

# **UTHR (Jaffna)in association with Pax Christi**

## **Special Report No. 1**

### **Bombing in Jaffna**

[Preface: Exploding the Nation](#)

[How the Civilians were Protected](#)

[The Political Situation](#)

[Indiscipline](#)

[Racist Overtones](#)

[The Bombing in Jaffna](#)

[Introduction:](#)

[A record of events in August 1990](#)

[Some more detail of particular bombings](#)

[The Situation in Mannar District](#)

### **Preface: Exploding the Nation**

This report centers around a particular issue, on which, because of the organisation's support base, information has been plentiful. But the questions that arise have a more general provenance, relevant to the situation in the East and indeed to the manner in which the government handles issues of basic humanity in the South. Where the situation in Jaffna as concerned, the casualties up to the 21st August are nowhere near as high as they are in the East. A few hundred in Jaffna have been killed and, very significantly, in a city and its environs which have functioned as the leading centre of Tamil cultural, educational and political life, the very institutions of civilized life are being slowly but steadily destroyed. A good part of the city is rubble. Churches and schools have been bombed even when they functioned as

refugee camps, killing a number of refugees. Even the only functioning hospital at Manipay was bombed. Hundreds of civilian dwellings have been bombed while ostensibly trying, to hit LTTE camps, often houses of forcibly displaced civilians, with bombs which have a technical accuracy of riot less than 100 yards. Market places and passenger vehicles appear to be regarded as legitimate targets. The message the local people got was that they were being treated as an alien enemy, and that a concerted attempt was being made to destroy the Tamils

as a people with a collective identity and will, and a way of life to articulate. Indeed, many people have

lost hope that there is a future to be revived and many of those left with the capacity to provide leadership are making plans to leave the country.

Let us be clear that the LTTE is much to blame for this state of affairs. It was clear to many for a long time that its objectives were distinct from the well-being of the Tamil people. We must also keep in mind that the LTTE's strength today owes much to the support it enjoyed from the Sri Lankan Government for well over a year, during which time it had the connivance of the government in destroying many able persons amongst the Tamils. The isolation and silence of the Tamils today arises partly from this. We must also remember that when President Premadasa had the LTTE's co-operation in calling upon the IPKF to leave, a major reason adduced was that the IPKF brought trouble instead of peace. The destruction caused in the North—East under the present government is totally unprecedented.

For the first time in over a millennium of history, Jaffna has ceased to be a city. While the LTTE can command astonishing destructive power when it is tackled without sensitivity and respect for the feelings and aspirations of the Tamil people, its pretensions and politics are essentially very weak. These could easily be handled with understanding and without violence. The fact that the government could not do that, questions its politics, which is the cause of a Himalayan tragedy in the South itself. [\[Top\]](#)

## **How the Civilians were Protected**

Let us examine this by looking into how the government has lived up to its correct and oft acknowledged stance that this war is not against Tamils. The first thing it could have done is to make the Tamils feel that even during war, it is concerned that their lives should be safe and that normal life should go on uninterrupted.

After Jaffna Hospital was vacated because of fighting near the Fort, Green Memorial Hospital, Manipal became the major hospital treating all emergency cases. But this too was bombed — 4 out of the 6 bombs dropped falling outside. There may have been an LTTE presence in the area, and LTTE persons in uniform and their vehicles may have come into the hospital premises, But, such a presence during war is not illegitimate. Respecting the civilians meant, respecting the essential role the hospital is playing in their well-being; with little help from the government.

Much of the business that was done in Jaffna town has been shifted to Muthirasanthai, two miles away. This is now the starting point for long distance passenger vehicles. Vendors have put up stalls there selling essential items and a market has sprung up. Instead of allowing this to go on, this area has become a target for aerial attacks. The apparent excuse is that the LTTE has forcibly occupied a house there and is using it as an office to issue permits for travel. Hundreds of harassed civilians queue up there for several days to have a decision made on their application. This house which is at the corner across the bend from St. James' Church, Nallur, has become a target. One aerial missile fell by the side of the church. Fortunately there was no explosion. 500 civilians who had taken shelter on the church veranda were covered with dust. Another bomb injured two persons. The target is situated in a densely packed neighbourhood. One irate civilian complained, "When the bombers come, the Tigers close the office doors and are quickly off in their Pajero jeeps. The hundreds of civilians in the visa

queue, passengers and those who shop or their daily needs are left to face the music at the hands of the government”.

When attacking vehicles, a government responsible for its civilians should first verify the nature of the target. Aerial gunners seem to start with the assumption that every vehicle is LTTE. A large number of passengers have been killed or injured. LTTE vehicles on the other hand almost always get away.

Civilian houses taken over as LTTE camps are bombed and often, houses are bombed because of small arms provocation from below. The LTTE loses next to nothing. They have good bunkers. If one house is destroyed, there are plenty of houses left to be taken over. It is the nation's wealth and the lives of the people that are being destroyed. The Government which can ill—afford the bombs, can hardly be expected to find the will, the money and the administrative capacity to rebuild these houses.

The relief sent by the government in the form of food and medicines to affected areas is far from adequate. Many refugees died of starvation and disease. Some even committed suicide. Much of the relief is being sent by people at their own expense, queuing up at Frances Road, Wellawatte, to hand in packages for relatives to a church agency which is transporting them to Jaffna. The Government is far from recognising the basic needs of its victims.

The government has willfully abandoned a large section of its citizens to the whims of its armed forces. There are no illusions about this in the South. It is the common talk in places of work that the government is bombing Jaffna because the inhabitants are Tamils.

## **The Political Situation**

It is common wisdom that proposals for a political solution need to be put forward, and alternative Tamil opinion should be allowed to come out, if the government is really concerned about the interest of the Tamil people. Also, the media should be encouraged to broadcast such opinions to the Tamils to show that there is an alternative to the LTTE. But what comes over in the media is the triumphalistic beat of war drums and an almost complete blackout of Tamil suffering. An initiative for a political solution along federal lines which was signed and sent to the president on 15th July by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Jaffna, the incumbent of the Nallur Kandasamy Temple and Bishop Ambalavanar and others, was as far as the people could make out, replied to a few days later with human excreta dropped from the air about the area of the Roman Catholic Cathedral. In the weeks to come, the area was bombed, including with untargetable and notorious barrel bombs. The whole episode spoke of cynicism and contempt for the Tamil people.

For the Minister of Defence to talk about evacuating eight lakhs of people from Jaffna to Vavuniya before the military assault on the former, may well sound a good idea in the South. Has he consulted any Tamil organisation, the churches or the NGO's on the practicalities of the matter? The government has and continues to behave as if it has only the Tigers to talk to amongst the Tamils, and is not interested in encouraging any democratic alternative. [\[Top\]](#)

## **Indiscipline**

In order to remove fear from amongst Tamils and give them confidence in the government, it should have faced up to the fact that its forces have indulged in many massacres in the East. There should have been *impartial inquiries* into all massacres including those of Muslims and Sinhalese to expose the culprits. Where its forces were involved, those responsible should have been punished. There are no signs of either taking place.

There is no information coming out of Jaffna after 22nd August, but a good deal of the bombing, aerial firing and pilots' conversations point to substantial indiscipline and callousness amongst pilots and gunners. The bombing of the refugee camp at St. Anthony's Passayoor killing 6 and that of the Lower School of Jaffna College were unprovoked. The Daily News of the 25th August speaks in its headlines of a helicopter descending to 50 feet above the ground and killing 113 'Tigers' on bicycles and motorcycles on the Kopay causeway. There is no indication of whether the victims were armed or were in a position to fire back. We know for a fact that when armed Tigers are on the ground, aircraft do not descend below 3000 feet at best. The full extent of what has happened in the last few days remains unknown.

## **Racist Overtones**

If there is any doubt that this war is racist or at least has a strong racist component, one need only look at what is happening in Trincomalee and Pottuvil. In the Trincomalee district hundreds of Tamils have been massacred and the rest live in fear in refugee camps, with no leaders to speak for them. The government has chosen this time to settle or resettle only Sinhalese. The press reports speak of the Minister of Defence visiting Sinhalese settled at Sirimapurama.

It has even been reported that building materials and craftsmen were brought from outside for this purpose (Daily News 22nd August). Barely two months ago many Tamil homes in Trincomalee were looted and burnt with the connivance of the Sri Lankan forces. The Minister was not reported saying anything about the rebuilding of Tamil homes and giving them protection.

In Pottuvil, nearly all Tamils are refugees, a number of them in Tirukkivil. At the end of June, those who had fled returned at the invitation of the STE. Promptly, their young men were rounded up and taken away. Nothing more has been heard of them. The rest fled again.

Recently the government and the media boasted that normality has been restored in Pottuvil and that the tourists have returned. There were pictures of tourists enjoying the sea. To add emphasis President Premadasa ceremonially switched on a new electrification scheme for Pottuvil. The tourists have returned but not the native Tamils. No voice was raised on their behalf. [\[Top\]](#)

**25th August 1990.**

## **The Bombing in Jaffna**

### **Introduction:**

This report is devoted to bombing in the North. The accounts were collected mainly by 'Pax Christi' and members of the University community, Jaffna. We are aware that what is going on is a larger tragedy *involving* several communities. The incidents reported give an insight into the nature of the underlying politics and the depressing lack of any sense of responsibility, that is inherent in the State's actions.

Given below are some of the tragic events that have shaken the Jaffna peninsula during the last two months. Due to the prevailing tension it was not possible to get accurate information about all the incidents that took place; therefore the number of incidents reported here is limited. [\[Top\]](#)

## **A record of events in August 1990**

### **1—8—90**

An Elf van was slightly damaged by a bomb which fell in front of the University of Jaffna Tinnaveli. The driver escaped, but two passers by were injured, one of whom died later in hospital. A few houses surrounding the University were taken over by the LTTE. Shells fired from Naval ships damaged the temple at Valvedditturai, the post office and the adjoining buildings.

### **2-8-90**

Between 5.30 pm and 6.30 pm the Chinese built Y12 bombers damaged several tens of houses in Jaffna. 'Two people were injured due to rockets fired from a helicopter at Kilinochchi. On the previous day 8 had been injured at Mallavi.

### **3-8-90**

Haran Theatre, Jaffna, caught fire and the neighbouring houses were destroyed as a consequence of the bombing in Jaffna. town. Three houses in Koddady were also destroyed in this bombing.

### **4-8-90**

At Maviddappuram more than 10 houses were damaged by the bombing. The Killali refugee camp was subject to firing from a helicopter. It was on this night the Fort was attacked for the second time by the Tiger Suicide Squads where 40 of them were killed. The bombers were in operation almost the whole night, damaging nearly 300 houses in Jaffna.

### **5-8-90**

To Machetti bombers attacked a refugee camp at St. Anthony's Church, Passaiyoor. According to eyewitnesses no militants were around, and apparently there was no provocation' to attack this place. Three rocket propelled bombs were fired into the camp, one falling straight into a group of refugees who were cooking a meal. Six people were killed and thirteen were injured. Out of the six who died four were children all under 11 years of age. The names and ages of those who died are:

1. Rasathi Thambithurai 53 years old.

2. Jesuthas Subashini 7 years old.
3. Pushparani, a nurse 43 years old.
4. Christy Selvanayagam Vigitha 10 years old.
5. James Nixon 8 years old.
6. Yogam Vanitha 10 years old.

Since the target was a church there is no apparent way in which the pilot could have mistaken the identity of the place.

### **6-8—90**

Don Bosco School, Jaffna, where the Red Cross as in operation was damaged due to a bomb which was dropped around 9 p.m. Two people at Kokuvil were injured as a result of the bombing in that area. On that day itself, some buildings behind the Jaffna Government Hospital also came under bomb attack. Bombers and helicopters, were in operation almost the whole day leaving 10 dead. Shells fired from Palaly killed 3 at Tellipalai. Some Indian fishermen were also attacked by the Navy. There was sudden attack on the Thirunelveli Public Market. Rocket propelled bombs were fired from Machetti bombers killing one civilian and injuring one other.

### **7—8—90**

Six bombs Were dropped, where Manipay Hospital was apparently the target. One fell on the roof of a building, pierced the next floor and damaged the Eye Clinic, which is on the ground floor. Another fell beside the X—Ray section. The front portion of the hospital was damaged. The rest fell across the Karainagar Road, demolishing a row of shops and killing 3.

Also on the 7th August, four bombers were n operation at Karainagar. The market at ‘Thirunilvelli was bombed. The Fire Brigade office at Nallur was hit by a bomb that, was believed to have been aimed at the adjoining Municipality buildings.

Five were killed down Ambalavanar Road, at Aththiyady, in another bombing incident, a point Pedro, one person died when Chavakachcheri market came under attack from helicopters, while many others were inured.

Thuraiyappa Vidyailayam School of Columbuturari and the prawn factory at Navatkui were also attacked from helicopters.

### **8-8-90**

More than 10 houses were affected due to a powerful bomb dropped near the Jaffna Convent. At noon, an aerielly fired rocket seriously injured a driver at Parameswera junction,

Thinnaveli. The Nunavil area came under attack around 7 pm and the people fled their homes out of fear.

Six rockets were fired from helicopters during the night at the University of Jaffna. It is believed that there was also firing from the ground. The refugee camp at St. Patrick's College came under bomb attack, leaving 3 dead and 26 injured. A shell fired from Palaly fell on a house at David Road, Jaffna, 10 miles away.

### **9-8-90**

This was the sixth day of intense aerial bombing. The Jaffna railway station came under attack in the morning. 40 families who had taken refuge there narrowly escaped death. A bomb fell on the railway line damaging 6 train carriages. 8 died at the junction of Hospital Road and Station Road, which is 100 yards from the station. Another bomb damaged an irrigation research centre and a house at Stanley Road.

A helicopter strafed Jaffna town the whole day. Chinese built Y12 bombers were in operation destroying many houses and shops and the densely built-up Wellington Theater junction area. Houses, including a library at Kodadi were affected.

The Chunnakam power plant was bombed twice and 2 diesel storage tanks were set on fire. With that the one hour per day electricity supply to Jaffna ceased. Some sources suggested that the actual target was a nearby shell factory. A pre-school funded by Sarvodaya, which had been turned into a refugee camp, at Kalmadu in Vavuniya was bombed and 3 were killed. An aerielly fired rocket seriously injured a woman at Urumpirai. At Velanal, one lady was killed by firing from a helicopter.

### **10-8-90**

Two bombers were in the air destroying houses at Kodady, which is in the area of Jaffna Fort. One building situated opposite the 'Bata' shop in Jaffna town caught on fire. At Arali one person was killed by helicopter strafing and several were injured.

At Kayts, St. Anthony's College and St. Joseph church came under bomber attack, and were partly damaged. A bomb, apparently aimed at Chundikuli' Girls. College, which housed refugees, destroyed a house nearby and damaged 4 others.

Rockets fired from helicopters, damaged Pillaiyar Temple at Punguduthevu, and a bowser which used to supply water to Velani, in-uring one person. At Chavakachcherj. strafing from helicopters killed 1, leaving *several* injured.

### **11-8-90**

Heavy shelling and bombing took place throughout the day in the surroundings of Jaffna town. People living down Navalar Road, Koddady and Pannai were terrified by the bombing. The consequence was heavy damage to houses and property.

Chunnakam market is a target whenever the operations cross to Jaffna from Palaly in helicopters. One could see the bullet marks all over the shops. On this day one boy was injured.

A helicopter attacked people traveling by boat near Velani, fortunately they all swam and escaped death. *Gun* boats fired shells from the sea into Gurunagar, Passaiyoor and Siruthevu and injured one woman. Manipay Hospital was attacked for the second time by rockets fired from a helicopter.

### **12—8—90**

At Arali, a bullock cart, in which some furniture was transported was hit by a rocket fired from a helicopter. The passengers narrowly escaped, but three houses in that area were damaged.

### **13—8—90**

Nelliady town was attacked by two bombers. A rice mill that was processing the paddy to supply the local population was damaged. One boy from Kollankaladdy died of 'firing from a helicopter at Chunnakam. The ambulance that belongs to the Jaffna hospital was hit by a rocket. The driver was injured and the vehicle overturned down Point Pedro Road. A row of shops came under bomb attack at Punnalaikaduvan Junction.

Helicopter firing and rocket attack on 50 refugees leaving for India from Vasanthapuram, Colombuthurai. 4 persons died including the boatman and 7 were injured. Rockets were aimed at the boat, and fell into the sea when the boat reached the shore. Many people escaped death. The boat did not go to India.

Those who died were Ahilan (22), boatman of Vasanthapuram. Nahalingam Sriskantharasa (25) of Kannathiddy, his stepson, Kalimuthu Surendran (12), and Chelliah Subendran (12).

Among those who were injured were Alphonse

Prasath (3), Rasakon Barath (3), Kunamani (34), Chellaiah Kavidas (8).

### **14-8-90**

Karainagar area came under attack from bombers

### **15-8-90**

Nallur area became the target since the militants began to issue visas from there for permission to leave the peninsula. Two bombers and one aeroplane were on operation, where the Municipality was apparently the target. 3 neighbouring houses and the fire brigade's office were damaged. A house, a garage (workshop) and a timber shop were affected due to another bomb which landed down Nallur-Kachcheri Road. Another rocket injured 6 gram vendors, near Nallur Kanthasamy temple. The same day, bombing took place at Kaithady, Navatkuli and Nunavil as well. Houses, shops and workshops were destroyed. Many Palmyrahs fell down. The tyre factory and a shop at Kaithy were also destroyed.



**16-8-90**

Heavy bombing took place throughout the night with the help of flare lights in Jaffna. This kept the people awake throughout the night. [\[Top\]](#)

### **Some more detail of particular bombings**

#### ***Green Memorial Hospital, Manipay***

No reason could immediately be adduced for the bombing except that the Tigers had a meeting in Manipay for the 40 militants who died in the second attempt at entering the Fort and that the LTTE persons were treated at the hospital. The front portion and the Eye Clinic of the Green Memorial Hospital were damaged, but the neighbouring shops across the road were demolished, killing three persons.

Nearly 100 children managed to get into a nearby trench, while the mothers stood outside as there was hardly any room for them in the trench. The women screamed hysterically. Many 'cyclists were soon around the place in order to help the wounded or to see the damage caused by the bomb. One man was seen to be lifting a leg attached to a buttock.

Following the bombing of Jaffna town and its surroundings in the latter part of June, the Jaffna Hospital ceased to function. Once again the Green Memorial Hospital of Manipay became crowded as it was in the middle part of the century. Following the bombing of the hospital it was spoken among the people that the ICRC had arranged a deal to ensure that the hospital would not be further bombed. It was also agreed that no armed persons would enter the premises. Injured militants were not to be brought in their uniforms or vehicles. But after 3 days the hospital was bombed again. A bomb fell in the courtyard causing no injury. [\[Top\]](#)

#### **Jaffna Station and Station Junction**

On the morning of the 9th at about 9am, people were just getting out of their houses after two days of intense fighting following the attack of the Jaffna Fort by the LTTE. Some people who had vacated their houses and were staying in refugee camps or with friends or relatives, went to see their houses (probably to check whether their houses were There or not) .Others went out in search

of any food stuff in an environment of acute food shortages (due to the government economic blockade). Still some others might have got out just to get some fresh air after remaining 'buried' in their bunkers for two days. Sudden y a huge four engine transport plane appeared in the sky at a height of more than 6,000 feet. Before anyone had fully realized its presence the first of the seven bombs each containing 300kg of gelignite was thrown from the plane, and one of these bombs which fell on the Hospital Road, Station Road junction killed 8 people instantly. [\[Top\]](#)

#### **Some of the people were as follows:**

Mr. Sivaraja was a teacher at St. John's College Jaffna. He was a graduate from the Ceylon University and was a much admired and loved teacher of Commerce and Accounts. He had a wide circle of friends and was an active member of the Ceylon Teachers Union. He had three children, and though a Hindu from Uduthurai, his wife was a Catholic graduate and teacher.

One of his children was disabled. He kept his father—in—law’s bakery and provided bread for the people even during these hard times.

Mr. Thyalan. Eight years ago he came from Batticaloa and established a fire—wood depot on the Station Road junction. He began working as a peon in the Uthayan Tamil Daily and became a typesetter. Though his 4 sisters and a brother continued living in Batticaloa, his mother and younger brother came to Jaffna eight months ago.

S. Anton, a 28 year old Science graduate teaching at Manipay Hindu College. He has a two year old child and stayed with his young wife in Station Road Jaffna. He was getting ready to move to Annaicottai.

Logan, a 27 year old. He was slightly demented and belonged to a very poor family, which he maintained through his own labours as a wood cutter and carter. He was a joyful man who sang and danced on the streets and was nicknamed MGR after the late South Indian cinema idol.

Another bomb fell on the railway station killing one person who was hiding with others in the concrete underpass. This happened as follows:

Ukama, was a 65 year old Sinhalese lady from Kurunagala. She visited her family often and had recently returned from her husband’s funeral at Kurunagala. Earlier she was employed as a private cook for Sinhalese officers at Jaffna Sinhala MV and hospital,. and after 1983 she started working as a popular large scale caterer in Jaffna. Many Jaffna grand weddings and funerals in town had to have Ukama’s supervision. She kept sending part of her earnings to her children in Kurunagala. On the morning in question, as the bombing from the Chinese four engine dragon began at 9.00 am, she ran to the Jaffna railway station concrete underground, as did many hundreds that morning. She was found dead, caught in the concrete debris and was buried under the auspices of the Red Cross, after the futile attempts by the Red Cross to hand over her body to her relatives.[\[Top\]](#)

### **The bombing of St. Patrick’s College refugee camp.**

On the 8th of August the bomber attack on St. Patrick’s College refugee camp, at 8.45 am, left 3 dead and 26 injured. All were rushed to the Holy Cross Hospital on Beach

Road, Jaffna, run by the Catholic Nuns of the Holy Cross Community.

Alphonsus Gregory Anthony was an ordinary fisherman of 45 years of age. He had come with his 4 daughters and a small son to the St. Patrick’s College refugee camp on the 19.6.90 and joined the 800 odd refugee

families. On this particular morning the children were hungry and bread was not available. The family was cooking some Kanji on the veranda of the college Chapel. As the youngest kept crying, he went over to the makeshift oven to quicken the process when a shell hit his right hand maiming him from the elbow. The 13 year old daughter Sutharsini, at his side, got a shell through her hip, thigh and leg and died at 3.00 pm. The smoke and dust enveloped the place and people ran over the wounded man trampling his hard. As the smoke cleared, someone put him on a bicycle and tried to rush him to hospital, only to see the bomber driving in for another kill. He was dropped near the college drain & left for dead. His twin sister saw

him and picked him up and called for help. Some young men emptied the garbage cart, belonging to the college, loaded the living and the dead including Alphonse and his three wounded children and rushed off to hospital to be met the next minute by the Ambulance which rushed in. Two of his daughters, Thiyalini (18) and Arulmathy (16) are still in hospital with serious stomach wounds and other injuries to the leg, shoulders and hands. Alphonse's house had been earlier damaged due to the bombs dropped on 19.7.90 and 23.7.90.

The bomber in the college incident was a 2 Twin engined Chinese built Y12 bomber, a deadly instrument which drops its instruments of death on unspecified targets

as it cannot aim with accuracy. It is ironical that this one particular family was the one to be affected. It was hunger that made them gather around the family oven, and one of the daughters had been seriously injured in the leg and chest during the IPKF operation in October 1987.

**To some these killings may be favourable statistics to show the brutality of the otherside, (overlooking their own). To others it maybe inevitable part of war towards a desired end. To some others it may be simply the hand of fate. But to us, each one of those killed is a human being, whose right to live was not less than the rights of those who are deciding the fates of others in a ruthless brutal power game.**[\[Top\]](#)

## **The Situation in Mannar District**

Following the war between the Tigers and the government in the East, people continued to evacuate first from Trincomalee district, and then later from Vavuniya and Mannar to Pesalai, Thalaimannar and Erukulampidy, in order to go across to India. Concern was expressed for the refugees by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M. Karunamthi. In early July, Talladi Army Camp in Mannar was attacked by the LTTE. As usual, shells were fired at random from Naval boats. As a consequence, fishing was disrupted. The Tigers initially encouraged the people to go across to India, and hence during this period the rate of civilian flight to India increased.

In mid July, restrictions were placed on people going to Inida. Some boatmen are said to have been fined by the LTTE. The rail and road bridges which connected Mannar town

to the main land were blown up and bringing relief to Mannar Island became difficult. The LTTE's operation or their presence was minimal on the Island. Many villagers in Mannar evacuated mainly due to starvation. The damages caused by the Sri Lankan Army in the villages on the mainland is severe, and thus the villages are partially or totally empty.

By August, the daily scene continued to be one of refugees from Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Mannar districts walking with their meagre belongings and malnourished infants, hoping to make their way to India. The Navy, mysteriously, had not made any concerted effort to stop the refugees from going to India, though they had been severe on those who return or come back to carry more refugees. There had been some Indian fishing vessels which had come and taken refugees, and one such vessel was attacked. Their rates were about 300 to 400 Rupees, though initially 1,000 to 1,500 Rupees were charged by local operators. On another occasion, when a heavy vehicle was transported to the mainland from Pesalai using a fishing trawler, the Navy came close to the shore and sank many of the boats moored there. Nearly 10,000

refugees who were in Pesalai panicked and ran helter skelter. After two days the situation returned to normal and the refugee flow resumed.

Vankalai is a village on the mainland of Mannar district. We give below the account of what happened at Vankalai when the army entered. [\[Top\]](#)

### **The Sri Lankan Army's Vankalai Operation**

On 9—8-90 the Sri Lankan Army numbering 2000, advanced on the village of Vankalai, 5 kilometers from Talladi Camp. The helicopter firing and shelling started around 10.00 am. Under air—cover the army advanced on foot, and by 12.00 entered the village. The LTTE withdrew without firing a shot. The people were asked to assemble at St. Anne's Catholic Church. They did so and the soldiers went around the village looting. Once the, looting was over the army officers asked about water supplies, the people replied that water was brought from another village using a bowser, and with the shortage of fuel there was no more water available. Following this the soldiers occupied the Vankalai Maha Vidalaya building. They allowed the people to go back home. No one was seriously injured or killed during the operation. Of the 5,000 people, 4,000 have already left the village for India. The neighbouring village of Nanaddan was bombed 10 days earlier.

On the morning of 7—8—90 between Mannar and Vankalai, six bodies were washed ashore. They were 4 persons from Kadakadu and two young boatmen, Newton (29), Anandan Croos (24) from Vankalai returning from India. A piece of wood, what was left of their boat, and an empty plastic fuel can riddled with bullet holes were washed along with the bodies They were victims of a Sri Lankan Navy shell and gun fire. They were returning from India in spite of the warning not to bring back any refugees.[]