

TIC

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Date: 19th November, 1983.

TAMIL INFORMATION CENTRE

INCIDENTS FROM 21ST JULY 1983.

1.0 SYNOPSIS OF PAST REPORTS

1.1 We have to date reporting on the following :-

The pogroms against the Tamil people in Sri Lanka by "Sinhalese people" and the Security Forces of the Sri Lanka Government.

The invasion by the "Sinhalese people" into Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts.

The harassment caused to the Tamils and the Tamil Refugees by the Government and the Agents of the Government and the distress and difficulties they are undergoing. About the extension of the Emergency and about the Colonisation policy of the Government.

EVENTS SINCE LAST REPORT

2.0 JAFFNA

2.1 It is reported that several persons have been arbitrarily arrested by the Armed Forces at Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya. In Jaffna Selladurai Sritharan (aged 20) and Gunam Jeyapalan (aged 19) were arrested by the Army at Kopay. The Member of Parliament for Kopay has protested against these arrests.

2.2 Govindan Probalaratnam alias Murugan (Date of Birth 26.8.1947) who had been working at the Sri Lanka Hosiery Knitting Industries in Colombo was tortured and killed allegedly by his fellow workers when he returned to his work-site from the Refugee Camp at Kaithady. The incident took place on the 14th of November 1983 and his mutilated body was later returned to Jaffna.

2.3 It is reported that after a bank robbery at Manipay on the 15th of November 1983 by some unknown persons, the civilians at Uduvil, Kondavil and Manipay are being harassed by the Armed Forces.

11, PEULAH ROAD, THORNTON HEATH, SURREY. CR4 8JH. U.K. Tel: 01-653 0506.

தமிழ்த் தேசிய ஆவணச் சுவடிகள்

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- 2.4 On the 17th of November 1983 a civilian named Rajeswaram age 43 years was killed by the Army while having a bath at his residence at Dutch Road, Uduvil. It is also reported that on the previous day two other civilians were killed by the Army at Kondavil, but this is not yet confirmed.
- 2.5 The Jaffna Citizens' Society has requested the President of Sri Lanka to hold an inquiry into the killing of civilians by the Armed Forces on the 24th and 25th of July 1983 and to pay compensation.
- 2.6 It is reported that the Social Services Department has insisted that the Tamil refugees will benefit from the services only if they return to their original places of residence. The refugees in Jaffna from up-country plantations have vehemently protested to the Government Officials that they were not willing to return to their original homes for fear of attack by the "Sinhalese people".
- 2.7 In Jaffna over 2000 Students have staged a protest march in October 24th 1983 demanding that the Tamil students displaced from Universities located in the South be accommodated in Universities in the North and East. Their demand is based on the corresponding accommodation offered by the Government to Sinhalese Students who have moved to the South from the East and from India and earlier in 1977 from the North.
- 2.8 It is reported that Ariyaratnam of Chunnakam and Rasiah of Urelu were arbitrarily arrested by the Police and kept in custody and when an application for bail was made in Courts the Police objected to the application alleging that the said persons were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).
- 3.0 COLOMBO
- 3.1 According to the news report appearing in the "Sun" of November 7 1983 the Ministry of Fisheries is to implement a new Scheme to provide licensed guns to owners of fishing "Wadiyas" (camps). This Scheme will apply specially for Northern and Eastern Coastal areas to protect the migrant fishermen who are Sinhalese. It is to be noted that in the wake of the July violence guns possessed by the people of the North and the East were taken over by the Government

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which now leaves the local Tamil people totally defenceless. In this context, it is also relevant to mention that these Sinhalese fishermen who migrate seasonally in very large numbers to Tamil areas, deprive the local Tamil fishermen of their livelihood who have no facilities for similar migrations to Sinhalese areas for fishing.

3.2 It is reliably learnt that there is daily an efflux of Tamils from Colombo to the North with all that is left of their belongings for fear of attack by the "Sinhalese people".

4.0 VAVUNIYA

4.1 It is reported that the passengers travelling from Jaffna to Colombo in buses are being harassed by the Armed Forces in Vavuniya under the pretext of "Searching for Terrorists". The report also states that some passengers were assaulted by the Armed personnel.

5.0 BATTICALOA

5.1 It is reported that about 152 persons were taken into custody by the Army at Batticaloa in the course of past 2 weeks and it is also reported that about 30 to 40 persons were locked up in Prison Cells which were meant for 2 to 4 persons and these persons are reported to have been assaulted by the Armed Forces and kept under inhuman conditions.

5.2 While strengthening the security systems in Batticaloa it has been proposed that a Gurunagar style security co-ordination headquarters be established there. It will be noted that the Gurunagar Army Camp was notorious for adopting the method of torture to extract confessions from arrested Tamil suspects ("SUN" of Tuesday November 1, 1983.)

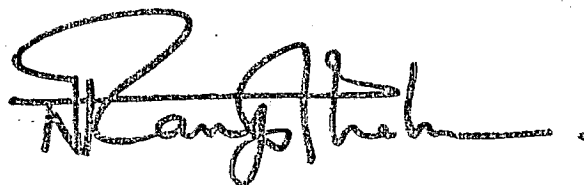
6.0 MANNAR

6.1 It is reported that the fishermen in the village of Pesalai in Mannar District are harassed and beaten up by the Army personnel who were in search of wanted people.

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7.0 GENERAL

7.1 According to a statement by the Minister of Information, Tamil Nadu, India there are over 23,000 Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees who have fled to India after the July/August racial violence in Sri Lanka and some of them are living in Refugee Camps. Unofficial reports claim that the number of refugees is much higher.



INFORMATION OFFICER.

"SUN" (Sri Lanka)

8th November, 1983.

NO ACTION TAKEN ON GUILTY

Three months have elapsed since the last wave of murder and arson that swept over our country. In this period the government has shown little or no concern to bring those responsible for the thuggery to justice or to reassure the Tamil minority of their rightful place in the life of the nation.

Great expense and effort have gone into reassuring foreigners and improving our international "image", but in comparison, hardly any attempt has been made to deal with the root problems which have led to the government's loss of credibility abroad.

As a Sinhalese, I am deeply ashamed that our political leaders are adding insult to the injury caused to the Tamils by refusing to talk with their elected leaders, and instead trying to smear their reputation and so encourage further racial enmity.

I do not condone the separatist cry, but I refuse to label it "immoral" or "evil" as the government makes it out to be. After all, Sri Lanka as a unitary political state is less than 150 years old; how then can the call for political autonomy in the north be described as a gross obscenity? Unrealistic, shortsighted and counter-productive it may be, but not evil.

Far more pernicious is the continuing propaganda (by extremists from both communities) which is gaining momentum as the apathy of the government deepens. Indeed "eelam" call itself is a result of our persistent refusal over the past 25 years to listen and to talk to the leaders of the Tamils.

Lethargy and political opportunism have resulted in the hardening of attitudes and the polarisation of positions which we see today. It is no exaggeration to say that successive governments through inaction more than anything else have created the terrorist movement in the north and the criminal gangs in the south.

Therefore, if the government continues this tradition of shortsightedness by not taking concrete steps to talk with the Tamils (without attempting to humiliate them further with all sorts of pre-conditions) then the blood-bath we saw in July will recur. The government has to take the initiative in working towards a long-term political solution for it was elected to serve the interests of the nation as a whole, not just the majority race.

University of Colombo.

—ROHAN WICKRAMARATNE.