were fewer - but the UN Panel of Experts appointed by Ban Ki Moon, which investigated this very issue, was very clear.
“The Government also systematically deprived people in the conflict zone of humanitarian aid, in the form of food and medical supplies, particularly surgical supplies, adding to their suffering. To this end, it purposefully underestimated the number of civilians who remained in the conflict zone. Tens of thousands lost their lives from January to May 2009, many of whom died anonymously in the carnage of the final few days”. (our emphasis)

But for a particularly stark example of “erratic” figures you need look no further than the Sri Lankan government’s figures on the dead.

As the authors of Corrupted Journalism report in this very chapter, the government claimed from early on to have a policy of “zero civilian casualties”.

Then at the end of April 2009, while the killing was approaching its height and just days after the massacres at Puttamattalen in the No Fire Zone (when it was split in half by government shelling at a cost of very many hundreds of lives), the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Bogollagama told diplomats that:

“...not a single civilian casualty had been caused by GSL military forces.” (our emphasis) (2)

On what is now officially recognized as the second last day of the war, Mahinda Samarasinghe the then Sri Lankan Minister for Disaster Management and Human Rights, told the world’s media: “Soldiers saved all the Tamil civilians trapped inside the war zone without shedding a drop of blood.”

A few weeks later, when the imprisoned doctors were being paraded at the MOD’s stage-managed press conference the figure they were told to give by their government handlers had gone up to “around 750”. Then, by 2013, the government had revised the figure again – this time to around 7000.
For the government supporters who wrote *Corrupted Journalism* to accuse us of “erratic” figures is somewhat ironic.

Again it is probably worth giving the last word on the government’s figures to the organization upon which *Corrupted Journalism* appears to place so much reliance, the UTHR (3)

“There was no consistency or any genuine information behind the Government’s figures. These were just pulled out of the hat, and on the basis of these food and medicines to the IDPs were curtailed to ridiculously low quantities, irregularly delivered, causing starvation and extreme hardship. It did not treat the Tamils as citizens of this country. In a more sinister vein, by deliberately understating the IDP numbers the Government was preparing for the eventuality where it could dismiss any later suggestion of high civilian casualties by pointing out that, according to its statistics, the dead persons never existed. It was as though they had been disappeared on paper in preparation for their extinction by cannon fire.”

**FOOTNOTES**

(1) University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) * Sri Lanka Uthr(J) Special Report No: 34

Date of release: 13th December 200

(2) [https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09COLOMBO456_a.html](https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09COLOMBO456_a.html)

(3) UTHR Special report 34 page 110
Chapter Seven
How many people died in the Vanni?

The chapter opens with Corrupted Journalism’s favoured device of a few quotes – with the clear implication that they somehow expose or contradict our thesis. These are two of those quotes.

“Who knows how many people died? We don’t know and it would be foolish for anyone to say that they know. But we do know what we don’t know.” Gordon Weiss

“Two years after the end of the war, there is still no reliable figure for civilian death.” The UN Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka

If the authors think these quotes suggest we are way off the mark in our discussions of the final death toll they rather miss the point. In fact they exactly reflect our own comments.

“No-one knows exactly how many died in this desecrated landscape” War Crimes Unpunished

“No-one knows how many died over the next few days.” Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields

“No-one knows how many civilians died in the last few months of the war.” No Fire Zone

In fact it becomes clear that what the authors of Corrupted Journalism are actually trying to do is suggest that any attempt investigate or get to the truth is foolish or wrong. Rather than encouraging a serious attempt to get to the truth they appear determined to muddy the waters, quoting, for example from a report from Human Rights Watch which says:

“despite the wide use of artillery and airpower during the recent offensive, there have been no credible reports of individual attacks causing high civilian casualties...”

In fact that report dates from 2008 – well before the massacres which began after the declaration of the first No Fire Zone on Jan 20th 2009.

It is certainly true that no-one knows how many died - itself an indictment of the government whose citizens they were. But that should not preclude us from reporting - as we do – on some of the possible estimates made by reputable bodies such as Ban Ki Moon’s Panel of Experts or the UN’s internal review panel.
This is what we said in *No Fire Zone*

“No-one knows how many civilians died in the last few months of the war. The UN panel of experts suggested it could be as many as 40,000. A more recent UN Internal Review suggested the figure could be 70,000 or even higher.”

*Corrupted Journalism’s* authors suggest, somewhat bizarrely, that this reporting of the 40,000 estimate puts us in breach of our obligations under UK broadcasting regulations:

“The 40,000 figure is very controversial. In addressing such a serious and obviously controversial allegation, Channel 4 ignored the requirement laid down in the British Broadcasting Code’s (sic) that “In dealing with matters of major political...controversy...an appropriately wide range of significant views must be included.”

Specifically they say: “The broadcaster and programme makers ignored a range of mortality figures that were contemporaneous.”

That is simply untrue. As we have demonstrated we frequently drew attention to the government’s claims that: “not a single civilian casualty had been caused by GSL military forces,” or that “all of the civilians who were inside the no fire zone have now been rescued.”

There is nothing we can do about the fact that those “contemporaneous figures” are implausible.

**FOOTNOTES**

http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/12/22/besieged-displaced-and-detained
Chapter Eight

Humanitarian access to the Vanni

The central theme of this chapter is that any suggestion that the government limited supplies of food and humanitarian aid to the No Fire Zones is false.

Much of the evidence demonstrating that the government did indeed deny humanitarian aid to the civilians trapped in the zone has already been covered. This included the deliberate underestimation of the numbers trapped, which was so clearly identified by the UN Panel of Experts who concluded: “The Government... systematically deprived people in the conflict zone of humanitarian aid, in the form of food and medical supplies, particularly surgical supplies, adding to their suffering”

Similarly the UTHR said: “On the basis of these (govt figures) food and medicines to the IDPs were curtailed to ridiculously low quantities, irregularly delivered, causing starvation and extreme hardship.”

But there is plenty of other evidence of the deliberate underestimation of the numbers of civilians in the No Fire Zone – including evidence which appears in our films, but which the authors of Corrupted Journalism ignore.

On April the 28th President Rajapaksa – when challenged on suggestions that humanitarian aid was being denied to the NFZ - personally endorsed the claim that there were only a few thousand civilians left in the zone. (1)

“We are sending the supplies. That’s why we want to finish this as soon as possible and get the people into our side because there are only about 5,000 to say, even 10,000 as they say.”

In fact according to UN estimates more than 120,000 civilians were still left in the zone.

But the evidence for the effects of this deprivation do not just come from reports from within the NFZ. Corrupted Journalism’s favoured authority, the UTHR, quote a source working within the government’s own camps for the internally displaced from the war zone after the end of hostilities. (2)

“The new arrivals at Zone Four are the ones who are, compared to all the previous arrivals, the most famished. For reasons that are self-evident they had been through the worst deprivation for the longest period. So, their condition on arrival was comparatively deplorable. This is not to take away the very real and unbearable levels of deprivation of the previous arrivals.”

This official reveals that the deliberate denial of adequate food and medicine to these Tamil civilians continued even in the camps.

“Many feeding mothers are not producing milk for their babies. There is no effort by the government to provide the hungry babies with any milk foods. As a result many babies are in a very bad condition. Even those with relatives living close by are not allowed to visit them. Even after allowing visitors, once their security screening and registration is over they are not going to allow relatives to bring anything near sufficient. The government and certain organizations will be giving some items. Many aid workers report that the situation is desperate. The rulers are trying to make out that everything is fine in the camps.”
The Doctor’s testimony

In the government’s defence *Corrupted Journalism* has to rely almost entirely on the affidavit from Dr Shanmugarajah, evidence which is so tainted by the pressure he came under during and after his arrest.

More reliable is the testimony given by his superior, the most senior government medical officer who was trapped with him in the No Fire Zone, Dr. Thurairajah Varatharajah. Unlike Dr Shanmugarajah, Dr Varatharajah has managed to leave the country, taking his family with him. Now free to speak, he has confirmed to an Indian TV station that the doctors were forced to lie at the press conference by the government.

In our film *No Fire Zone* he is seen on video talking from his hospital within the NFZ complaining about the fact that despite requests the government is failing send supplies.

> This is the ICU [Intensive Care Unit] but we don’t have any ICU facilities: a cardiac monitor [etc]. We don’t have any laboratory facilities. We can’t check the blood.

> We don’t have any antibiotics and blood, so several times we’ve inform our government, but the government’s not willing to send any medicine here.

Now out of the country he has confirmed what he said then: “We would have been able to save many thousands had we had appropriate medicines.”

Humanitarian Access

At the end of the chapter the authors also challenge – albeit extremely briefly – our evidence on the restrictions placed in the way of the evacuation of the wounded. They make the contention:

> The UN has also documented that the only force obstructing the evacuation of wounded or ill civilians from the Vanni was the LTTE.

As so often – despite their liberal use of footnotes elsewhere – this bald assertion has no reference or stated source. This is probably because it isn’t true.

For example United States Sitrep 74 – leaked by Wikileaks and quoted in War Crimes Unpunished – records the President’s brother Basil specifically rejecting a call to allow the ICRC access.

> “Ambassador called Basil Rajapaksa to note the reports of many dead and wounded lying in the conflict zone, and again requested access for the ICRC to the area to evacuate the wounded. Basil energetically refused…”

So at this point at least, it was the government not the LTTE which was the force obstructing the evacuation of wounded.

But *Corrupted Journalism* describes our failure to mention this demonstrable untruth (that the only force obstructing the evacuation of wounded or ill civilians from the Vanni was the LTTE) as one of the missing “material facts” we used to “mislead” our viewers. They then suggest – as implausibly as before - that this leaves us in breach of our duties under the broadcasting code. This is how they put it:
“These are material facts that were absent from the Channel 4 programmes, which as a result misled their viewers. The disregarding and omission of these material facts was also unfair to the Sri Lankan government. Despite the fact that the British media regulator’s Broadcasting Code commits broadcasters and programme makers to the inclusion of significant viewpoints when dealing with matters of major political controversy, these facts and others were absent from both of Channel 4’s programmes.”

It is also worth noting that in the course of making the first film, Channel sent an extremely full and detailed description of all the key allegations to be made in the film to the Sri Lankan High Commission in London and invited the GOSL to respond in detail. They declined to do so, stating: “As the conduct of Channel 4 with regard to this matter has consistently fallen well short of the “standards and fairness” expected of a responsible TV Channel, the Government of Sri Lanka does not wish to be associated with the Channel at any time unless and until a suitable retraction is made to the satisfaction of the Government.”

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**FOOTNOTES**

(1) Sky interview with President Mahinda Rajapaksa April 28th 2009

(2) University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) * sri lanka. uthr(j) Special Report No: 34 Date of release: 13th December 2000

(3) Interview with Dr. Thurairajah Varatharajah on Indian TV station NewsX in November 2013
Chapter Nine
The Mobile Telephone Footage

This chapter of Corrupted Journalism sets out to cast doubt on the video evidence of war crimes and atrocities apparently filmed by Sri Lankan soldiers as “war trophies” at the end of the war.

It does, however, have a fundamental flaw – in that it simply avoids dealing with most of the footage. The events depicted in those clips are so demonstrably true – and corroborated by other footage and known facts – that there is nothing they can say. They also have an additional constraint: further footage keeps emerging which corroborates our evidence – and they know that process is likely to continue. Indeed one of their central defences was further undermined by new video evidence which we revealed almost exactly as they were publishing their book.

They do however, address two of the clips in detail. The first shows the execution of bound and blindfolded male prisoners, and the second concerns the death of the Tamil Tiger TV presenter Isaipriya.

However in the first case they ignore the conclusions reached by a series of independent and respected experts who examined the footage in minute detail (and whose findings were summed up by the UN’s Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial Killings:

*The overall conclusion reached by the experts is that the video is authentic and the events reflected in the video footage occurred as depicted. The Special Rapporteur has concluded that the video footage indicates the commission of serious crimes*.

In the other case – as we shall see - they attempt to hide behind a defence which is both irrelevant and offensive.

The Execution footage

They open the chapter by mentioning three specific bits of footage. The first is the footage which shows naked male prisoners being executed in cold blood. This they later discuss in some detail and we will too.

They continue:

*“Channel 4 also presented some more footage of an execution of three people whom it states appear to be Tiger fighters. The broadcaster also screened additional video or mobile telephone footage which it claimed constituted evidence of the rape and sexual assault of women.”*

They promise: “*The simple reality is that these claims cannot be sustained.*

Having asserted that the claim that the footage shows the execution of three tiger fighters “cannot be sustained” they offer not one shred of evidence to justify this statement. Indeed they never mention the footage again.
A Forensic Examination

However just for the record it is worth establishing that we didn’t simply take this “trophy” footage at face value. Like all our footage and evidence we do not present it until we are absolutely certain it is real. Thus we had it first independently examined by a respected team of forensic digital analysts often used by the British Courts – who looked for any evidence of editing, manipulation, or visual, audio or technical inconsistencies. They also examined the metadata associated with the footage. They concluded that the footage shows no signs of manipulation and appears to depict genuine executions. Metadata encoded within the video indicates it was recorded on the 15th of May 2009, in the last few days of the war.

We also had it separately examined by an internationally respected forensic pathologist, Professor Derek Pounder formerly of Adelaide and Alberta and Calgary Universities and now head of the Department of Forensic medicine at Dundee Universities. Prof Pounder is listed in Debrett’s as a consulting expert to the International Criminal Court, the UN, and the Council of Europe among others. He is an expert in gunshot injuries and was the pathologist in the recent high profile inquest into the death of Mark Duggan who was shot by police in Tottenham in London. He studied the Sri Lankan footage in detail – examining the nature of the wounds, the blood spatter, the way the bodies fell and so on. Unusually of course – in this situation he was able to see the actual moment of death, albeit only on film. He too concluded that there was no evidence to suggest this footage depicted anything other than a genuine execution.

Finally, as with all the other footage we had the Sinhala dialogue spoken by the soldiers translated. Because Sinhala soldiers tend to use language with quite a lot of slang, we actually had it translated separately by a series of Sinhala speakers and then their translations moderated by a further Sinhala speaker, to ensure our English translation was as accurate as possible.

Given this thorough forensic approach it is hardly surprising that the authors of Corrupted Journalism have so little to say about this footage. It is worth noting that we applied this forensic approach to all the trophy footage shot by SLA soldiers on the battlefield.
Evidence of Sexual Assault – and the Death of Isaipriya

The third and final point they make in the introductory paragraph is this:

“The broadcaster also screened additional video or mobile telephone footage which it claimed constituted evidence of the rape and sexual assault of women.”

About this too, they say: “The simple reality is that these claims cannot be sustained.” In fact what they are doing with that statement once again, is accusing us of saying something we didn’t – and then attacking us for it.

For a start we did not say that categorically this “constituted evidence of rape”. We are far more careful and precise in our use of language than the authors of Corrupted Journalism appear to be. What we said, based on the way the bodies are arranged and displayed, the way that the clothes are removed, the way the bodies are treated and the crude sexual comments by the soldiers filming the bodies, is that, “some appear to have been raped or sexually assaulted and then murdered”. The forensic pathologist Professor Pounder, described some of the photographs as “compelling evidence of systematic executions and likely sexual assault of female prisoners prior to execution.”

But there is a more important point to be made here about the claims in Corrupted Journalism – and this concerns the evidence they present in relation to the footage showing the executed and apparently sexually assaulted body of the Tamil Tiger TV presenter and actor, Isaipriya.

This section begins thus:

Having apparently been ignorant of Vany Kumar’s clear LTTE links and military training, as outlined in Chapter 3, Channel 4 was also seemingly unaware that another of their alleged “civilians”, Issipriya, who featured in both programmes, was in fact another LTTE member.

In fact, as we have established already Corrupted Journalism’s claim of “Vany Kumar’s clear LTTE links and military training” (our emphasis) turned out to be utterly without any foundation in evidence.

Isaipriya, on the other hand, most certainly was an LTTE member – and we made this clear, both in our films and on Channel 4 News.

In War Crimes Unpunished we described the footage of her dead body as:

“...footage suggesting sexual violence against female Tigers including the LTTE TV presenter Isaipriya.”

In Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields we described her thus:

The Tigers also established something that looked very much like a functioning military state, with an administrative capital, Kilinochchi, and its own banks, schools, police and even a television station with a star presenter known as Isaipriya.

And in No Fire Zone we included a sequence from the UN worker Benjamin Dix – who had met her - in which he said Isaipriya:

“...stood for and symbolised the movement of the Tigers which was hard and brutal and completely focused on their objective of gaining Tamil Eelam and an independent state within Sri Lanka.”
In commentary we describe her as:

“Isaipriya, the Tiger singer and newsreader.”

On Channel 4 News – as far back as December 2010 – reporter Jonathan Miller described her as “a fully signed up member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam – designated as a proscribed terrorist organization.”

But despite all of this, as we mentioned earlier, the authors of Corrupted Journalism state categorically - and apparently without a hint of shame:

“Channel 4 was also seemingly unaware that another of their alleged “civilians”, Isipriya, who featured in both programmes, was in fact another LTTE member.”

But it is only as this section continues that the authors’ reason for maintaining this obvious fiction become clear.

**The Circumstances of Death**

Our evidence makes it clear that Isaipriya was executed. In the footage and stills she is seen dead, partially stripped and with her hands bound behind her back. It is noticeable that the authors of Crimes Unpunished do not actually come up with any evidence to suggest anything else.

Instead they first try to imply that we were either denying or didn’t know of Isaipriya’s LTTE connections – and then suggest that our motive for this was to rule out the possibility that she died in combat. Ergo, their argument runs, having “established” that she was indeed an LTTE member it is logical to assume she died in combat.

Presumably they hope that by the time they have taken us through this logic, we will have forgotten that far from being found armed and in a fighting mode, she was naked with her hands bound behind her back and the only evidence of injury is a single head-wound.

They also try to suggest that it was normal to strip all the bodies to search for suicide bombs. This doesn’t explain why among the rows of dead bodies seen in photographs, a far higher proportion of women have been stripped than men.

It doesn’t explain why the soldiers filming the naked women say things like: “Move the cloth aside... I would like to fuck it again.” or “I really want to cut off her tits... if no one was around.”

It also doesn’t explain why Isaipriya, whose upper body was stripped at the point of her capture (see below) and was clearly not wearing a suicide vest, subsequently had the clothes beneath her waist pulled down.
A Pattern of Behaviour

The final piece of “evidence” the authors present on the whole issue of sexual violence is this statement:

“Accusations of sexual misconduct were also out of keeping with the documented behaviour of the Sri Lankan army.”

In fact there are many documented examples. For example in 2007 108 Sri Lankan soldiers, including 3 officers of the 950-member-strong Sri Lankan UN peacekeeping contingent in Haiti were expelled from Haiti after being implicated in sexual abuse. After an inquiry the UN Office of internal oversight concluded that ‘acts of sexual exploitation and abuse (against children) were frequent and occurred usually at night, and at virtually every location where the contingent personnel were deployed.’

In a submission last year to the UN United Nations Universal Periodic Review two years ago (1) a variety of Haitian Human rights and advocacy groups said that Sri Lankan troops had violated the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols and may be subject to charges of war crimes. They added:

“The Sri Lankan forces may be charged for war crimes since the victims were subjected to death threats, physical assaults and sexual violence for the victims to engage in sex with peacekeepers... These actions also constitute crimes against humanity under customary international criminal law.”

To this day – in a series of news reports and inquiries by Human Rights groups - Sri Lankan troops garrisoned in the Tamil areas of the north have been accused of the systematic abuse and rape of Tamil women. (2) (3)

One final point must be made about the government’s posture on our coverage of the death of Isaipriya – a posture echoed so closely by Corrupted Journalism.

It is the disturbing implication that the fact of Isaipriya’s membership of the LTTE – which they falsely accuse us of concealing – somehow changes everything – or is even relevant. That it somehow justifies, mitigates or even excuses her sexual assault and cold-blooded execution.

Finally, of course, there is one hugely significant piece of evidence which leaves every one of Corrupted Journalism’s claims about Isaipriya bereft of credibility. We mentioned at this start of this chapter that one of the problems for Corrupted Journalism’s authors is that further video evidence keeps emerging which corroborates our evidence and undermines their defence – and they know that is likely to continue.

What happened in this case is that almost exactly as they published their book – we were able to release a brand new and particularly devastating piece of evidence about the death of Isaipriya. It was a 48 second long video clip which showed Isaipriya at the point of her capture. She has been positively identified by several people including close relatives. She is alive and uninjured. Corrupted Journalism’s case – that she was killed in combat – is shown to be completely false.

It is perhaps worth quoting the Press Release we issued at the time.

“The government of Sri Lanka has always claimed that Isaipriya died in combat in the last few days of the war. But this devastating new video evidence shows that this is simply not true: it conclusively demonstrates that Isaipriya was captured alive by government forces.”
The footage shows Isaipriya at the point of her capture. Half naked, she is clearly distressed and disorientated. These soldiers do not mistreat her - indeed they attempt to cover her nakedness under the sheet in which she is later found dead.

But the footage proves she was alive and uninjured when taken prisoner. Some information suggests she was trying to flee by boat. Certainly it is clear from what they say that these soldiers believe that she is someone important. Indeed one of them asks if she is Tiger Leader Villupillai Prabhakaran’s daughter. She says she is not.

Director Callum Macrae said: “This evidence is extremely important, not just because it reveals a terrible incident but because, taken with all the other evidence of executions and mistreatment of prisoners, it suggests this behaviour was systematic. And in a disciplined army like the Sri Lankan one that would suggest that responsibility for this action can be traced to the very top. It also raises questions about how this culture of apparent impunity was allowed to develop within the Sri Lankan armed forces.

“It is known where this happened, it is known who the commanders were in the area – and yet the Sri Lankan government has apparently taken no real steps to investigate and identify those responsible.

“... the Sri Lankan Government must explain how Isaipriya came to be stripped naked, apparently sexually assaulted and executed in the custody of Sri Lankan armed forces. The fact that she was a Tamil Tiger is no excuse for those crimes.”

**Execution Video**

*Corrupted Journalism* also devotes a considerable amount of space in this chapter to dealing with one particular piece of video evidence which became known as “The Channel 4 execution video” – a chilling sequence in which several men in Sri Lankan army uniforms execute in cold blood a series of mostly naked men who are blindfolded and have their hands bound.

The case that *Corrupted Journalism* puts forward is that a section of the video contains some inconsistencies. These including a date recorded in the metadata, which suggests it was filmed after the end of the war, and evidence of edits including a section where a letter A can be seen on the images. They argue that as a result of this:

“The authenticity of the mobile telephone video footage shown in the Channel 4 programmes, particularly that said to show the execution of bound prisoners, continues to be called into question.”

In doing this they echo constant government claims that the videos are “faked”.

The problem for *Corrupted Journalism* is that these concerns were actually raised in relation to an original short version of the clip, just one minute long.

That clip was examined on behalf of the UN Special Rapporteur Mr. Philip Alston, by an independent video and audio expert, a forensic pathologist and a ballistics expert who also recognized that some questions remained unanswered – although they were in little doubt about its authenticity. Mr Alston summarized their findings as demonstrating that ‘while there are some unexplained elements in the video, there are strong indications of its authenticity.’

He called for an impartial investigation into whether war crimes had been committed.
Those doubts were enough for the government to describe the videos, in effect, as “fakes”. Those doubts and “unanswered questions” are also woven at great length into this section of *Corrupted Journalism*.

The problem for the authors of *Corrupted Journalism* however, is that those concerns were long ago completely answered.

**A Serious Omission**

In a remarkable omission *Corrupted Journalism* fails to mention that subsequently a much fuller 5 minute long version of the video was obtained and that when this was examined by independent experts contracted by the UN all the possible significant inconsistencies were explained.

As the new UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial Executions, Mr Christof Heyns, explained in his extremely detailed report (4)

> Of special importance is the fact that the extended video material has now enabled the experts to address the issues identified as ‘unanswered’ during the first round, and relied upon by the Government as proof that the video was not authentic....

> What is reflected in the extended video are crimes of the highest order – definitive war crimes. Judging by the use of cell phones by soldiers in the video, there may well be other records of the same events available. There appear to be links that can be made to other evidentiary material, which is already available or may still be brought to light, giving a clearer picture of what happened during the last phase of the war. Investigating the identity of those whose faces are captured so clearly on these videos cannot be difficult for the Government, which may contact the commanders of the troops who participated in the last phases of the war. Similarly, an international investigation with appropriate powers of inquiry and witness protection mechanisms will also be well placed to address these issues.

The report also includes the detailed technical reports of the experts. These two have been made public.(5) Heyns summarises their conclusions:

> The overall conclusion reached by the experts is that the video is authentic and the events reflected in the video footage occurred as depicted. The Special Rapporteur has concluded that the video footage indicates the commission of serious crimes, which should together with any other available evidence be examined systematically and professionally by domestic investigators appointed by the Sri Lankan Government, as well as by an independent, international investigational body, with a clear mandate to establish who should be held accountable for the killings.

*Corrupted Journalism* entirely fails to mention any of this. They do though, also suggest an alternative explanation should their claims of fakery not be accepted. They suggest the
people doing the shooting could be Tamil Tigers disguised as Sri Lankan soldiers making a video to discredit the Sri Lankan Army (thus suggesting their victims could be captured Sri Lankan soldiers or even civilians).

This claim doesn’t stand up to the most casual of scrutiny. The location is identifiably the sandspit where the final battle happened. Still photographs from the same scene confirm that. The victims in the footage include Isaipriya who is clearly identified (and neither Corrupted Journalism nor the government of Sri Lanka have ever suggested she was killed by the Tigers. Nor could they now of course, as we have footage of her alive in the custody of recognizable Sri Lankan soldiers.)

The suggestion that the LTTE in those last desperate days – as death became inevitable and discipline collapsed - could have set up such a hoax and found enough un-accented Sinhala speaking Tigers and un-blood-soaked SLA uniforms to carry it out - is clearly implausible. That they could then teach them to use such convincing dialogue and acting, (we had the audio translated by several independent Sinhala speakers), just adds to the unlikeliness of the claim.

A forged version of the video, with crudely dubbed-on Tamil voices did subsequently appear on the net – but it was so transparently a fraud that even the authors of Corrupted Journalism clearly couldn’t bring themselves to mention it.

In any case it is significant that when the short version of the tape came out the government never suggested it was Sinhala-speaking Tigers doing the shooting. It was only when the technical questions about that tape were answered that anyone resorted to the “it was all acted” excuse.

Even the UN special Rapporteur dismisses this claim as implausible.

The outstanding issues identified during the investigation of the first video have now been resolved. This includes the apparent inconsistent date on the first video. However, even if that had not been done, the question could be asked how material that issue was in the first place. If someone had manufactured a false video of the events during the final stages of the war, with the malicious intent of portraying the Government’s conduct during the war in a negative light, the last thing one would expect such a person to do is to provide the video with a date that falls months after the completion of the war. Likewise, it appears highly unlikely that a person who wants to create the impression that a cell phone was used would be so careless as to leave an ‘A’ on the frames if that can only be done on a high quality video camera.
A crude reductionism

In the end the authors of *Corrupted Journalism* resort, as they frequently do, to summarizing the complex evidence we present above as crudely as possible, in order to criticize it.

“The director of the Channel 4 programmes, Callum Macrae, said the gunmen must have been army soldiers because they were wearing Sri Lankan army uniforms and spoke Sinhalese.”

Describing this crude reductionist version of our evidence as “naive but understandably self-serving” they launch into a comparison which would be laughable were the subject matter not so serious.

*It is perhaps fortunate that Macrae was not in a position of responsibility in 1939. Following his logic, he may have accepted at face value Nazi claims that Polish soldiers had attacked German border posts on the German-Polish frontier on 31 August 1939, claims then used by the Nazis as a pretext for their invasion of Poland. The BBC reported on 1 September 1939, that “[The invasion] follows yesterday’s report on German radio that the border town of Gliwice had been raided by a group of Polish soldiers, who had all been shot dead.” The simple fact is that the attackers were Polish-speaking German troops, dressed in Polish uniforms, who left behind dead bodies in Polish uniforms. The bodies were in fact those of prisoners from concentration camps; they were dressed in Polish uniforms, killed and left behind. The bodies that were left behind were described by the Germans as Konserve i.e., canned goods (which also led to the German code name for the operation, Operation Konserve)*

This discordant and inappropriate analogy stands very uncomfortably in a discussion of such very serious matters.

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**FOOTNOTES**

(1) Submission supported by a variety of Haitian Human rights and advocacy groups to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review Twelfth Session of the Working Group on the UPR Human Rights Council 3 October – 13 October 2011


(2) BBC report. ‘Tamils still being raped and tortured’ in Sri Lanka http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24849699

(3) Rights Watch Report: Politically Motivated Sexual Assaults in Custody Continue Since Conflict http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/02/26/we-will-teach-you-lesson


Chapter Ten
A Forensic Investigation

The chapter sets out to attack the notion that our investigation was “forensic” – and consists largely of rehearsals of the arguments dealt with in previous chapters. It is perhaps worth picking up on a couple though. The chapter begins by repeating the authors’ earlier canard.

“...the victims of the shelling were present in the conflict zone because they were part of the civilian population that had in effect been abducted by the LTTE.”

In fact as the authors have already admitted elsewhere, the victims were in the “no fire zone” – or “conflict zone” as they more accurately call it here - not because they had been “abducted” by the LTTE, but because they had been advised to gather there by the government for their own safety. Their situation – as we explained in our films - was then made worse by the fact that the LTTE would not let those who wanted to leave, do so.

Our description is accurate and even-handed. Theirs is selective and one-sided. The suggestion that it is us who are failing to be forensic is simply untenable.

They then repeat another contention designed to undermine the suggestion that our evidence would be considered by a court.

The UN’s 2010 technical report has also quite correctly stated that the alleged footage cannot be authenticated to an absolute certainty without access to both the original footage and the device purportedly used to make the recording for further testing and comparison. Despite requests by both the United Nations and the Government of Sri Lanka, Channel 4 has not provided them with either. In a real court this would also not be tolerated.
As they know perfectly well the 2010 report was superseded by the 2011 report in which the UN declared: “The outstanding issues identified during the investigation of the first video have now been resolved.”

They also know – if they have read the UN report – that Channel 4 did indeed provide the UN with the footage who in turn provided it to the government.

Their final suggestion that somehow Channel 4 is in a better position than the Sri Lankan military authorities to recover the soldier’s mobile phone is clearly not sensible. Indeed that the Sri Lankan military have so far not (publicly at least) made any efforts to recover any phone footage from the soldiers under their command is in itself a cause for concern.

**Professor Pounder**

The attack on the professional credibility of the respected forensic pathologist Professor Derek Pounder which follows cannot be allowed to pass without comment.

As we explained, Professor Pounder is one the leading forensic pathologists in the world - formerly of Adelaide and Alberta and Calgary Universities and now head of the Department of Forensic medicine at Dundee Universities. He is also a consulting expert to the International Criminal Court, the UN, and the Council of Europe among others.

The attack on him ranges from the irrelevant, (an extract from a academic discussion on an entirely different matter), the frankly odd (the suggestion that because he is interested in human rights this somehow disqualifies him from dealing with issues to do with human rights), to the simply insulting, (suggesting his contribution was “something any layman would be capable of doing”).

Their critique starts with an early observation by Professor Pounder.

> “There is a very high incidence of lethal gunshot wounds to the head raising the strong suspicion of executions at the time of surrender, with aimed head shots to stationary, highly visible targets.”

The authors do not agree, suggesting, inter alia, that these could have been caused by the Tigers shooting themselves in the head. As an alternative they add: “Pounder may also have been unaware of the fact that the LTTE cadres often wore body armour which can only be defeated by shots to the head.”

Clearly realizing there is a problem with this because normally if you wear body armour you also wear a helmet, they later note: “While helmets were worn by Sri Lankan combat troops, LTTE combatants appear not to have used them.”

They supply a reference in the footnotes to the evidence for their contention that the LTTE often wore body armour. Problematically - as so often with *Corrupted Journalism* - this evidence turns out to show no such thing. It turns out to be a Tiger propaganda pop-video called “Tamil Tigers Latest & the Greatest Video Song Ever”. (1) In the video - featuring archive of battle and training scenes – the vast majority of cadre are not wearing body armour and the small number who are, are also wearing helmets! Their reference source actually disproves their thesis.
The Death of Prabakharan

Next, after expending several hundred words on irrelevant discussion of a photograph which does not even appear in the film, the authors focus on the death of LTTE leader Villupilai Prabakharan and his 12 year old son Balachandran.

At the end of the war Government of Sri Lanka sources came up with several conflicting versions of - and times for - his death: variously suggesting he was killed trying to escape in an ambulance, or that he was found the next day in a lagoon.

There was a curious confluence of interest between Tiger supporters and the government – who both wanted to show that Prabakharan died in combat. The former to preserve the heroic notion that he would never surrender – and the latter to prevent suggestions he was executed. Perhaps because of this the authors of Corrupted Journalism suggest, rather surprisingly, that the LTTE’s view on how Prabakharan died is more relevant than Professor Pounder’s.

So what can we tell independently about what happened? It is clear that many attempts were made to disguise the circumstances and location of the death. Photographs taken officially and unofficially by government forces show that his body was first dressed in a Tiger military uniform then naked – and first clean, then smeared in mud.

In the officially released photographs he is wearing his uniform, but a head wound is covered so that it cannot be seen – however several unofficial photographs have appeared which show a gaping wound in his forehead.

The appearance of the injury led to all sorts of wild speculation about how he had died – one of the most frequent stories was that he had been captured and then killed by a blow to his head with an axe. In those circumstances we could not possibly do what the authors of Corrupted Journalism appear to want us to do – which is to simply accept whatever version the government finally settled on, especially when, for different reasons, Tiger supporters want us to believe the same story.

Given that taking those stories at face value was not a professionally acceptable option, we asked Professor Pounder for an assessment of the appearance of the wound.

His reply is cautious and – unlike the version which Corrupted Journalism seem to want us to accept – is based on the evidence that is available, rather than the vested interests of either the government or supporters of the LTTE.

*This would be very typical of a high-velocity gunshot wound to the head, where we’re looking at an exit area at the front, and therefore - not seen in the photograph- presumably an entry wound to the back of the head.*

*So a single gunshot wound to the head is a little unusual in terms of an armed conflict - in terms of a shoot-out, if you like - then it would suggest that perhaps, it was, it is a targeted shot at a subject who wasn’t moving.*

We submit that Professor Pounder’s cautious and qualified professional assessment is more independent and reliable than the partisan spin put on the events by the LTTE, the government, or its supporters who wrote Corrupted Journalism.
Balachandran

Finally *Corrupted Journalism* moves onto the footage and stills of the child Balachandran who is shown dead, with five bullet wounds to the torso, surrounded by the bodies of five men believed to be his bodyguards. They have been shot – and the blindfolds and rope which had bound their hands and eyes can still be seen. Leaving aside the authors’ woefully imprecise summary of Pounder’s very specific analysis of each of the five bullet wounds in the child’s torso (even fuller in the complete interview he provided, but cut down for time reasons in the film), we move onto their possible explanations for Balachandran’s death, consisting of speculation far wilder than anything they accuse us of.

In direct contradiction to their earlier theories they now suggest that the boy’s father may have chosen death not just for himself but the whole family, citing the behavior of the Nazis to justify their case.

“It is very possible that the LTTE leader Prabakharan may have chosen death rather than capture not just for himself but also for his family members just as many Nazi leaders did in the Götterdämmerung they visited upon their country, their compatriots and their families in the ruins of Berlin in May 1945. Dr Joseph Goebbels, for example, arranged for his six children to be killed by his colleagues before committing suicide together with his wife. Prabakharan may have given instructions for his son’s escorts to kill him rather than have him fall into government hands.”

The problem with this theory is that, in both the footage and stills of the aftermath, those escorts are also dead. Clearly, despite what *Corrupted Journalism* may wish to believe, they did not first execute the child then bind their own hands, blindfold themselves and shoot themselves in the head.

**FOOTNOTES**

(1) Tamil Tigers Latest & the Greatest Video Song Ever First uploaded on Youtube in 2008 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2BowEEb3KI
Chapter Eleven
A failure in Media Regulation

This chapter opens by quoting a review of Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields by the television critic, A. A. Gill. In the review, Gill, after a lengthy attack on Jon Snow’s choice of ties and socks, makes it clear that (unlike other reviewers and industry judges ranging from BAFTA to the Royal Television Society), he did not like the film. That is his right, of course.

But when his review was seized upon by supporters of the Sri Lankan government, including the authors of Corrupted Journalism, as some kind of defence against the charges made by the film he felt constrained to clarify his position and wrote a follow-up. In this he was clear what he felt about the government of Sri Lanka and its supporters.

“We might think that by the time supporters of a government are reduced to quoting a TV critic to back up its record, they’re clawing at the barrel bottom with their fingernails.

“...Subsequent events and inquiries from every other source, from the United Nations down, have backed up the original segment. Channel 4’s gut, its news instinct, has been wholly vindicated. And if some people choose to use that as a quote to rebut a threadbare defence of the indefensible, well, there’s nothing I can do about it.”

It is also worth noting that the authors of Corrupted Journalism opened this chapter and introduced Gill’s review by claiming:

The lapse in journalistic standards apparent in Channel 4’s first “Killing Fields” programme appalled fellow British journalists. The well-known British journalist A A Gill was particularly critical.

In fact a thorough search of comments on the film by British journalists reveals that AA Gill appears to have been the only journalist to have been critical of the film, let alone “appalled” by it. And even he now says the Channel has been “wholly vindicated”.

The rest of this short chapter consists of an attack on the British regulator. The reason for this is clear, and more than a little edifying. In what had every appearance of an orchestrated event, Sri Lankan Government supporters made over 100 complaints about our TV coverage to the UK’s independent broadcasting regulatory body, The Office of Communications (OFCOM).

These submissions to OFCOM included, as Corrupted Journalism acknowledges, a 389-page complaint (including 19 appendices) about our second film War Crimes Unpunished. It was one of the longest complaints, ever received by OFCOM.

The complaint was lodged by an organization called Sri Lanka Media Watch, whose only public presence is a page on the Engage Sri Lanka website which published the anonymously written Corrupted Journalism. Engage Sri Lanka is not a legally incorporated entity and we have found no reference to it by other official bodies.

The other main complainant about the second film was Lord Naseby. Lord Naseby is a Conservative Peer and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Sri Lanka. From entries in the Register of Lords’ Interests, it appears that he has visited Sri Lanka as a guest of the Government of Sri Lanka on numerous occasions in recent years. On most if not all of those occasions the Sri Lankan Government appears from the record to have paid for his accommodation and/or travel and/or other expenses
The main reason for *Corrupted Journalism*’s unhappiness with the regulator is clear. After lengthy investigations every single complaint was rejected. It was accepted we had carried out an extensive investigation, verified the authenticity of this material and subjected evidence to rigorous journalistic analysis and cross-checking.

That finding was echoed by other national regulators. As *Corrupted Journalism* itself points out, when the Norwegian Channel NRK broadcast *Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields* a similar complaint was put the Norwegian regulator, the Norwegian Press Complaints Commission. That too was rejected.

*Corrupted Journalism* takes the view that this simply proves the regulators have got it wrong. Others may take the view that is the anonymous writers of *Corrupted Journalism* who are way off the mark.
Postscript

Normally one would not take an anonymously published document too seriously – certainly to the extent of producing so detailed reply. However Corrupted Journalism has been widely distributed and extensively quoted in Sri Lankan newspapers and has been sent to many journalists and academics, as well as diplomats and politicians. It clearly has the potential to mislead large numbers of people and muddy the debate – not least by entirely failing to address or confront the key revelations of our journalism.

There is no company or legal entity mentioned in the book as being responsible. The publisher is only identified by a website address: www.EngageSriLanka.com.

It also clearly has significant financial backing – but there is no indication of where this comes from. Unlike Channel 4 – which is a regulated and licensed public service broadcaster which produces an audited annual report each year – Engage Sri Lanka’s finances, backers, office bearers and authors are anonymous. Readers cannot tell when reading Corrupted Journalism if this organisation’s financial, political or other considerations have influenced the writing.
Callum Macrae

is the director of the *Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields, Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields: War Crimes Unpunished* and the feature documentary *No Fire Zone*

A BAFTA and Grierson nominee, he has won many accolades including two Royal Television Society awards, two One World awards, an Amnesty Award as well as a Columbia DuPont Broadcast journalism Award and a Peabody in the US.

He has worked around the world from Japan to Haiti and made several films in Africa – covering conflicts in Cote D’Ivoire, Uganda, Mali, and Sudan. His films include three major investigations into allegations of coalition crimes in Iraq.

As a writer he was awarded a campaigning journalist of the year award and was recently presented with a Scottish BAFTA special achievement award.

@Callum_Macrae
Channel 4’s coverage of the last period of Sri Lanka’s bloody civil war – though Channel 4 News, its two documentaries in the Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields series and the feature documentary No Fire Zone – has provoked an unparalleled response.

Cited approvingly by the UN, praised by the Prime Minister and the recipient of several industry awards, the channel’s journalism has been credited with transforming the world’s awareness of these terrible crimes. It was seen to have set the agenda for the controversial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November 2013 and even saw the team nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

But there has been hostility too. The team have been subjected to death threats, vilification and, in Sri Lanka, a series of hostile pro-government demonstrations.

In the UK a website called Engage Sri Lanka orchestrated a series of well-funded attacks on the films, including a 389 page complaint to the regulator OFCOM – which was rejected. In late 2013 it published a 222 page book which was widely distributed to journalists, academics, politicians and people of influence. It was called “Corrupted Journalism: Channel 4 and Sri Lanka”.

This booklet is a detailed and considered response.