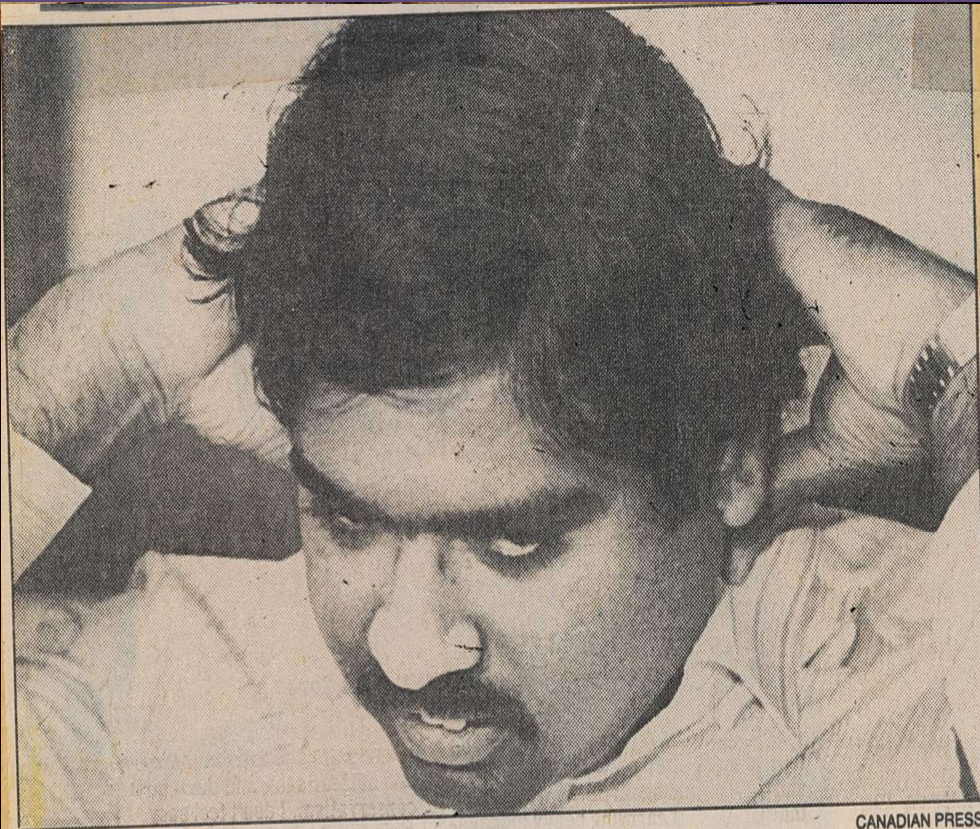


Tamil accuses envoy of torture. (1986, September 21). *The Vancouver Sun*.



CANADIAN PRESS

UMAPATHISIVAN PARARAJASEGARAN: torture described at Ottawa news conference Monday

Tamil accuses envoy of torture

Canadian Press

OTTAWA — A Tamil refugee now living in Paris surfaced in Ottawa Monday to accuse the Sri Lankan high commissioner to Canada of torturing him while he was in detention in 1979.

But the high commissioner, retired army brigadier Tissa Weeratunga, denied the charges in an interview with *The Canadian Press*. And the ombudsman for the Sri Lankan government, Sam Wijesinha, said he has never received a human rights complaint in five years in the post.

As debate heated over the former military role of the high commissioner, the Tamils of Canada association challenged Weeratunga to face charges of human rights abuses in a Canadian court. They said he should drop his diplomatic immunity and let the courts decide on his guilt or innocence.

At the same time, the Sri Lankan high commission released an unsigned statement accusing the Tamil refugee, Umapathisivan (Baby) Pararajasegaran, of being a terrorist and thief who is part of "a

separatist network" trying to destabilize the Sri Lankan government.

But during a crowded news conference at a downtown hotel, Pararajasegaran denied he was a terrorist or that he had committed any crimes in Sri Lanka.

"I am not aware of any instance in Sri Lanka in which I was wanted," he said through an interpreter, adding "up to now in my life, I have never been involved in any crimes."

Pointing to his scars and recalling his torture in detention in the city of Jaffna in 1979, he repeated his accusations that Weeratunga personally directed the beatings and that Weeratunga threatened him with death if he didn't cooperate with interrogators.

At that time Weeratunga was the army commander in Jaffna, ordered to put down a wave of unrest and bombings that had erupted in the Tamil areas of northern Sri Lanka.

The diplomat said Pararajasegaran's charges "are absolute nonsense."

"I never took part in any torturing at all . . . all this is a part of the campaign of the separatist movement that is on in Sri Lanka. It is an attempt to smear me and through me, Sri Lanka."