

Vallipunam Senchcholai Complex Massacre

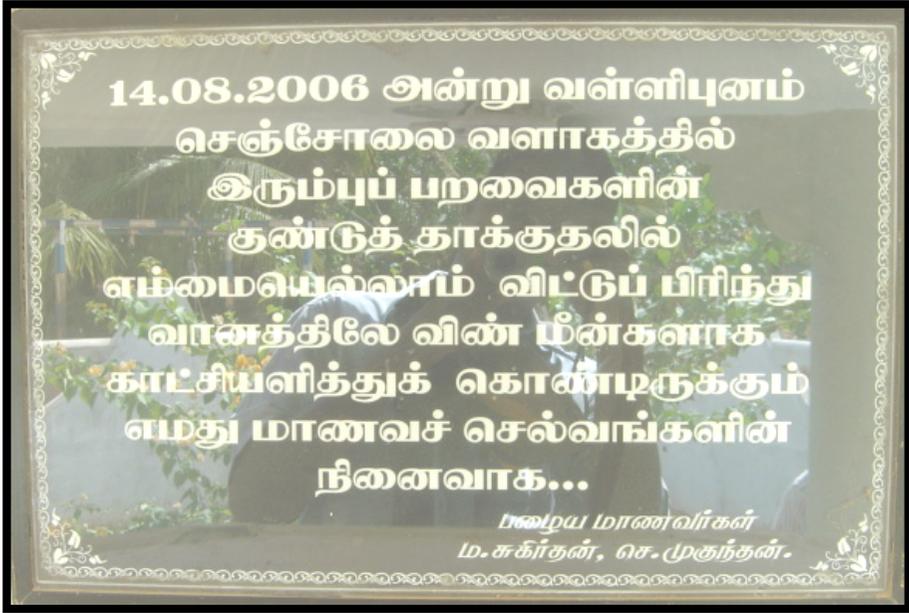
2006.08.14



NESOHR
Karadipokku Junction
Kilinochchi
Sri Lanka

தமிழ்த் தேசிய ஆவணக் சுவடிகள்

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Massacre of School Girls
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Report by



North East Secretariat on Human Rights (NESOHR)

Karadipokku Junction

Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka

nesohr2006@yahoo.com

<http://www.nesohr.org>

0094 21 228 5986

Information Collected by



Statistical Centre for North East (SNE)

A9 Road, Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka

snepvtltd@gmail.com

0094212283952

First Edition in English - 2007

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This book is dedicated to the
53 girls and two staff who lost their life in
the Vallipunam Senchchola complex bombing

தமிழ்த் தேசிய ஆவணக் சுவடிகள்

Foreword

The Vallipunam Senchchulai complex bombing is one among the many large scale massacres of civilians by successive Sri Lankan governments that have carried out and is continuing to carry out a well planned ethnic genocide of the Tamil people in the island of Sri Lanka. All along school students were not exempt from the genocidal intent of successive Sri Lankan governments. The aerial bombing of the Vallipunam Senchchulai complex on 14 August 2006 targeted hundreds of senior school girls who were taking part in a leadership workshop. Fifty three school girls and two staffs were killed in this attack. Girls who sustained serious injury number 130. Many more girls with less serious injuries recovered after treatment.

This report brings together information from many sources about this incident. Families of the girls and staff who were killed, severely injured girls, people from the education sector who organized the workshop were all interviewed. Affidavits signed by families, death certificates issued by the coroner, and statements from those affected have all been put together in this report.

Thank you

NESOHR Team

2007.07.01

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Massacre of School Girls in the Vallipunam Senchchola Complex 2006.08.14

For the last two decades, Vanni region has been put under many forms of oppressive measures by the Sri Lankan government. Economic blockade, aerial bombardments, and military occupation of Vanni have made it into a very badly affected area. Vanni was able to recover a little only after the signing the ceasefire agreement in February 2002. The re-imposition of the oppressive measures over the last one and half years is pushing back any recovery that was made.

The education was one of the severely affected aspects of life in Vanni. Non appointment of teachers, restriction on sending text books, lack of laboratory equipment and the on going attacks and repeated displacement contributed to this. During the early ceasefire period, the education sector in Vanni implemented several programs including workshops, sport competitions, and tours for the students to make up for these shortcomings and speed up the development of the students.

The leadership workshop organized by the Principals Association to run from 11 August to 20, 2006 in the Vallipunam Senchchola complex was part of this wider program. Senior school girls from Kilinochchi, Mullaithivu and Oddusuddan Zonal Education Divisions took part in this workshop.

On 14 August 2006, three days after the workshop got underway, four Sri Lankan bombers dropped several bombs on the Senchchola complex where the girls were staying and taking part in the workshop. Fifty three school girls and three staff at the workshop were killed. More than 130 girls sustained severe injuries.

This incident has left a very deep psychological scar on the school students in Vanni. Since this bombing whenever Sri Lankan bombers fly in the sky, students run in fear in all directions from their classrooms disrupting the functioning of the school for the rest of the day.

Principals' Association Letter to UNICEF

Mullaitivu Principals Association
Mullaitivu

Kandavalai Principals Association
Kilinochchi

16 August 2006

To:
United Nations Children's Fund
Geneva Regional Office
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10

Subject: Aerial bombing of the Vallipunam school camp on 14 August 2006

Our two associations strongly condemn the attack by the Sri Lankan air force fighter jets on more than 500 Advanced Level (A/L) female students who were taking part in a residential school camp in Vallipunam. The camp was intended to teach first aid and other disaster management skills.

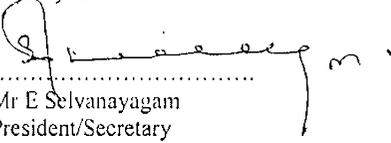
Realizing the urgent need for such training in view of the war situation and acceding to the request from many school development boards in our areas and also listening to the wishes of the students, we, together with several other organizations, co-ordinated the Vallipunam residential school camp as a pilot project. We obtained funding from CWDR and support from the Kilinochchi St John's Ambulance to draw up the program and to provide trainers. Staff and trainers for the school camp were brought together by our associations. We drew up the ten-day program and time schedule. We chose the former Senchcholai complex as a suitable quiet and central location. We started the course on 11 August 2006.

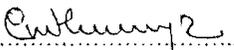
The residential course progressed to its fourth day, when on 14 August at 7:00am the students were getting ready for the day's program when four Sri Lankan government Kfir jets started showering the area with bombs. Many were killed and injured. When we arrived at the camp location, what we saw was hard to describe. We carried out all the necessary arrangements to transport the injured to the hospitals with help of neighbors in the area.

This is not the first time the Sri Lankan armed forces have carried out attacks on Tamil students. The Sri Lankan government has recently increased the tempo of attack on Tamil educational institutions. We hope the international community will not continue to be just an observer when tragedies like the Vallipunam school camp attack are carried out. Your organization with focus on child rights and child development must take immediate steps to stop all attacks by the Sri Lankan armed forces on Tamil educational institutions and Tamil students.

We appeal to you to ensure that our students will be able to have a decent learning environment without having to face such dangers.

Thank you.


.....
Mr E Selvanayagam
President/Secretary
Mullaitivu Principals Assoc.


.....
Mr K Mathuranayagam
President/Secretary
Kandavalai Principals Assoc.

UNICEF: Children are victims of the conflict in Sri Lanka

Colombo, New York, Geneva, 15 August 2006 –



The bombing on Monday of a Vallipunam compound in Mullaitivu district that reportedly killed dozens of girls and wounded many more is a shocking result of the rising violence in Sri Lanka,

UNICEF said today.

"These children are innocent victims of violence," said Ann M. Veneman, UNICEF Executive Director. "We call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and ensure children and the places where they live, study and play are protected from harm."

The compound in the northern part of the country was bombed, reportedly killing as many as 40 adolescent girls. Some 100 children were wounded, many critically. Girls from various schools in the nearby district of Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi were staying overnight at the compound, attending a two-day course in first-aid.

UNICEF staff from a nearby office immediately visited the compound to assess the situation and to provide fuel and supplies for the hospital as well as counseling support for the injured students and the bereaved families.

This latest incident comes amidst escalating hostilities in Sri Lanka in recent weeks, where tens of thousands of children were displaced from their homes. Hundreds of children have been injured, lost family members, and live in constant fear of the violence and continuous shelling of their communities.

The view of a school principal

Mr Sinnaih Baskaran (Principal of Visuvamadu Mahavidyalayam)



This leadership workshop for disaster management was organized by the Zonal Education Departments in Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu. The lectures were given by selected school teachers. We needed a location to bring all the students in one place. The Senchchulai complex came up as the most suitable. Because it was once a children's home complex there was enough space for the students stay. We also believed that the location identified as a children's home complex will safeguard it from any attack on it.

Forty eight girls from our school went for this workshop. Twelve of these girls were killed in the aerial attack and a further 26 girls were injured. We have built a memorial in the school for the girls who were killed in this attack. This memorial has pictures of 15 girls who were killed. This includes three pictures of our former students who were also killed in this attack.

The Sri Lankan Government has carried out this attack knowing that this location is a children's home complex. Tamil people live in fear in this island. International community must evaluate this dire condition of the Tamils in this island and take the necessary steps to ensure such massacres do not take place again.

A student who suffered leg injury

Ms Kalaichelvan Hema (Udayarkaddu Mahavidhyalayam)

I am a 2008 GCE

Advanced Level student at

Udayarkaddu

Mahavidhalayam. We were

at the Senchcholai

Children's Home Complex

to follow a Leadership

Workshop in disaster



management. The workshop went well for three days. On the fourth day we

were finishing our morning chores when the Kfirs started dropping bombs.

We ran in all direction. I was injured in my leg near my left knee. I was in

the Kilinochchi hospital for two months. Even now I cannot stand on my

own. I went to school in a three-wheeler for two days. I felt uneasy asking

other girls to help me all the time. I have therefore stopped going to school.

Sri Lankan Government must visit all the schools in the Mullaithivu district and

view the memorials that have been erected in these schools for the students who

have been killed and also see the injured students. They will then realize how the

future generation is affected by their aerial bombardments.

A student who suffered leg injury

Ms Kidnan Siloyini (Tharmapuram Mahavidhyalayma)



We went to Vallipunam Senchchola complex to attend the Disaster management leadership workshop on 10 August 2006. The workshop proceeded well for three days. But on the 14th August at 7.00am Kfirs began attacking us. We all ran and lied down on the ground. I lost my left leg below the knee. I was also injured in my waist and stomach areas. I have no idea how to think back about that day. There were more than 550 girls attending the workshop. Within minutes it turned into a blood bath. Cries of pain and help echoed all around. I was taken to the Kilinochchi hospital. I was there for nearly three months. I am continuing with my studies at GCE AL. I feel depressed thinking about my friends who were killed and injured more seriously than myself. I appeal to everyone to stop such attacks on the students of Tamil



A student who lost one eye

Ms Robert Yogarasa Thushyanthi



I was studying GCE AL at Semmalai Mahavidhyalayam. I went with all my classmates to attend the Disaster management workshop at Vallipunam Senchchulai Children's Home complex. There were more than 500 girls there attending the workshop. We went there on 10 August. We were given classes on physical fitness, leadership, team work, first aid and self confidence. We were all thoroughly enjoying the classes and each other.

On 14 August many were still finishing their morning chores and those who have finished were getting ready for the morning exercise. At that time Kfir bombers began dropping bombs. We did not expect this. There were no bunkers there either. Bombs began to fall near us and explode. I thought that I will never live after this. After the bombing stopped and felt that one of my eyes was itching. When I put my hand I felt blood. It was only then that I realized that I was injured in my eye. I must have fainted after that. When I woke up I was lying in a hospital bed. The hospital was filled with people. My parents were there too. My right eye was bandaged. I could not move my arms or legs. There were several injuries. After a few days I was transferred from Puthukudiyiruppu hospital to Kilinochchi hospital. There were many girls there who have lost their legs.

Fr Reginald from Annai Ilam comes home to give me counseling. Sometimes he comes to the school too. I feel depressed when everyone, people who were kind to me as well as those who used to quarrel with me, now look at me with sympathy. When I hear Kefir noise I hear the cries of the girls at the Senchchulai complex on that fatal day.

An injured student

Ms Mahesalingam Senthuja, Semmalai Mahavidhyalayam



I was studying GCE AL at Semmalai Mahavidhyalayam. Many of my classmates and I went to Vallipunam Senchchulai Children's Home complex to attend the Disaster Management Leadership workshop. There were more than 500 students who have gathered to attend the workshop.

We were taking physical exercises in the morning and later we were learning first aid and other related subjects.

On 14 August when Kfirs bombers started attacking us we were unable to run anywhere to escape because bombs were falling all around us. We all fell down on the ground. I was lying under a tree with my cousin. After the Kfirs have left I could not put my left feet on the ground. It was all crushed. My cousin also was injured in her stomach. She ripped her dress and bandaged my feet and she carried me when people came running to help. Some boys put me on the motorbikes and that the last I remember because I fainted after that. When I woke up I found myself in Puthukuduyiruppu hospital with my feet bandaged. Sonn my parents and relatives arrived. They were relieved to see myself and my cousin alive. My feel is OK now but because I have lost my big toe I cannot walk normally. I do not like going to school anymore. I cannot think back of that time when many of my friends were killed and injured. When I think that our government has put us in this state I feel disgusted with life itself.