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TAMIL INFORMATION CENTRE  
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND TAMILS OF SRI LANKA  
INFORMATION RECEIVED SINCE LAST REPORT

1.0 JAFFNA

- 1.1 On 24.6.85, at Poonagari unknown gunmen attacked an army convoy at the entrance to a dispensary. In a reprisal one civilian was killed.
- 1.2 On 26.6.85, Mr Anandarajah, Principal of St John's College was shot dead by unknown gunmen.
- 1.3 On 27.6.85, Cicil Wikremanayake who was kidnapped by unknown persons was released the following day.
- 1.4 On 1.7.85, in Jaffna over 500 boys and girls had marched covering nearly 30 miles to protest against the ceasefire and the proposed talks between the Sri Lankan Government and Tamil militants and Tamil United Liberation Front.

2.0 MANNAR

- 2.1 4 bodies were found at Pallimadu. The assailants or the reasons for the killings are not yet known.

3.0 MULLAITIEVU

- 3.1 On 27.6.85, at Oddusuddan 3 policemen were kidnapped by unknown persons.

4.0 VAVUNIYA

- 4.1 9 bodies were found in Vavuniya. Neither the assailants nor the reasons for the killings are yet known.

5.0 TRINCOMALEE

- 5.1 On 19.1.85, near Muthur Simon Winchester, a reporter of the Sunday Times and a photographer were arrested. The attack by the armed Sinhalese 'home guards' and the security forces were the worst in Muthur area. It is now estimated that over 3,500 houses were burnt or destroyed during the first two weeks of June and there are over 25,000 Tamils rendered refugees in the Trincomalee district. Some are still in the forest unable to return to their villages or to take refuge elsewhere (see page 6). The entire village of Sampur was shelled from the sea by the Navy. It will be recalled that similar shelling took place since August 1984 in the Northern Province.

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6.0 BATTICALOA

- 6.1 The persons arrested on 17.6.85 and 19.6.85 have been tortured. Some are still in detention.
- 6.2 On 20.6.85 at Batticaloa Railway Station at least 3 persons were arrested by the security forces.
- 6.3 On 21.6.85, the body of a Tamil person was found in front of the Batticaloa courts. It is reported that he was killed by the police commandos the previous night.
- 6.4 On 30.6.85, 4 police commandos were killed and 8 policemen were injured in a gun fight between police commandos and the police force.

7.0 AMPARAI

- 7.1 On 18.6.85, at Pothuvil two Italian tourists were shot and injured by the security forces.

8.0 OTHER DISTRICTS

- 8.1 On 22.6.85, at Tissamaharagama a Tamil police inspector was hacked to death by a Sinhalese policemen.

9.0 GENERAL

- 9.1 The Norwegian Cabinet has reduced the development aid to Sri Lanka by half this year. It is observed that this decision which is the first of its kind was intended to express concern regarding the current policies of the Sri Lankan Government.
- 9.2 The Australian Council for Overseas Aid has renewed its call for the Australian Government to request the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to stop raising funds for his Government's National Defence.
- 9.3 Mr Justice Taylor, High Court Judge, in London accused the Home Office of using artificial and inhuman criteria in dealing with applications for political asylum from Tamils fleeing communal violence in Sri Lanka. He said that it was a startling proposition that the applicant could not qualify for asylum if he and his family had not been singled out for persecution. He also said that "it can be of little comfort to a Tamil family to know they are being persecuted as Tamils rather than individuals". The Judge ordered the decision to refuse asylum to be quashed.
- 9.4 Talks between Sri Lanka Government and Tamil Leaders are scheduled to take place during the 2nd week of July. Lalith Athulathmudali, Minister for National Security has stated that "if terrorists knew they could win, they would not agree to a dialogue". Mrs Srimavo Bandaranaike has said that she would stress on a general election when a viable solution is to be put forward before the people to decide. Mrs Bandaranaike and her son Anura Bandaranaike, Leader of the Opposition, are expected to visit India.

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that they would not participate . The ENLF has also stated that the government is not honouring the conditions of the ceasefire. The Indian government is extending its good offices to convene the talks and it is believed in some quarters that the ENLF will eventually be persuaded to attend the talks which is scheduled for the 2nd week of July.

While Jayewardene was discussing with Rajiv Gandhi on 2nd June the ethnic problems and perhaps the possibility of a ceasefire, violence was let loose in the Trincomalee District which continued even after Jayewardene returned to Colombo. It is estimated that over 100 persons were killed and still several hundreds are missing, over 3,500 houses were burnt or destroyed. Several thousands are still in the jungles, unable to return to their homes or to take refuge in the adjoining Batticaloa District, since the Home Guards (armed Sinhalese civilians) are patrolling the area. The pogrom was carried out by armed Sinhalese civilians assisted by the security forces. There appears to be no desire on the part of the Sri Lankan Government to assist the Tamil refugees to return to their homes. The security forces, it would be recalled, drove the Tamils in several villages in the Mullaitivu District and they are now refugees in camps. The Government proposed to evacuate several villages in Chettikulam area to create a 'no fire' zone. Some people have already left the area. Largest number of people leaving has been from Mannar District where people fled to India. There are over 100,000 refugees presently in India. The effect of the actions and inactions by the Sri Lankan government is an effort to evacuate the Tamils from Trincomalee, Mannar, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu Districts. In Trincomalee District there were only 15.2% of Sinhalese in 1946 and due to government sponsored colonisation since independence, the percentage has increased to 33.6% in 1981, the year of the last census. The Sinhalese population in Vavuniya, Mannar and Mullaitivu Districts are 16.6%, 8.1% and 5.1% respectively in 1981.

In 1984, thousands of youths were rounded up and kept in detention and many were tortured. There were several killings in detention. One of the known instances is the killings in the Vavuniya army camp. Several hundreds of persons have disappeared. Extra judicial killings and 'disappearances' in 1984 and 1985 were estimated at 3000 persons. Several thousand houses were burnt or destroyed or looted. Women were raped in the Tamil homelands. No action was taken by the government and the explanation that the acts were done by an 'indisciplined' army cannot be taken seriously. Most of the victims were not compensated. Suggestions by International Organisations for impartial inquiry went unheeded. There are over 150,000 refugees outside the country and over 350,000 people have been made refugees in their own homelands.

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ENLFF has issued a statement that the conditions to observe for the strict ceasefire have not been brought into effect. 500 youths in Jaffna demonstrated along a route of 30 miles in Jaffna protesting against the ceasefire as well as the proposed talks. Jaffna faced some of worst atrocities by the army, where several villages were shelled from the sea. It does not appear that the steps taken in the form they are taken at the moment are being welcomed by the people who faced the brunt of the atrocities .

There is a long history of broken promises and abandoned pacts. The Bandaranaike - Chelvanayakam pact, the first to be entered for autonomy for both North and East was not implemented because of opposition. President Jayewardene was one of the chief opponents who declared that he would fight without granting a 'quarter' to the Tamils and embarked on a 'long march' in protest. The second pact, Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayakam pact which was entered into in 1965 for similar solution was again not implemented. Jayewardene was part of that government, which 'failed' to implement it. In the manifesto of the United National Party in 1977, prior to the general elections, an all party conference was promised, but not undertaken. 'An All Party Conference' convened in January 1984 at the instance of the Indian government failed to bring about a satisfactory solution. The annexure 'C' which provided for some devolution of power was abandoned by Jayewardene. Recently, in an interview, Jayewardene was particular to point out that he has not agreed to granting anything more than what the party of Mrs Bandaranaike was willing to grant to the Tamils. The national question of the Tamils is a political platform for both major Sinhalese parties who vie with each other for the position of the greatest oppressor. Sinhalese leadership has failed to take the problem above party politics and thus the Tamils had to seek their own channels to assert their right of self determination.

Is there adequate will and suitable climate to instill the trust and confidence necessary to arrive at a negotiated settlement ? Will the proposed settlement remove the insecurity of the Tamils to end the army atrocities ? One of the solutions suggested is the granting of powers enjoyed by the linguistic states in India ? Will the formation of linguistic state as in India be acceptable ? The Northern and Eastern provinces taken together have 87% Tamil speaking people . In this discussion, the problem facing the plantation Tamils have been ignored ? In the Nuwara-Eliya District, 64% of the people are Tamil speaking. It would be possible to annex parts of the adjacent districts such as Kandy, Matale and Badulla where the majority are Tamil speaking. Will there be a linguistic state for the plantation Tamils so that they could share the power of government ? These are some of the questions for which satisfactory answers will have to be found if a lasting solution is to be achieved to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka.

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# Behind the lines with the Tamil guerrillas

by Simon Winchester, Trincomalee

IN Colombo there has been much talk of a ceasefire in the near-civil war that has brought such misery to the island of Sri Lanka in the past three years. But outside Colombo, it is regarded only as talk. In the lush countryside, and around the vitally important old British naval base at Trincomalee, on the eastern coast, where the fighting has recently been particularly bloody, neither side is ready for peace.

"We are continuing with the fight," insisted Gamesh, a young man who, in normal times, had been a medical student, and was still a talkative and polite middle-class Tamil of 24. When we met, in a secluded village 10 miles south of "Trinco", last week, he was carrying a Soviet-made AK47 assault rifle, a bandolier of ammunition, a pouch of hand-grenades, and a commando knife.

With his two well-armed colleagues - one a chemistry student, the other a former civil servant - from a local unit of the Tamil Tigers guerrilla group, Gamesh was scornful of Tuesday's announcement of an 18-week "cessation of hostilities" between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the small army of militant Tamils, in which he is a section leader.

"Why should we stop now? What is in it for us? Anyone can see that we are well on the way to winning," he said. "We have already surrounded the forces up in Jaffna. Now we are going to push them into the sea off Trincomalee."

The battle for control of Trincomalee - Nelson called it "the finest harbour in the world", and it was a prime Royal Navy base until 1957 - is turning out to be the critical struggle in Sri Lanka. Militant Tamils, who want all of northern and eastern Sri Lanka for themselves, as an autonomous or semi-autonomous state to be named Tamil Eelam, see Trincomalee as their natural capital city. But the island's Sinhalese majority, well aware of the strategic and commercial importance of the harbour - as a base for the Ceylon navy and

as an expanding centre for container trade with the Orient - is equally determined not to allow it to fall into Tamil hands.

In our brief reconnaissance of the region - cut short by our arrest, interrogation, and summary removal back to Colombo - it became easy to understand the bitterness and hatred that is currently dividing the communities in Sri Lanka. We found it first, unexpectedly, at a small village called Tiriyai, 50 miles north of Trincomalee. It is a place named in the guidebook for its exquisite 7th-century Buddhist pagoda, and is said to have a population of 2,000, most of them Tamils and most in the business of paddy-farming or raising cashew nuts.

When we arrived in Tiriyai last week, almost every single house had been wrecked and burned, and fewer than 100 people remained. One resident, an elderly Tamil rice-grower - his characteristically complicated name had 23 letters and seven syllables - said the Sri Lankan army had arrived five days before.

"A helicopter came first at 8am, firing guns down at us," he said. "Then the lorries came with hundreds of soldiers. They fired their guns, and drove us all out into the jungle. Then they poured paraffin on the houses and burned them. They went very quickly. They were gone by 10am, and they left the whole village on fire."

Certainly there had been terrible devastation. The few who remained were still stunned and shocked. One man, a farm manager, showed me a letter he was writing to his superior in Trinco: "Sir, I beg to inform you that the following properties of mine were damaged, burned, or stolen by the security forces..." The letter went on to list the pathetic accumulations of a Sri Lankan rural life: "One Honda motorcycle, one sewing machine, one push-bicycle, two stools, one umbrella large, one umbrella small, many dresses, 10 gunny sacks, two bags of paddy."

The ruins of his life lay round about him as he wrote, wisps of smoke still curling up from the piles of sacking in which he had stored his spring harvest.

Every shop had been looted and smashed. In the tiny public library, all the books had been heaped together to make a pyre, the index cards burned, and the filing cabinets wrecked. The temple had been set on fire.

Most of the villagers were to be found later, camped out at a school 40 miles south, on the outskirts of Trincomalee. Three people had been killed by gunfire, half a dozen had been left wounded and all the rest were homeless. "And this is just the tragedy of one village", said Kandaratanam Sivapalam, the local chairman of the Tamil citizens' committee.

"There are 10 villages north of Trinco, and 30 south that have been smashed and burned by the army and by the hooligans they call the Home Guard," he said. "The Sinhalese are trying to drive the Tamils away from Trinco so that they can keep control of the port. No outsiders can come and see, and the press are not allowed to write about it here."

In an official comment on the Tiriyai operation, the Ministry of National Security has said that in response to a terrorist attack on a police station near the village, in early June "operations were carried out in an attempt to isolate the perpetrators". The government strongly denied claims that it intended to move out Tamil villagers and replace them with Sinhalese.

In the flat countryside to the south of Trincomalee harbour - which can be reached only by a rickety ferry boat that carries more fish and live chickens than human passengers - dozens more Tamil villages were found to have been burned and sacked in army operations in the last 10 days. (The security forces' co-ordinating officer for the Trincomalee region is actually a naval officer, a Commodore Jayasuria; he commands some 10 battalions of infantry, commando squads and naval assault parties as well as helicopter and reconnaissance aircraft of the air force.)

Five new refugee camps have sprung up in the neighbourhood of the gutted village of Sampoor and now house some 30,000 refugees, many with

appalling tales to tell. We met a man who claims to have been arrested by the army in the village of Killivati; he had been tied, with 37 others, in a human chain and forced to walk past a machinegun which then opened fire. He was hit by bullets in the throat and right elbow, but feigned death.

The troops piled brushwood and timber batters on the bodies and set fire to them. But as one log slipped from the pile the man, who had wriggled free from the rope, was able to dive into the undergrowth and crawl away under cover of the smoke and flames. When we met him he was thin and desperately sick, suffering from loss of blood. But he had already become something of a hero among the younger Tamils.

Like him, the Tamil guerrillas are widely admired, their violent tactics now, to judge from conversations and interviews conducted last week, accepted by virtually all sectors of rural Tamil society.

The fighters themselves, who agreed only with great reluctance to be interviewed, were confident and, it has to be admitted, impressive. The trio we met, though possibly not representative, were intelligent young men. They were not the hooligans or cowboys mentioned in the Colombo press and they also were not, they insisted, marxists. True, their weapons were Soviet-made (the Sri Lankan army uses American M-16s). But they said: "We want no more socialism for Tamil Eelam than President Jaywardene wants for Sri Lanka as a whole. We want freedom for our people, that is all."

But in pursuit of that freedom had not some terrible acts of slaughter been committed by the guerrillas? "Yes, but it is a vicious circle," said Gamesh, the medical student. "Violence breeds more violence. You have it in Ireland. We have it here. It will not end until the cause is taken away. That is why this talk of a ceasefire is so meaningless in the long term."