

# Evidence of Lanka's brutal war on operating table

**AFP, Cheddikulam**  
The X-ray shows a bullet lodged next to the heart of a Tamil man, one of tens of thousands who have flooded out of Sri Lanka's northeast to escape the war with the Tamil Tigers.  
"He said he was shot in the chest six months ago. But we can't remove it because we'd have to do full open-chest surgery," said Michel Orsel, a doctor working in a French field hospital set up on the island.

Over the last two weeks, the team of 72 surgeons, doctors, nurses and other staff have already treated 700 people, 100 of whom have been put on the operating table.

And under the scalpel, the skinny and traumatised displaced have given a gruesome picture of how Tamil civilians have paid a heavy price in what the island's government has been a "rescue mission."  
Their wounds show how ordinary and impoverished villagers -- male and female, young and old -- have been shot, shelled, bombed and burned as the bitter

ethnic conflict enters its bloody final phase.

One surgeon, Daniel Gaujoux, said he was "stunned by the number of machine gun bullets and shrapnel we are pulling out" from civilians who managed to escape.

"We've removed 30 bullets in 10 days -- around 10 of them from the arms and legs of children, and even one from the knee of an old woman," said Frederic Vavdin, another member of the French government aid team.

One young girl, 12-year-old J. Nitharsana, was lucky to keep her foot.

Her father, V. Jegathaeswaran, said she was wounded a month ago by the Tamil Tigers -- who have been accused of keeping civilians as human shields to slow a fierce government onslaught.

Another one of the wounded, 36-year-old Susenthiran Thirassamma, was nursing horrific burns to her chest and shoulders. She said she was "burned by a chemical bomb" two weeks ago.

Doctors at the French field hospital said they had seen a number of similar injuries, including "some with white hands, possibly caused by burns from

phosphorus" -- an incendiary weapon which is banned from use in civilian areas under an international convention.

Both the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers have accused each other of using chemical weapons, charges each have denied.

With the island's hawkish government severely restricting access to the north, independent monitoring of how the war is being conducted is almost non-existent.

However, the Sri Lanka's defence ministry last week granted permission to AFP to visit the French field hospital at Cheddikulam, 90 kilometres (56 miles) south-west of the war zone.

According to a United Nations document circulated among diplomats last month, around 6,500 Tamil civilians are thought to have been killed and 14,000 wounded in the government's offensive since the start of the year.

And in March, the UN's human rights chief Navi Pillay said both the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) -- who have been fighting for an independent state since the 1970s -- may have committed war crimes.



This photo taken on May 6 shows a Sri Lankan man (L) waiting for an operation at the French emergency rescue operation hospital near the northern Sri Lankan town of Cheddikulam. Over the last two weeks, the team of 72 surgeons, doctors, nurses and other staff at the French field hospital have already treated 700 people, 100 of whom have been put on the operating table.

## Prabhakaran's 'underwater bunker' found

**AFP, Colombo**  
The Sri Lankan army said on Sunday it had uncovered a large contraption that may have been intended as an underwater bunker for the leader of the Tamil Tiger rebels.

The 360-foot (110-metre) long railway carriage-like construction may have been designed to be wheeled into the sea as a hiding place for Velupillai Prabhakaran, the army said.

The bizarre unit "could be submerged in water and used as a temporary home," it said in a statement.

It was not immediately possible to verify the reported find.

The government says it is close to defeating the Tamil rebels, who are holed up on the northeast coast, after 37 years of ethnic conflict.

Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickrematunge told parliament last week that Prabhakaran, 54, was still leading his men in their battle against an overwhelming military offensive.



Supporters of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) look at a banner bearing a caricature of Nepalese President Ram Baran Yadav during a demonstration in Kathmandu on Saturday.

## Police asked to protect belongings of Lankan war-displaced

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Colombo**

The Sri Lankan police have been ordered to protect the belongings of thousands of war-displaced civilians who escaped fighting between the troops and Tamil Tigers in the island's north and are now housed in refugee camps, a media report said here Sunday.

According to government statistics, nearly 200,000 people have fled the war-zone and come to the government-held areas since the beginning of this year. They have been temporarily housed at refugee camps and welfare centres in the northern Vavuniya town.

"Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa has directed the police to take immediate measures to protect valuables such as jewellery and cash of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)," the state-run Sunday Observer quoted a senior police official as saying. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police for the north Nimal Lewke has said a special police awareness programme has been launched "to educate people not to keep their jewellery and money with them."

He said that Tamils in the north had refrained from keeping their jewellery and money in banks due to the fear of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The Tigers insisted that they deposit their cash and jewellery in rebel-run banks.

## India faces serious risk of another Mumbai-style attack: US expert

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Washington**

With Pakistan's "Jihadi Frankenstein monster" forcing its army to remain focused on India, a retired CIA expert on South Asia has warned of a serious risk of another Mumbai-style attack on the country.

Noting that the post-Mumbai era of significant tension between India and Pakistan has not come to a close yet, Bruce O. Riedel says, "there is a serious risk of another Mumbai-style attack."

This "would ratchet up tensions and make the Pakistani army even more determined to keep 80 percent of its manpower focused on India rather than on the threat posed by the internal jihadi problem," he said in an interview with Council on Foreign Relations, a Washington think tank.

There are a few tentative signs of Pakistan realising that its army and the intelligence service has created a "Jihadi Frankenstein monster," said Riedel who chaired a special task force to develop President Barack Obama's

policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"But it is far from clear that they acknowledge that the existential threat to Pakistan's freedoms comes from within," he said. "I think the army remains focused on the external threat posed by India."

"Of course, here the 'Frankenstein' [monster] is a self-fulfilling prophecy because extremist groups, in this case Lashkar-e-Taiba, attacked India last November in Mumbai," said Riedel, now senior fellow at Brookings Institution, another think tank.

Suggesting that tension between New Delhi and Islamabad is back to a very high level, the expert said: "In that sense, the 'Frankenstein' (monster creates) the conditions for the army to be focused on India."

Riedel also warned of "a real possibility of a jihadist state emerging in Pakistan sometime in the future. And that has to be one of the worst nightmares American foreign policy could have to deal with."

A growing coalescence of jihadi militant

## Concern over burns on Afghans caught in battle

*Possibility of white phosphorus use*

**AP, Kabul**

Afghanistan's leading human rights organisation said Sunday it was investigating the possibility that white phosphorus was used in a US-Taliban battle that killed scores of Afghans.

The US military rejected speculation it had used the weapon but left open the possibility Taliban militants did.

Afghan doctors are concerned over what they are calling "unusual" burns on Afghans wounded in last Monday's battle in Farah province, which President Hamid Karzai has said may have killed 125 to 130 civilians.

Allegations that white phosphorus or another chemical may have been used threaten to deepen the controversy over what Afghan officials say could be the worst case of civilian deaths since the 2001 US invasion that ousted the Taliban regime. The incident in

Farah drew the condemnation of Karzai who called for an end to airstrikes.

Nader Nadery, a commissioner for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, said officials were concerned white phosphorus may have been used, but he said more investigation was needed.

"Our teams have met with patients," Nadery told The Associated Press. "They are investigating the cause of the injuries and the use of white phosphorus."

White phosphorus is a spontaneously flammable material that can cause painful chemical burns. It is used to mark targets, create smoke screens or as a weapon, and can be delivered by shells, flares or hand grenades, according to GlobalSecurity.org.

Human rights groups denounce its use for the severe burns it causes, though it is not banned by any treaty to which the United States is a signatory.

## Bomb blasts kill 11 Afghan workers

**AFP, Jalalabad**

Eleven Afghan construction workers were killed yesterday in separate bomb blasts similar to those carried out by Taliban insurgents in violence-plagued Afghanistan, authorities said.

In one attack, a bomb blew up a construction company vehicle in a remote eastern district on the border with Pakistan, killing eight workers, the interior ministry said.

It blamed the blast on the "enemies of Afghanistan", a term Afghan officials use to refer to Taliban insurgents.

Police in Nangarhar province had said earlier that seven had died in the attack in the Haska Mina district.

"They were Afghan civilians working as roadworkers, engineers and supervisors for

a company doing various construction work in the district," provincial police spokesman Abdul Ghafoor told AFP.

Another bomb exploded Sunday in the southern province of Zabul, killing three more construction workers, the interior ministry said in a separate statement.

There were no immediate claims of responsibility for the blasts but the Taliban use roadside bombs in their campaign against the Kabul government and foreign troops helping it to fight insurgents.

Civilians are the main victims of Afghanistan's insurgency with nearly 2,200 killed last year in attacks linked to the conflict between the militants and pro-government forces, according to the United Nations.



University students shout slogans against US and foreign troops during a demonstration following US airstrikes in Farah province, in Kabul yesterday. About 1,000 students marched in the Afghan capital to protest against the alleged killing of scores of civilians in US airstrikes.

## We will secure equal status for Lankan Tamils: Sonia

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Chennai**

Expressing anguish over the plight of the Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi said here Sunday that the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) would work to secure equal status and equal rights for them.

"Our ultimate goal is to secure for Tamil people (in Sri Lanka) equal status and equal rights," Sonia Gandhi said at an election rally where Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK chief M. Karunanidhi was also present.



Mothers of disappeared Kashmiri youth shout during a demonstration organised by the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) on Mother's Day in Srinagar yesterday.

## Ram Temple very much on BJP agenda: Advani

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Bilaspur**

The Bharatiya Janata Party's prime ministerial candidate LK Advani Saturday termed the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government as the "mother of all ills" and assured voters that the construction of a grand Ram temple at Ayodhya was still on his party's agenda.

"The Congress-led UPA government is the mother of all ills. Farmers are committing suicide, women are not safe... the government is a mute spectator," he said while addressing an election rally here, his first in Himachal Pradesh.

Commenting on the party's promise to building a Ram temple in Ayodhya, he said: "The Ram temple is very much on the agenda of the party. If we come to power, we will take the coalition partners into confidence (on construction of the temple)."

The BJP leader said there would neither be a Third Front nor a Fourth Front government at the centre.

"The reality of Indian politics is that the country could be ruled either by a Congress-led or a BJP-led coalition. And all the other small parties will join these two," he said.

## Dynasty mixed blessing for Rahul

**AFP, New Delhi**

For Rahul Gandhi, star campaigner of the ruling Congress party and touted as a future premier, being the torch-bearer of India's political "first family" is a source of pride -- but also a millstone.

Rahul has cast himself as champion of India's poor masses while out campaigning in marathon month-long general elections that wind up Thursday, and the 38-year-old is frequently mobbed by fervent supporters.

But critics carp about his lineage -- his family has given India three prime ministers -- saying the dynasty's continued political dominance is at odds with India's emerging economic superpower status.

The man himself has taken a middle ground, saying last week that "just because I'm the outcome of that system doesn't mean I can't change that system."

The good-looking Rahul, whose dimpled face beams from electoral posters, says his position may be "undemocratic but it's the reality."

"I could do nothing and that would change nothing. But my position gives me certain advantages" to push for change, he told journalists.

He brushes aside talk of becoming prime minister. But the change he talks about does not involve ruling himself out of the running for the job and few analysts doubt he will be the Congress nominee at some point.

Since independence in 1947, power in the Congress has passed from his great-grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first premier, to his

grandmother Indira Gandhi and later to his father Rajiv.

It now rests with Rahul's Italian-born mother, Sonia, party president and seen as India's most influential politician. Many Congress loyalists cannot envisage the party without a Gandhi at the top.

However, right now, Rahul says his big goal is to open up India's political process.

"I consider it my honour and my duty to change the system of which I'm the result," he says.

-- Promise to bring change

-- He says he wants to bring in "the aam admi", or common man, so they have a stake in changing the system -- long a preserve of families, fixers and people with influence -- and rife with corruption where votes are openly bought.

"I go to the villages where there's nothing and I see people who're amazing, who put us all to shame. The real energy of India is in the villages" and must be unleashed, said Gandhi, who has paid a slew of visits to humble rural homes.

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Ms. Pooja Khullar, Education Promotion Manager  
will counsel students on  
13<sup>th</sup> (Wed) May, 2009 from 11 am to 5 pm  
at British Council, Dhaka  
For appointments, kindly contact:  
British Council  
5, Fuller Road, Dhaka 1000  
Tel.: +88 02 8618905  
Fax: +88 02 8613375, 8613255

For more information contact:  
**University of Leeds South Asia Office**  
812, Mercantile House; 15, K.G. Marg, New Delhi-100 001, India  
Tel.: + 91 11 2335 9370/80 Fax: + 91 11 2 335 7615  
E-Mail: info@leedsindia.com Web: www.leedsindia.com