

# TAMIL INFORMATION

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## CLOSING THE DOOR FOR PEACE

International non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in Sri Lanka say that an independent assessment of the situation in Jaffna is necessary before they could resume work in the peninsula. The announcement followed Sri Lankan government's claim that normalcy had been restored in Jaffna after military operation *Sunray II*.

*Operation Sunray II* was launched on 19 April to take control of Vadamaradchi and Thenmaradchi in the east of Jaffna peninsula. Around 150,000 Tamils from western Valikamam had taken refuge in these areas when the Sri Lankan army captured Jaffna town in December. A further 220,000 people had fled to the Vanni on the mainland.

Heavy shelling and aerial bombardment of the eastern areas which preceded the army advance caused extensive damage in some areas. Helicopter gunships attacked civilians waiting to cross the Jaffna lagoon at Kilali killing several people. The helicopters also sank several boats crossing the lagoon. Following the attack on the only crossing point for civilians into the mainland, people were forced to go westwards into Valikamam and other army-held areas, through a corridor opened by the military at Puthur. Kilali was captured by the army on 26 April.

Reports say the LTTE did not offer resistance and refrained from preventing people moving into western Jaffna. LTTE cadre are said to have withdrawn

into the Vanni, moving all arms and equipment from the Jaffna peninsula. The LTTE's aim is to reduce its losses, increase the capacity as a guerrilla force to inflict maximum loss on the Sri Lankan security forces. By its withdrawal, LTTE has also ensured that civilian casualties are low.

On 8 April, the government extended Emergency rule, in force in Colombo and North-East, to the entire island. Censorship on military news was introduced on 19 April. The ban on independent observers remains. The government has taken every step to prevent information emanating from Jaffna where the army is said to have killed over 50 civilians in the operation.

Local media has also been harassed to force them to toe the line. News broadcasts of Maharaja Broadcasting Corporation's Sirasa FM and *yes FM* radios were banned and two media officers charged in courts for disturbing the public order. The offence is the announcement by the radios that curfew had been extended instead of Emergency.

The Army, after preventing people from crossing at Kilali, separated the youths from their families and took into

safety and say torture in army custody to extract information is routine.

In Jaffna town and Valikamam areas the facilities for the large number of people returning are totally insufficient. Food and medicine are in short supply. People have been ordered to fly a white flag in front of their homes and display the names of occupants outside the front door. The army has warned that if anyone is found in the home whose name does not appear on the list, the family will face grave consequences. The people have also been ordered to remain in their homes between 6 pm and 6 am. Those returning are being issued new identity cards in addition to the national identity cards. Human rights agencies have already denounced the measure as a breach of the law. At least one person with identity card issued by the LTTE has been killed by the army. Others have been arrested.

In the Vanni on the mainland, government restrictions have increased and the conditions of the 220,000 refugees is deteriorating. Reports say the food stores in Kilinochchi are empty and Colombo has not paid heed to the appeal by Vanni Government Agents for drought relief.

The government has ordered that food and medicine must be transported only by government agencies and NGOs are expressly prohibited from taking food and medicine across

Thandikulam in Vavuniya into the Vanni. At NGO meetings in Colombo officers from the Department of the Essential Services Commissioner have claimed that sufficient food and medicine are available in the Vanni.

"The government of Sri Lanka is not waging a war for peace, but a war for subjugation.

It is now occupying Tamil Homelands and holding the civilians prisoners.

We have only made a tactical withdrawal....."

custody over 500 young people. Sixty of them were taken to Colombo and are currently being held at the Mirihana police station. The others are detained at the Palaly military camp. Human rights workers are concerned for their



Water levels in wells have fallen because of the drought and NGOs say water supply to the huge refugee population is a major problem. People have to walk several miles in some areas for water. According to informed sources the Defence Minister has denied permission for a UNICEF water-sanitation engineer to visit the Vanni. The government has also ruled that international agencies working in the north cannot upgrade their staff.

The National Peace Council says that the Sri Lankan government has taken sole and full responsibility for essential food relief to refugees and that it is concerned over the tedious procedures involved in transporting supplies. The Peace Council also says that although over 1,420 lorry-loads of food are needed each month for the Vanni, only 545 lorry-loads in December and another 778 in January were sent. Of the estimated requirement of 175 ton of lentils for Kilinochchi District in the Vanni, only 71 ton was sent and 5.4 ton milk food was supplied whereas the need is 175 ton. Reports from Kilinochchi also suggest that not one truck of food stuffs from the CEGS arrived in the District between 14 March and 9 April.

Government restrictions are aimed at forcing refugees in the Vanni to return to Jaffna. More pressure from the government and the security forces on the Vanni refugees are expected. Many people in the Vanni have expressed their desire to return home. However they are also concerned about life under army rule. Observers believe that as LTTE attacks intensify in the Jaffna peninsula, retaliatory army attacks on civilians may be expected as in the case of other military-occupied areas, particularly in the east. A number of massacres by security forces in the eastern areas indicate that the army's "hearts and minds" exercise will not last long. In February, the army massacred 24 Tamils at Kumarapuram in Trincomalee District. The People's Alliance (PA) which promised to deal with impunity, has consciously allowed impunity among security forces to continue and the fact remains that no security personnel has been punished for killing civilians, although almost

two years have elapsed since the PA was elected to office.

The government now seems determined to pursue a military solution and the political package is being used to mislead the international community. The package has been watered-down since it was first published in August 1995 and the concerns raised by Tamils have been dismissed. It must be emphasized that Tamils are not unreasonably rejecting the peace proposals. Tamils have analysed the proposals in the light of past experiences and the discrimination suffered by the community at the hands of all the governments in the five decades since independence. Tamils have come to the conclusion that the proposals need to be modified taking into consideration the concerns and the aspirations of the Tamil people. Many of the concerns have been documented in the publication of the Tamil Information Centre titled *Sri Lanka: Devolution Proposals August 1995 and January 1996*.

The government proposals are devoid of true devolution and those foreign governments and NGO personnel who praise the package, have not fully understood the great sufferings the Tamils have endured or they have other motives. The reality is that the government has no heart for true devolution of power.

With the composition of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform which is currently debating the proposals, it is unlikely that Tamil aspirations will be taken into consideration. Many Select Committee members have already expressed opposition to sharing of power. The Tamil political parties have rejected the proposals, as it falls too short of Tamil rights and aspirations.

The confrontations between the PA and the main opposition United National Party (UNP) in other areas of politics are bound to be reflected in the Select Committee. Therefore, the most likely scenario is that the proposals will be shredded before it leaves the Select Committee.

Thereafter the proposals will have to go before the Constitutional Court and then to the Parliament where it must be

passed by a two-thirds majority. If a two-thirds majority is obtained in Parliament then it will have to be approved by the people at a national referendum. The government cannot obtain a two-thirds majority in Parliament without the support of the UNP. Recent statements by the UNP and the increasing attack on UNP supporters by PA politicians show that the UNP may not vote with the government. There is also increasing rebellion within government ranks. Government Minister S.Thondaman's Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) staged a major strike on the plantations which resulted in a revenue loss of Rs 500 million. Mr Thondaman also initiated a no-confidence motion in Parliament against his cabinet colleague and Plantations Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake. Junior minister Athauda Seneviratne defied a government ban under Emergency regulations of May Day processions. The Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) is increasingly becoming militant. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) has been voting against extension of Emergency for the past four months. The disarray in the government also indicates that a two-thirds majority in Parliament for the proposals is most unlikely.

There are issues that the International Community is failing to consider, in its enthusiasm for the peace proposals. The government is using the opportunity to attack not only the LTTE but also the entire Tamil community. President Chandrika threatens the Tamils by saying that the Sinhalese people are becoming increasingly impatient and an all out war with the LTTE which is inevitable, may lead to violence against Tamils in Sinhalese areas. She also blames the Tamils for the conflict whereas the Tamils have always been at the receiving end. The increasing belligerence of the government and President Chandrika will not contribute to peace. If the government is serious about peace then it must make a genuine attempt to address the problems of the Tamil people. Peace cannot be achieved through war. War can bring only further misery on the Tamil people.



## TIC ACCESSION LIST

A selection of documents received by the Centre in  
March/April/May 1996

**SHR 3882**

A safe and dignified return?: Report on the implementation of the repatriation of Sri Lankan citizens

Switzerland: Swiss Refugee Council (OSAR); February 1995

35p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Repatriation / Refugees / Sri Lankan Tamils / Switzerland / UNHCR / Political History / Statistics / Asylum / Chronology

**SHR 3889**

Urgent Action: Extrajudicial executions / Fear of further killings

London: Amnesty International; 13 February 1996

2p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Killings / Civilians / Trincomalee District

**SHR 3890**

Human Rights Watch World Report: 1995: Sri Lankan Human Rights developments

United States: Human Rights Watch; December 1995

7p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Human Rights Violations / Killings / LTTE / Sinhalese / Displaced People / Destruction / Statistics / Foreign Interest / Freedom of Expression / Aid / Militarisation

**SHR 3891**

Silent war: Censorship and the conflict in Sri Lanka

London: Article 19; March 1996

63p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Media / Freedom of Expression / Emergency Regulations

**SHR 3892**

Identity crisis of Sri Lankan Muslims

India: Mittal Publications; 1987

163p

**DESCRIPTORS:** Muslims / History / Politics / Culture / Economy / Statistics

**SHR 3894**

Tamil Exodus and beyond: An analysis of the national conflict in Sri Lanka

London: L.Samarasinghe; January 1996

129p

**DESCRIPTORS:** Political Opinion / LTTE / Peace Initiatives / Visit Report

**SHR 3956**

UNHCR Update on Sri Lanka

Geneva: UNHCR; 6 March 1996

1p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** INTERNALLY DISPLACED / UNHCR PROTECTION

**SHR 3957**

Tamil Welfare Association (Newham)

UK: Annual report 1995 and tenth anniversary souvenir

London: Tamil Welfare Association (Newham); 1996

176p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Tamil Refugees / UK / Europe / Torture / Performing Arts / Mother Tongue Teaching and Learning

**PB**

Court of Appeal ruling: social security benefits for asylum seekers

London: The Refugee Council; 1996

2p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** ASYLUM IN BRITAIN / WELFARE BENEFITS

**OHR 334**

If this peace is real: The return home of uprooted Angolans

Washington: U.S. Committee For Refugees; December 1995

37p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Angola / Refugees / War / History / Displaced People

**OHR 339**

The short procedure: An analysis of the Home Office scheme for rapid initial decisions in asylum cases by Judith Jagmohan

London: Asylum Rights Campaign; April 1996

**DESCRIPTORS:** Asylum in Britain / Short Procedure Scheme / White list / Recommendations

**OHR 340**

Amnesty International and India

London: Amnesty International; March 1996

23p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS / PERPETRATORS / VICTIMS / IMPUNITY / LEGAL SAFE-GUARDS

**SGN 446**

Water resources development:

Jaffna Peninsula by

K. Shanmugarajah

Australia: Fast Books; 1993

121p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Rain Fall & Hydrology / Ground water Resources / Recommendations

**SER**

Indigenous people and self-determination: a case study of the Wanniyala-aetto (Veddahs) of Sri Lanka by Wiveca Stegeborn

Colombo: Law and Society Trust; April 1996

15p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Indigenous People of Sri Lanka / History / Human Rights

**SER**

The Draft-Proposals for Devolution -January 1996 by Bertram

Bastiampillai

Colombo: Christian Workers

Fellowship; 4th Qr. 1995 & 1st Qr. 1996.

5p.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Aim of Devolution / Executive Power / Legislative Power / Judicial Power / Regional Attorney-General / Finance Commission / Public Service Commission / Exclusive Economic Zone / Law and Order / Chief Minister's Conference



# National Peace Council Organiser Interviewed

Over three months after the military captured the Tamil Tiger stronghold of Jaffna peninsula, the war appears to have reached a stalemate. The Sri Lankan government bracing for guerrilla attacks in the east and capital Colombo.

Inside sources say the Defence Ministry is taking delivery of more attack aircrafts, helicopter gunships and naval patrol boats in a major arms build-up to crush the Tamil rebellion. The Tigers also continue to receive arms in the north-east from their foreign sources.

The People's Alliance government which was elected on a peace ticket and denouncing the previous regime for continuing the war, has succumbed to pressures from the hardliners and the military and is heading for total war, trampling the remaining peace constituency in its march. The victory in capturing Jaffna has been given prominence and hopes of a solution to the Tamil national question are played down.

Tamils say that most peace organisations formed by the Sinhalese groups in Sri Lanka and overseas were formed only after 1988 with the beginning of a military crack down on the Sinhalese People's Liberation Front (JVP) and major human rights violations against the Sinhalese people in southern Sri Lanka. These organisations were extremely active while the violations against the Sinhalese continued. After Jaffna was captured these organisations are either remaining quiet or have given up talking about peace. Some organisations have openly joined the war-promoters demanding the crushing of the Tamils.

The Sinhalese zealots are having the upper hand calling for total victory and the peace constituency is looked upon as traitors. Despite the overwhelming odds there are some who will not turn away but continue their crusade to achieve a just and lasting peace. One of them is the National Peace Council

which has striven to drive home the message of peace. The aim of the National Peace Council is to create an atmosphere where both the government and the LTTE can be persuaded to relinquish war.

Mr. Ajith Rupasinghe, National Organiser of the Peace Council in an interview to the media in Jaffna in late February said that their objective is to establish a multi-ethnic democratic society based on negotiation creating unity, equality and dignity among all people. He further said as follows:

"Peace should be achieved on a structured basis. Only views expressing the genuine needs of the people should be put forward. It is vital that people in the higher echelons should be drawn into the peace process. People always desire to live in peace and unity. This is why our Council promotes this objective.

"The political system of this country and the successive governments which ruled this country are mainly responsible for this conflict. It is a historical truth that lasting peace cannot be achieved if we are to depend on our present political systems. The lesson we have learned so far is that the ethnic crisis cannot be resolved by the state. Even when the state makes some effort the opposition parties create chaos and bring about a situation of racial tension. When the state makes an attempt it is bent on a military solution. Since independence the democratically elected governments of the Sinhala majority have been exploiting the minority community. This situation has continued with each successive government. This has become the national policy. All the former governments instead of fostering racial harmony deliberately pursued a policy of alienating the Tamils. When the Tamil Congress put forward the "Swabhasha" policy, the government responded with "Sinhala Only". The Indo-Pakistan Act of 1948 clearly showed the alienation of the Tamils. This deprived the Tamil people of their rights. Through the Sinhala Only Act the state kindled racialism. Further political rights were stripped by the Republican Constitution of 1972.

Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact was opposed by the UNP. Dudley-Chelvanayakam Pact was opposed by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Though initially the leftist parties recognized the rights of the Tamils later on they too joined the ranks of the parties opposed to Tamil aspirations.

"The World Tamil Conference held in 1974 was the turning point in the history of the ethnic problem. It is noteworthy that nine Tamils were killed in this incident. So far the Tamils have sought a peaceful solution through a unitary state. But they were continuously deceived by the ruling parties and also subjected to oppression.

"Subsequent to the 1972 constitution the Tamils lost faith in finding a solution through a unitary state. As a result the demand for a separate state was put forward by the Vaddukodai resolution of 1974. Only after many years of agitation rights were given in 1961 and that too in very negligible measure. The creation of Regional Development Councils is an example of these half-hearted measures. The 1981 DDC elections in Jaffna were disrupted by politically orchestrated gangs. Ballot boxes were even found in the room of a Minister. This political hooliganism culminated in the torching of the Jaffna Public Library. Rare books and documents numbering 95,000 were reduced to ashes. This was like rubbing salt on the sore wounds of the Tamils. The Tamils saw this act as one of cultural desecration. The situation deteriorated further with the ratification of the 6th amendment to the Constitution. Tamils were threatened further by planned settlement schemes. This took the form of a regional threat. The Constitution of 1972 was felt to be a threat to the language, education and economics of Tamils. As a result of these obnoxious measures the Tamil youths lost their faith in the Tamil leadership, the Tamil parliamentarians as well as the government. Former President Jayewardene tried to suppress the Tamil youth movement in six months through the military. This had been a narrow policy. The July 1983 holocaust paved the way for a military confrontation. This transformed

the conflict into a national struggle. The situation escalated into a prolonged war between the Indian Peace Keeping Forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The ongoing conflict is the 3rd Eelam war. The negotiating efforts of the government failed. At every stage of the negotiations the army dominated. The negotiations held so far were clearly intended to isolate the LTTE. It is a fact the political leaders were not keen to control the army and give the Tamils their rights. After years of suppression and delusion the Tamil people set their hopes on Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga to achieve peace. Mrs Kumaratunga had said that the Tamils had been betrayed by their former leaders and that she accepted the LTTE as the representatives of the Tamil people. When negotiations commenced again the army was able to win over Chandrika and continue in the way the army wanted to act. Although Chandrika boldly moved forward unlike her political predecessors the army suppressed her and started to act on their own. The LTTE too has certain responsibilities in finding a solution to this problem. They have alienated the Sinhalese. They turned them against the Tamil people. The massacre of innocent civilians by liberation movement can in no way be justified. Instead of mobilising the support of the people to win their demands they placed their faith on some other elements. The Indian government was able to manoeuvre the LTTE because the LTTE depended on them.

"But the people of this country became suspicious of their motives. Any movement should have faith in the people. If not, it will meet the same fate that befell the JVP. A narrow objective based on the liberation of their race alone will never help them to achieve this objective. However, if their objective brings within its scope the people, then there is a chance for victory. The state and the LTTE should commence negotiations with a clear conscience. The Government of Sri Lanka should accept the right of self determination of the Tamil people. The reasons for the failure of talks on previous occasions should be critically analysed. No room should be allowed for thinking on racial lines. Military dominance should be rejected and the

executive power of the state dominate negotiations. The LTTE too should conscientiously declare and confirm that they are prepared for talks. Only demands that can be expected to be obtained should be submitted. The LTTE should do everything possible to

remove the suspicions of the Sinhala people which must be expressed by their actions. The future of the Government depends on their proposals. However, the proposals are also alienating the LTTE against the President"

## " Those who created the war are the successive governments in power "

*The following extract is from an interview of Mr Ajith Rupasinghe that appeared in Eelanadu published from Jaffna in February 1996.*

**Q.** What obstacles do you encounter in your march towards peace?

**A.** Racial politics is the main obstacle in our peace efforts. War obstructs peace and promotes racialism.

**Q.** The Government says that the war was started by the Liberation Tigers and that they will establish peace by defeating the Tigers in the war. What are your comments?

**A.** You can never bring about peace through war. War could only help to strengthen the hands of the racial elements. The 'Yapapatuna' slogan raised recently only helped to kindle racial discord. By celebrating the victory of Jaffna fire has spread throughout the country. We must look back to history to decide as to who started the war. The successive governments that ruled this country started this war by oppressing the Tamils and by committing racial massacres. The government which started the war on the minority community should be the first to stop it.

The government must seek correct ways and means to end the war. The governments of this country came to power by raising the racial cry. In 1956 when the UNP manifesto proclaimed to bring in a Sinhala Only Act S W R D Bandaranaike announced it will be ushered in within 24 hours of his election to power. As to who strips the rights of the minorities most has been the contest between these two parties. Through the chauvinism of the majority they decreed that only the majority should enjoy all rights and concessions. For many decades the Tamil political leaders endeavoured to solve the problem through Parliamentary politics, but their hopes were shattered.

Whenever a ruling party took the first step towards solving the problem the main opposition party blocked it. Even the non-violent struggles of the Tamil people were suppressed by the state.

With the declaration of the Republic and the constitutional reforms of 1972, the hopes of the Tamil people blew off with the wind. The whole object of keeping the minority under subjection by the majority was fulfilled by the constitution of 1972.

The Tamils were oppressed to such an extent that not only were they kept away from engaging in political activities but also found their cultural activities curtailed. The Tamil community wept when they realised that they were being oppressed both politically and culturally. The Tamil youth rose in anger when they saw their democratic political rights slipping away from them. It is the threat to the identity of the Tamil race that laid the foundation to the Vaddukodai Resolution. In 1977 the Tamil people cast their votes in support of the Vaddukodai Resolution.

In spite of these, in 1981 the Tamil leaders accepted the District Councils. District Councils were mere crumbs dished out to them. Yet the government acted as if they did not want the Tamil people to have even these crumbs. It indulged in election frauds and thuggery. The state forces burnt to ashes the Jaffna Public Library, an invaluable and irreplaceable treasure. Thousands of rare books were reduced to ashes.



The biggest treasure of knowledge in the whole of Asia was destroyed overnight. This inflicted festering wounds in the hearts of the Tamil people. This was ethnic oriented cultural murder. In the face of such atrocities traditional Tamil leadership became ineffective. It is in this context that the Tamil youths took to the armed struggle.

These clearly show as to who started the war on the Tamil people. In such circumstances resorting to arms to safeguard the rights of a race or community becomes inevitable. Neither is it wrong. The Tamil people fought non-violently for more than 40 years and when they failed in their non-violent struggle, they took to arms. Therefore, it is the duty of the State to solve this problem through a peaceful approach. Both parties should undertake parallel approaches to the issue with a view to finding a solution.

It is the government that should first stop the war. Peace initiatives should first come from the government. It is also their duty as the government.

**Q.** Liberation Tigers are the ones who broke the agreement on the cessation of hostilities, therefore, the government says that peace talks can be held only if they lay down their arms?

**A.** It is true that the Liberation Tigers broke the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. But we must consider why they did that.

When they had talks with the government the Liberation Tigers submitted three issues. The failure of the government to approach these three issues in the proper perspective was the reason for resumption of hostilities. These three issues were paramount in bringing about mutual understanding and confidence.

*The first-* Lifting the economic embargo. It is only human that people who have been isolated and suffering for the past 12 years be provided with their basic needs. Even this humanitarian assistance had not been provided as agreed upon.

*The second-* Removing the army camp at Pooneryn in order to open up the Pooneryn route.

Confidence and understanding cannot be built with the sword in one hand. People will have confidence only if you lay down the sword. It is important that people should be able to live safely and move about safely. The feeling of safely must be there.

*The third-* Liberation Tiger members be allowed to move about with their arms. The Tigers considered that this was essential to show that they have not surrendered to the government and to establish equality between the Tigers and the forces. Their argument was that an unarmed Tiger cannot maintain equality with armed service personnel. The Liberation Tigers demanded that they be allowed to carry arms for their own protection. These feelings should have been considered with due respect.

**Q.** The Government would have had certain practical difficulties in fulfilling the demand of the Liberation Tigers, was it not so?

**A.** It was not a case of blindly fulfilling the demands of the Liberation Tigers. What was needed was an understanding of the background to the demands.

It was meaningless to discuss other matters ignoring the three issues submitted by the Tigers. The government should have initiated the discussions on these issues. Acting with the thought that the Liberation Tigers could be made to surrender or that they could be suppressed, would not help to bring about peace.

The government not only failed to approach the three issues in their proper perspective but also displayed with resolve and authority how understanding and confidence could be destroyed. While peace talks were being held some persons in the government were seeking ways and means of weakening the Tigers through the talks. They were also writing to the press. More than 40 letters were exchanged between the President and the Tigers. The Tigers had informed earlier that if their demands were not fulfilled they would discard the

agreement on the cessation of hostilities. The government kept silent and yet the agreement was extended to another month. Again on 28th Liberation Tigers terminated the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. When their justifiable demands were refused by the government they again took up arms.

**Q.** Can you achieve Liberation through an armed struggle alone?

**A.** An armed struggle alone will not solve the problem. We need a better philosophy for this. We must discuss the issues at length and arrive at a logical solution. Struggle must be viewed from the standpoint of Liberation struggles waged on an international scale.

The ideology of struggle must be viewed as synonymous with the liberation of the people of the world. Though the sequence of logic should be looked at from the perspective of internationalism the local realities and conditions must be reckoned with, it should reflect the needs and aspirations of these people. The focal point of the conceptual methods and actions should be the people, if not, the struggle will be a failure as evidenced by the JVP.

**Q.** Sinhala people too have many problems. It is said that the JVP's armed struggle was for the liberation of Sinhala people?

**A.** The focus of the JVP struggle was a narrow chavinistic nationalist struggle. Their rationale was a petty nationalism. Their conceptual methods and actions ignored the liberation of the people.

They had no democratic plan. They had no plans to solve the problems of the peasants, the workers, the labour force and the women.

They thought that they were the redeemers of the people. They considered themselves as saviours with sacrifice in their hearts and the people as inactive zombies. By this type of action the enemy could not be destroyed but only an agreement could be reached with him. Society could not be restructured to create a new society. Eventually the JVP surrendered to the government.

**Q.** Do you endorse the method the

Government adopted to suppress the JVP?

**A.** Definitely not, I oppose the method adopted by the government to suppress the JVP. It was barbaric. But yet we have lessons to learn from this.

Thousands of revolutionaries have sacrificed their lives. Their sacrifice and dedication cannot be forgotten. This is why I urge that lessons are to be learned from this, lessons for which the price has been paid in blood.

**Q.** Not only the Tamil people but Sinhala people too have problems. Has this government taken steps to solve the problems of the Sinhala people?

**A.** Basically I have to say no. Both major parties here are capitalist parties. This is a neo-colonial state. The mudalalies and international capitalists are the ones whom they represent. They deceive the people by giving them promises to win the elections.

They try to come to power on attractive slogans. Their hands are tainted hands. Only a peoples' democratic government can solve the problems of all the people. Only a peoples' democracy that consists of the representatives of the oppressed people can find a solution to the whole problem of this country.

**Q.** What do people in the south think of the ethnic problem of the minorities?

**A.** There are different views at different levels. Yet in general there is a consensus that they should live in unity with the Tamils.

Today many are of the view that Tamils should live in equality with equal rights. A feeling that whatever rights they enjoy should be given also to the Tamils is widespread in the south. However this is being distorted by the state and the politicians. As a result an erroneous conceptualization of the Tamil nationalist struggle is seen at different levels. False propaganda is carried out to safeguard the interests of the racist elements and to enable the government to strengthen its hands. Though this seems to be a small group, in the

vacuum created in the present political situation, they appear enlarged and are dominating the field. But they do not represent the entire Sinhala population.

**Q.** What do you think of the suspicions in the South regarding the Tamil national struggle?

**A.** There are fears regarding the North-East merger, autonomy and of the support of Tamil Nadu to the Sri Lankan Tamils. The politicians have given many dimensions to these fears and have distorted the facts.

**Q.** What is your opinion on the demand of the Tamil parties that the North-East should be accepted as the homeland of the Tamils and that the North-East should be permanently merged?

**A.** The right of self determination of the minority race in Sri Lanka should be recognised. The right of self determination is a fundamental democratic right. A region and an economic basis should be there to implement this in practice.

The region of the Tamil people is identified as the land mass lying in the North and East. Contemporary Tamil nationalism was created by the blood shed by many thousands of people. It is in the North-East that the Tamils who can be identified as a separate political and cultural entity are concentrated. Therefore, I feel that a permanent North-East merger is essential. As much as the Sinhala people have fears and suspicions the Tamils too have fears and suspicions. A democratic structure should be designed to allay the fears and suspicions on both sides. A solution can be found only through this.

**Q.** Are there ways and means to solve the Tamil problem in the political package put forward by the government?

**A.** This political package will never solve the problems of the Tamils. As long as there is dominant governance by the state a solution cannot be easily found.

A package for the solution of the problem should accept the right of self determination of the Tamil people and should be based on that recognition. This package cannot be viewed as one satisfying the right of self determination. If they genuinely seek to solve the Tamil problem they should have prepared this package in consultation with the Liberation Tigers. Their equal participation should have been obtained. This package has been prepared by the SLFP to safeguard the interests of its social base and as far as possible to devolve the least power to the Tamil nationalists. The government openly says that through this political package the Liberation Tigers could be isolated and defeated in war. The package is being used as a weapon to justify the war. In the present situation if they are genuinely concerned about solving the Tamil problem they should have talks with the Tigers on equal terms to prepare and implement a solution. Only through such a course will the minority race get its rights. This can be achieved only through democratisation and by fundamentally changing the dominance of the State.

**Q.** Today the country is burning due to the ethnic problem. In this situation what do you wish to tell the government, the Liberation Tigers and in general to the people of this country?

**A.** The armed forces should be under the control of the civil administration of the government. The civil administration should not be under the control of the army. The Government should create an atmosphere conducive to talks with the Liberation Tigers, an atmosphere that can destroy racialism.

The Liberation Tigers should refrain from committing acts that alienate them from the Sinhala and Muslim people. The Tiger organisation should come out with a plan for negotiations. This is the message that would enable talks with the government on equal terms. All must be united in a single front to stop the war. This is the only way to achieve national unity and build a new Sri Lanka where all ethnic groups can live as brothers enjoying equal rights.



## MARCH DIARY

### MARCH 01

**ARBITRARY ARRESTS:** Over 300 Tamils including a child of three years arrested on suspicion by the Wellawatte police in Colombo were produced before the Mt. Lavinia magistrate who reprimanded the police for arresting merely on suspicion without investigations.

**FARMERS ARRESTED:** Villagers of Koduwamadu and Iluppachchenai in Batticaloa District sought refuge in Chenkalady following troop advance towards their villages. K.Ravithas (19 yrs), S.Shanmuganathan (24 yrs) and P.Deavadas (20 yrs) from Mylavedduwan engaged in threshing paddy were arrested by advancing troops.

### MARCH 02

**EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLING:** Chandrasegaram from Thirukovil in Amparai District was killed by the LTTE according to a Defence Ministry report.

### MARCH 03

**TAMIL JEWELLER KILLED BY A HOMEGUARD:** T Kannadasan (24 yrs), a jeweller residing at Dharga Town in Kalutara District was killed by a Homeguard who gained entrance in the night on the pretext of searching visitors who have no police registration. Cash and jewellery were also robbed from the house.

### MARCH 04

**SOLDIERS HACK TO DEATH TAMILS:** K.Kanagalingam (32 yrs), his brother K.Kanageswaran (25 yrs) and his brother-in-law T.Pulendrarajah (38 yrs) were hacked to death in the night in their house at Salambaikkulam in Vavniya District by soldiers from the nearby army camp who alleged that some LTTE members had visited the house that day. Wife of Pulendrarajah, Sivayogarani who escaped with serious injuries has identified the attackers.

### MARCH 05

**FISHERMEN RELEASED:** Three Sinhalese fishermen from Trincomalee held in custody by the LTTE arrived in Trincomalee harbour after being released in Jaffna through the Interna-

tional Committee of the Red Cross.

### MARCH 06

**TAMIL VISITING DETAINEE ARRESTED:** S.Alfred, a former Director of the Palmyrah Development Board, visiting a Tamil government employee detained at Narahenpita police station in Colombo was himself arrested as a LTTE suspect.

### MARCH 07

**TROOPS RUN AMOK:** Mrs. Nagamani (40 yrs) and Mrs. Nesammah (45 yrs) were raped by soldiers from the army checkpoint at Thiyavadduvan in Batticaloa District. Both women were admitted to Valaichchenai hospital.

**TROOP RAMPAGE:** Soldiers from the Navalady junction army camp attacked villagers of Mylankarachchai in Batticaloa District following the forcible removal of a tractor from the area by unidentified persons. Over 15 villagers were admitted to hospital with serious injuries and the rest fled to neighbouring Nasivanthivu.

### TAMILS DISAPPEAR AFTER

**ARREST:** R.Mohandas (24 yrs) and K.Sathiskumar (30 yrs) arrested from Armour Street in Colombo during a search of the area have disappeared. Mrs.S.Vijayaratnam (50 yrs) displaced from Jaffna and temporarily staying in a lodging house at Central Road in Colombo was arrested as an LTTE suspect by the Cinnamon Gardens police.

### MARCH 08

**ARMS RECOVERED:** Troops surrounded Kathiresan Street in Colombo and arrested eight Tamils including the owner of a shop from where firearms, ammunition, grenades and identity cards were recovered.

### MARCH 09

**REFUGEE CRISIS:** Minister of Rehabilitation M H M Ashraff disclosed at a press conference that the official figure of refugees in the country stood at 700,000.

### MARCH 10

**HIGH PRIEST CONSULTED:**

Reports said that Tamil political parties held discussions on the government devolution proposals with Buddhist high priest, Mahanayake Thera of Malwatte in Kandy.

### MARCH 11

**STF SUFFER LOSSES:** A Special Task Force patrol came under attack at Vellaveli in Batticaloa District and 23 policemen were killed. Air force planes called for assistance targeted Kandalady village injuring four civilians.

### MARCH 12

**LONG DETENTION AT ARMY CAMP:** Fourteen Tamils detained for several months at Palaly army camp in Jaffna District were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross who took them by ship to Point Pedro.

**SHELLFIRE VICTIM:** Shellfire directed from the army camp towards Vakara in Batticaloa District claimed the life of Kalipillai Samithamby, a mother of six children.

**MASS ARREST OF TAMILS:** Police arrested 118 Hill country Tamils working at rice mills around Dambulla in Matale District. P.R.Kannan, Suppu and N.Suppiahundaram from Colombo who went to the Assistant Indian High Commission Office in Kandy were arrested by police when they were passing the police station.

### MARCH 13

**RENEWED SHELLING:** Military stationed at Karadikulam army camp carried out fresh attacks on Vakara in Batticaloa District.

### MARCH 14

**KILLED IN THE SHELLING:** Ravichandran (10 yrs) and Navindrarajah (12yrs) were killed by army shells while working in a field in Batticaloa.

### MARCH 15

**FARMERS ARRESTED:** Fifteen Tamil farmers were arrested by Welikanda police in Polonnaruwa District. They went missing after being handed over to the Aranagalavila



## MARCH DIARY

police.

**COLOMBO ARRESTS:** Maradana police in Colombo arrested 40 Tamils from Batticaloa with identity papers who had arrived the same day to travel to Qatar where they had secured employment. They had been cleared at over 10 checkpoints en route to Colombo.

**SAILORS UNDER ATTACK:** Two naval boats came under LTTE attack off the Mannar coast resulting in the killing of 16 sailors. Eight were listed missing after the attack.

**MARCH 16  
MASSACRE IN MANNAR:** Following the death of over 16 sailors on 15 March two MI-17 helicopters attacked and killed 15 and injured 57 refugees at Nachchikudah in Mannar District.

**GOVERNMENT COVER-UP:** In a statement, the Defence Ministry reported that pilots of airforce MI-17 helicopters had killed 30 LTTE men in a dawn raid on two LTTE bases along the Mannar coast.

**POLICE POST ATTACKED:** Five policemen were killed and 10 injured when the LTTE attacked the police post at Alinjapottana in Polonnaruwa District. In a statement the LTTE said that it lost three men in the attack.

**MARCH 17  
JAFFNA UNSAFE FOR DOCTORS:** The Government Medical Officers Association said the army must guarantee the safety of doctors before compelling them to work in Jaffna.

**MARCH 18  
LTTE INFILTRATION:** An LTTE mine killed 18 soldiers travelling in an agricultural tractor at Mallakam in Jaffna District. In a separate incident, two soldiers were killed and five injured in an LTTE ambush at Vavunathivu in Batticaloa District.

**MARCH 19  
HILL COUNTRY ARRESTS:** Four Tamils were arrested on suspicion by police from Poonagala Plantation, Bandarawela in Badulla District.

**MARCH 20  
KAYTS INFILTRATED:** Seven soldiers were killed and five injured at Aralithurai in Jaffna District by the LTTE in a seaborne attack. In a statement the LTTE said that three of their men were also killed in the raid.

**ABDUCTED AND KILLED:** The bodies of V.Kaththalingham (43 yrs) and Sooty were recovered with gunshot wounds at Iluppadichchenai in Batticaloa District. They had been earlier abducted by unidentified persons.

**MARCH 21  
SOLDIER KILLED:** LTTE shot dead a soldier in Muthur in Trincomalee District for terrorising the villagers.

**MARCH 22  
ARMY OFFICER ARRESTED:** Ganemulla army commanding officer Lt.Col.Srinath Rajapaksa was arrested by police following an order by the Minuwangoda Magistrate in connection with the murder of policeman Nilantha Senaratne.

**MARCH 23  
HEAVY TROOP CASUALTIES:** Forty soldiers were killed and 13 injured at Vantharumoolai in Batticaloa District when a foot patrol came under LTTE attack. Two Special Task Force personnel were killed in another attack at Sinnavaththai in Amparai District.

**ARMY REPRISAL:** Following the LTTE attack at Vantharumoolai shellfire directed towards Mavadvembu killed Miss Ranjani (7 yrs) and injured four others.

**MARCH 24  
TAMIL OFFICER ARRESTED:** The Co-ordinator at Jaffna Government Agent's office in Colombo was arrested by officers of the Criminal Investigation Department who also shut down the office.

**MARCH 25  
TROOPS AMBUSHED:** A troop patrol was ambushed by the LTTE at Pulmoddai in Trincomalee District. Fifteen soldiers and eight LTTE cadre

were killed according to security sources.

**MARCH 26  
ATTACK ON DISPLACED:** Two Russian built planes bombed Vadamardchy area in Jaffna District at 9.15am setting ablaze several houses. Shellfire from Palaly army camp at 3.15am destroyed a section of the Chavakachcheri Ladies College.

**MARCH 27  
EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS:** The bodies of T.Sivakumar of Thunukkai and P.Thanapalasingham were recovered at Vavuniya with bullet wounds at the back of their heads. Stab wounds were also found on one body.

**MARCH 28  
TAMIL ARRESTS:** Three Tamil women were arrested by police from the Anderson Housing Scheme at Narahenpita in Colombo.

**TURMOIL IN THE EAST:** One soldier was killed and three injured in an LTTE attack at Sorawawe in Trincomalee District. The body of T. Pushparajah (20 yrs) from Nasivanthivu was recovered with gunshot wounds at Puthukkudyiruppu in Batticaloa District.

**MARCH 29  
LTTE SUFFER:** Security sources reported the death of four LTTE men in an attempted infiltration at Suthumalai in Jaffna District.

**MARCH 30  
CLASH AT SEA:** An Israeli-built Dvora attack craft was sunk off Mullaitivu coast in a Sea Tiger attack. Ten sailors were killed and five injured. The Defence Ministry claimed that over 25 Tigers were killed.

**MARCH 31  
ATTACK ON MULLAITIVU:** Israeli built Kfir fighter planes bombed the residential areas of Mullaitivu in the early hours of the morning causing heavy damage to property.



## APRIL DIARY

### APRIL 01

**TOIL IN JAFFNA:** Security sources reported the death of two soldiers in Valigamam area in Jaffna District due to sun stroke.

### APRIL 02

**PLOTE ACCUSED:** The government agents of Mannar, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi Districts complained that PLOTE members' interference at Thandikulam check-point had brought the transport of essential supplies to a halt.

### MUSLIM VILLAGE HIT BY

**SHELLS:** Thiyavadduvan Muslim village in the Batticaloa District was hit by indiscriminate shelling of the army from Valaichenai Paper Factory military camp. Three people were reported killed and five seriously injured in the attack.

### APRIL 03

**TIGER TOLL:** Security reports put the death toll of the LTTE at 41 and soldiers at five in a confrontation at Sangaraththai in Jaffna District.

### LTTE OPENS POLICE STATION:

LTTE opened a police station at Nachchikuda in the Mannar District.

### APRIL 04

**TIGER LOSSES:** Operational Headquarters of the Defence Ministry reported the recovery of 43 bodies of LTTE members at Chankanai in Jaffna District.

### DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY

Ukrainian built MI-24 helicopter gunships fired rockets indiscriminately on Watharavathai, Kapputhu and Mandan villages in Jaffna District causing heavy damage to buildings. Residents had taken shelters in bunkers thus avoiding loss of life.

### APRIL 05

**STF SUFFERS IN EAST:** An LTTE attack on the Special Task Force camp at Pulkunawa in Amparai District left 16 STF men and four LTTE cadres dead.

**CLASH IN NORTH:** Two soldiers and three LTTE cadres were killed in a

skirmish at Udayarkulam in Kilinochchi District.

### DESTRUCTION OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PROPERTY:

Military fired artillery and mortar shells from Karadikulam camp into Vaharai village in the Batticaloa District. Villagers took shelter in bunkers avoiding death and injury. Reports suggest heavy destruction to property and vegetation.

### APRIL 06

**TAMIL ARRESTS IN COLOMBO:** Five Tamil men and three women, all over the age of 50 years from Batticaloa were arrested in Colombo where they had arrived to visit their sons detained at Magazine Prison.

### APRIL 07

**ATTACK ON LTTE:** Operational Headquarters of the Defence Ministry reported the killing of one LTTE cadre at Pandivirichchan in Vavuniya District and three at Parangianmadu in Batticaloa District.

### APRIL 08

**EMERGENCY EXTENDED:** A Presidential proclamation extended the State of Emergency to cover the entire island.

### APRIL 09

**AMBUSH IN EAST:** Security sources reported the recovery of two bodies of LTTE cadre following an ambush at Pallikkudiyiruppu in Trincomalee District.

### APRIL 10

**EXTENSION OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY:** The extension of the State of Emergency to cover the whole country was passed by 116 to 80 votes in Parliament. Tamil MPs from EPDP, PLOTE and CWC voted in favour while those from TULF voted against.

### APRIL 11

**TAMIL ARRESTS IN BATTICALOA:** Six women were arrested at the Kottaimunai road-block while returning home on leave from the prawn farm in Colombo where they are employed.

### CORRUPT ARMY COMMANDER:

Corruption charges involving Rs.7.5 million were filed in the Colombo High Court against retired army commander General H. Wanasinghe.

### INCIDENT IN POLONNARUWA:

One soldier was killed in an LTTE attack at Welikandai in Polonnaruwa District.

### APRIL 12

#### TAMILS UNSAFE IN PRISON:

Seven Tamils including women inmates of Welikada prison were set upon by a group of Sinhalese drug offenders.

### COLOMBO HARBOUR RAIDED:

LTTE frogmen and Sea Tigers raided the Colombo harbour at dawn. The Defence Minister claimed that two cargo vessels were damaged and five LTTE members were killed by the navy. The LTTE listed nine martyrs and claimed six naval craft were damaged.

### APRIL 13

#### DEMOLITION AND EVICTION:

Following the LTTE raid on the Colombo harbour over 500 families living along the beaches at Mutwal, Wattala and Hendala were evicted by the security forces. Huts were destroyed and permanent structures were razed to the ground.

### APRIL 14

#### EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLING:

Pradeshia Sabha member A.Asokan of Tamil group TELO was shot dead by the LTTE at Valaichenai in Batticaloa District.

### APRIL 15

**CIVILIANS KILLED:** Vijeyakumar and T.Atputharajah were killed by troops at Vinayakapuram in Batticaloa District. Security sources identified the former as a LTTE member and the latter as a LTTE supporter.

### APRIL 16

**CANADIAN ASSESSMENT:** Junior Ministers L.J.Edward, Raphael Jerald and Director of Foreign Affairs T.W.Colmar visited Colombo to study the impact of the devolution proposals on the ethnic conflict.



## APRIL DIARY

**FISHING BAN:** Security forces banned fishing in the sea off the Trincomalee coast fearing LTTE's seaborne attacks on the naval harbour.

**APRIL 17**

**ABDUCTION OF TAMILS:** Shop owner V.Saravanamuthu and employee S.Naguleswaran were abducted in a white van from St.Michaels Road at Kollupitiya in Colombo.

**APRIL 18**

**BRITON DEPORTED:** British researcher and author Jane Russell was deported for overstaying in Sri Lanka after being detained in Kandy and Welikade jails under Emergency regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

**SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN:** Confederation of People's Organisation launched a signature campaign. The aim is to collect atleast 500,000 signatures to be sent to the UN Secretary General and the President of Sri Lanka explaining the plight of the Tamils in the North-East and to draw attention to their aspirations.

**APRIL 19**

**CENSORSHIP REIMPOSED:** Censorship on military news was imposed to coincide with the curfew in the North and the beginning of military operation *Riveresa II*.

**MOD REJECTS OXFAM REQUEST:** Ministry of Defence rejected OXFAM's request to take 3000 shelter units to the displaced in the Vanni region. The move is to avoid any consolidation of the displacement in Vanni according to government sources.

**APRIL 20**

**RAPID ADVANCE:** Defence Ministry reported the rapid advance of troops in Jaffna on several fronts with 14 bodies of LTTE cadre being recovered in the area.

**APRIL 21**

**BODIES WASHED ASHORE:** Nine bodies were washed ashore on Mandaitivu in Jaffna District and security sources reported they were of

LTTE members killed at sea.

**APRIL 22**

**PLANTATION SECTOR SHUT-DOWN:** Over 700,000 plantation workers began a week's strike demanding Rs 8/- wage increase and 300 days work in a year.

**TROOPS RELENT:** Soldiers who abducted V.Saravanamuthu and S.Naguleswaran five days earlier handed them over to the Crime Detection Bureau Headquarters.

**APRIL 23**

**APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE:** The Government Agent of Kilinochchi held an emergency meeting with the representatives of ICRC and UNHCR along with MSF, OXFAM and FORUT to deal with the sudden influx of people fleeing military operation *Riviresa II*.

**APRIL 24**

**STIFF RESISTANCE:** The advancing military column into Vadamaradchi faced stiff resistance from the LTTE at Thondamanaru giving time for the LTTE to remove men and equipment from the area.

**VILLAGE SHELLED:** Chemmalai village in the Mullaitivu District came under heavy shelling by the Sri Lankan military based in the Manal Aru military camp. According to reports, one person was killed and another seriously injured in the attack.

**APRIL 25**

**APPEAL BY HINDU MAHA SABAH:** Hindu Maha Sabah sent an urgent letter to President Chandrika to allow food and shelter units to Vanni for the displaced people.

**HUNGER STRIKE:** Fiftyone Tamil detainees held at Kalutura prison went on a hunger strike demanding that they be charged or released without delay.

**APRIL 26**

**MINIMAL RESISTANCE:** Defence Ministry reported the killing of five LTTE cadre as troops occupied most

areas of the Jaffna peninsula.

**APRIL 27**

**DEATH BY CYANIDE:** TELO member R.Siva was found dead in the TELO office at Valaichchenai in Batticaloa District and police reported that he had bitten a cyanide capsule.

**EXODUS OF TAMILS:** Tamils living in Vadamaradchi and Thenmaradchi began to move out of the areas in large numbers fearing a large scale military offensive.

**APRIL 28**

**ATTACK ON LTTE:** Security sources reported the killing of two LTTE cadre in a confrontation with troops at Palukamam in Batticaloa District.

**NIGHT SHELLING:** Security forces fired shells indiscriminately into Kerudavil, Thondamanaru and Valvettithurai in the early hours of the morning.

**APRIL 29**

**REQUISITION FOR JAFFNA:** The Government Agent of Jaffna requested the urgent dispatch of 5,000 lanterns, 10,000 torchlight cells, 5,000 torchlights and 100 water pumps for the returnees in the Valikamam area.

**CLASH IN BATTICALOA:** Three Special Task Force members were killed in an LTTE attack at Urani in Batticaloa District.

**APRIL 30**

**LIGHTS OFF:** Public places in the Jaffna peninsula were ordered to turn off their lights at 8 pm. Protests were mounting against army checking houses in the nights. Girl students were refusing to attend schools fearing army harassment.

**ATTACK ON FLEEING TAMILS:**

Security forces stationed at Elephant Pass military base continued shelling of Kilali lagoon to stop people crossing into the mainland. Fighter planes were also deployed to bomb Kilali crossing.



## MAY DIARY

### MAY 01

**PROCESSIONS BANNED:** Processions to mark International Workers Day were banned by government. Twenty one marchers were hospitalised after police broke up with batons and teargas a procession by Nava Sama Samaja Party.

### MAY 02

**LETTER BOMB:** President of the Porativu Pradeshiya Sabha, N Rasadurai was killed by an explosion when he opened a letter at his residence beside the Special Task Force camp at Mandoor in Batticaloa District.

**ABDUCTED AND KILLED:** Two Reserve Police Constables and two Home Guards were abducted from a private bus at Pottuvil in Amparai District by armed men. The body of one Reserve Police Constable was later recovered in the vicinity.

### MAY 03

**ATTACKS ON SECURITY FORCES:** In a skirmish at Kodikamam in Jaffna District one soldier was killed and another injured by the LTTE. Another encounter at Thoppur in Trincomalee led to the killing of one policeman and injury to another.

### MAY 04

**ARREST IN TRAIN:** Thiruvaharan Thiruvaraj (18 yrs) and Thurairatnam (31 yrs) were arrested on the train to Vavuniya and held without a charge in Ragama police station.

### MAY 05

**TRAVELLERS TURNED AWAY:** Security force personnel at Thandikulam check point made travellers to Colombo stand in the hot sun for long hours and then turned them back.

### MAY 06

**PATROL AMUSHED:** A troop patrol was ambushed by the LTTE at Kodikamam in Jaffna District.

**MASS RALLY:** Hundreds of displaced men, women and elderly the participated in a mass rally in Kilinochchi protesting against government ban on food and medical supplies to the displaced people. Petitions were also submitted af-

ter the rally to the Government Agent Kilinochchi and officials of UNHCR, ICRC, OXFAM and MSF.

### MAY 07

**INFILTRATION IN JAFFNA:** One soldier was killed and two injured in an LTTE attack at Kodikamam in Jaffna District.

### MAY 08

**CONDUCTED TOUR:** For the first time since the start of the military offensive in Jaffna in July 95, journalists numbering 42 were taken by the government but were not allowed to be on their own and were flown out the same evening. They reported long food queues in Jaffna.

**CIVILIAN KILLED:** R Kumaraguru (22 yrs) from Vantharumoolai in Batticaloa District was killed by gunfire and the coroner delivered a verdict of death from gunshot wounds in a crossfire. There were no others injured.

### MAY 09

**LSSP AGAINST EMERGENCY RULE:** Constituent of the People's Alliance government, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party abstained in the voting in parliament for the extension of Emergency rule in the country. Tamil MPs from EPDP, PLOTE and CWC voted in favour of the extension.

### MAY 10

**EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLING:** The body of Miss S Vani (30yrs), an employee of the Batticaloa hospital was recovered with gunshot wounds at Vantharumoolai. She has been abducted over two months earlier.

### MAY 11

**SKIRMISHES CONTINUE IN NORTH AND EAST:** Fourteen soldiers were killed and 15 injured in an LTTE attack at Siththandy in Batticaloa District. Bodies of nine LTTE cadres were recovered according to the security sources. The report also claimed that three LTTE cadres were killed by troops lying in ambush at Peththalai also in Batticaloa District. Three soldiers were killed in an LTTE attack at Sarasalai in Jaffna District.

### MAY 12

**NO PEACE THROUGH WAR:** Housing, Construction and Public utilities Minister N S de Silva speaking in parliament claimed that the North-East war was the cause for the high cost of living and the lack of funds for economic development.

**SEA ENCOUNTER:** The Defence Ministry reported the recovery of two bodies following naval fire directed at an LTTE boat off the Vettrilaikerni coast in Jaffna District.

### MAY 13

**SECTARIAN CLASH:** Sebastian was stabbed to death and Sukanthan received cut injuries while being within the Mannar office of a Tamil group.

**PROBLEMS IN PLANTATIONS:** The President announced the formation of a high powered committee to look into the problems of the Hill country amidst growing tension.

### MAY 14

**MILITARY OCCUPATION:** The Defence Ministry reported that the Jaffna peninsula was under the complete control of the security forces with the securing of the Point Pedro area at a cost of only one casualty.

**SEA BATTLE:** LTTE boats accompanying passenger traffic at Kilali came under attack by the Sri Lankan Navy. Both sides exchanged fire for over two hours and the navy retreated. A woman passenger, Kandiah Rukmani (45 yrs) from Point-Pedro was killed in the attack.

### MAY 15

**LTTE OPENS BANK IN MULLAITIVU:** LTTE opened a banking service and implored the people to use it.

### MAY 16

**AIR ATTACK:** Air force planes from Palaly air base dropped bombs on Maruthkerni village at 6.30 am. The planes bombed the village again at 10.30 am killing five civilians and causing severe destruction to property. The village was targeted again at 12 noon and at 3pm.

## MAY DIARY

**MAY 17**

**TROOPS STAB WOMEN TO DEATH:** Miss Sri Ranjani (18 yrs), Ms Puvaneswary (36 yrs) and Ms Rajeswary (38yrs) were stabbed to death by troops at Mattuvil in Jaffna District. A Defence Ministry statement claimed that terrorists in army uniform had been the murderers.

**MARKET PLACE BOMBED:** Sri Lankan airforce dropped bombs on Thambirai market in Pooneryn at 10am when full with shoppers. Five people were killed and over 10 seriously injured. Others took shelter in the air-raid bunkers near the market place.

**MAY 18**

**ARMY TAKES OVER PUBLIC TRANSPORT:** The army took over all buses from Batticaloa, Valaichenai and Kalmunai bus depots in the Batticaloa District resulting in a complete breakdown of passenger services in the District.

**MAY 19**

**CLASHES IN EAST:** The army camp at Kivulukada in Trincomalee District came under LTTE attack and six soldiers were killed. Another LTTE attack on the army camp at Kent farm in Mullaitivu District claimed the life of a soldier.

**MAY 20**

**DEATH THREATS:** Mrs L Kobbekaduwa received death threats over the phone for her evidence before the Presidential Commission inquiring into the death of her husband Gen. Kobbekaduwa.

**STUDENTS ATTACKED:** Police stationed in China Bay attacked Muslims students protesting against lack of facilities and staff at the AL-Azwar Muslim College in Trincomalee District. Thirty three students were seriously hurt and admitted to hospital. Thirty one of them were women students.

**MAY 21**

**ARMY SHELLING:** Army shelled villages surrounding the Elephant Pass military camp continuously throughout the day fearing an LTTE attack.

**MAY 22**

**SEACOAST BOMBED:** Coastal areas of Kunchi Paranthan in Kilinochchi District were shelled by soldiers in Elephant Pass army Camp after a bombing raid by airforce planes. A woman collecting salt was seriously hurt in the bombing.

**MAY 23**

**CONTINUING SKIRMESHES:** One airman and a sailor were killed at Varathupalai in Jaffna District when their vehicle came under LTTE attack. One policeman was killed when the LTTE attacked the police post at Mutur ferry terminal in Trincomalee District.

**MAY 24**

**GOVERNMENT SETBACK:** Opposition party, UNP declared in the parliament that it was against any political structure that would affect the unitary nature of Sri Lanka. The DUNLDF also reiterated this view, while the Tamil parties stuck to federalism and a merger of the North-East Provinces.

**ARREST OF TAMIL WOMAN FREED BY COURT:** Mrs P Thuraisingham (58 yrs) released on bail by the Additional Magistrate in Colombo was arrested by Crime Detection Bureau officer and taken to Cinnamon Gardens police as she came out of the court premises.

**MAY 25**

**SUMMER TIME:** The government advanced clocks by an hour in an attempt to reduce the consumption of scarce hydro-electric power supplies caused by the failure of monsoon rains.

**MAY 26**

**NO RESPITE:** A search party of troops came under LTTE attack at Nelliady in Jaffna District and claimed the lives of two soldiers. Two were injured in the attack.

**May 27**

**COSTLY ENCOUNTER:** Eight soldiers were killed and 10 injured when the army camp at Meegasgodella in Trincomalee District came under LTTE attack. The Defence Ministry claimed that 16 LTTE cadres were also killed when reinforcement backed by naval guns and

aircraft arrived. The LTTE named three members as martyrs in this attack.

**TAMIL RETURNEES:** The first ship-load of people to Jaffna took off from Trincomalee.

**MAY 28**

**TROOPS ABDUCT AND KILL CIVILIANS:** Troops who arrived in an unmarked white van at 10.30 p.m. abducted S Murali Krishna (18 yrs) and P Gunasingham (21yrs) from Anpuvalipuram in Trincomalee District. Their bodies with bullet wounds were found tied to the telephone post nearby early in the morning. Earlier in the day a soldier shopping at Trincomalee town centre had been shot dead by an unidentified gunman suspected to be a LTTE member.

**MORE CASUALTIES:** Two soldiers were killed and four injured in an LTTE attack near Iyakkachchi in Kilinochchi District.

**MAY 29**

**BLACKOUT:** The whole country came to a virtual halt as 14,500 workers of the Joint Trade Union Front of the Ceylon Electricity Board went on strike, demanding the discontinuation of the government's proposal to privatise the CEB, and the immediate implementation of the cabinet-approved salary structure.

**MAY 30**

**TRADE UNIONISTS ARRESTED:** Twenty trade unionists holding a meeting with the press over the electricity workers strike were arrested by police in Colombo. The government also declared electricity supplies an essential service under the Public Security Ordinance.

**MAY 31**

**OPERATION SHOCK:** Troops acting under the Public Security Ordinance forcibly removed electricity workers from their residences to resume power supplies. This forcible removal of workers was undertaken as part of the military's operation code-named *operation Shock* to restore electricity to the nation.



## Durable peace essential for solution to refugee problem: Views from the US Committee for Refugees (USCR)

*The US Committee for Refugee, in a March 1996 report entitled "The People in between: Sri Lankans face long-term displacement as conflict escalates", say that there cannot be a lasting solution to the problem of the displaced short of an answer to the underlying civil conflict. The recommendations of the US committee are given below:*

As with most conflicts, it is the civilians in Sri Lanka who suffer the most. As of late winter 1995, the majority of Sri Lanka's northern population was displaced. While the situation has stabilised to some extent and most sources say that food and other supplies are reaching them, they are still treated as pawns, caught in a continuing struggle for control over the population. The threats to their physical security have increased. They have no control over any aspect of their lives: they have lost their homes, work, often family, and all personal security. A large number of them live in overcrowded conditions with poor access to sanitation and health facilities. Children, who are particularly vulnerable, have no access to education.

The displacement is likely to continue into the foreseeable future with little possibility for the displaced to return to their homes. The immediate crisis is taking place in the shadow of a continuing civil war that is now in its second decade of armed conflict. USCR does not believe there will be a lasting solution to the problem of the displaced in northern Sri Lanka short of an answer to the underlying civil conflict.

### To Restore Peace:

1. The Sri Lankan government and

the LTTE should desist from further acts of violence and begin good faith negotiations to seek a durable solution to the conflict. The government's peace package released in August 1995 provides a basis on which at least to begin negotiations.

2. The Sri Lankan government and the LTTE should agree to the assistance of a third party in helping to resolve the conflict.

3. The Sri Lankan government and the LTTE should conduct themselves in accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law, and make every effort to ensure the safety of civilian life and property, including all facilities necessary for civilian life.

The Sri Lankan government should ratify Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, which deals with internal armed conflicts. The LTTE, in a public statement released in 1988, undertook to conduct itself in accordance with principles laid down in the Geneva Conventions. It should honour that commitment.

4. Political parties should put aside rivalries and cooperate in an effort to find a durable solution to the conflict. They should make known their stands on the August 1995 proposals and assist in public education efforts on the need for finding a lasting political solution to the conflict.

5. The U.S. government should actively encourage the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to resume negotiations. It should provide all available assistance to facilitate a dialogue between the two groups.

### To assist the conflict's newest victims:

1. The Sri Lankan government and the LTTE should ensure that the displaced have access to satisfactory conditions of shelter, hygiene, health,

safety, and nutrition. Special protection should be made available to those among the displaced population who are particularly vulnerable, including women, children, and the elderly. Education for displaced children should begin as soon as possible.

2. The Sri Lankan government and the LTTE should grant local and foreign NGOs full and free access to the displaced population. Every effort should be made to facilitate NGOs ability to deliver food and non-food items, and to provide other essential services to the displaced.

3. Donor governments should provide adequate levels of humanitarian assistance to NGOs working in Sri Lanka. Specifically, donor governments should respond urgently and positively to the two funding appeals that have already been put forward by the ICRC and UNHCR.

4. The government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE should, by recognizing the freedom of movement guaranteed by international human rights law, permit the displaced to return to their original areas or move to any other area of the country if they so wish.

Full and independent information should be made available to the displaced to enable them to exercise effectively their right to free movement. The information should include specifically the security, welfare, and infrastructure conditions of their original areas of habitation, or other areas to which they wish to move.

### To assist in providing accurate information:

1. The Sri Lankan government should permit local and foreign media representatives, and representatives of international organisations monitoring the situation, to visit the affected areas.
2. The LTTE should permit all representatives of the media to have free

and full access to the people in the areas it controls.

3. Donor governments should provide adequate levels of humanitarian assistance to the government and NGOs working in Sri Lanka. Specifically, donor governments should respond urgently and positively to the funding appeals that have already been put forward by the ICRC and UNHCR.

### To promote better relations among NGOs, the Media, and the government:

1. The Sri Lankan government should recognise the special role played

by humanitarian NGOs in times of conflict and remove any obstacles that may be hindering NGOs in the performance of their functions.

2. The Sri Lankan government should guarantee the freedom of association and expression of all NGOs.

3. The Sri Lankan government should initiate a dialogue with NGOs including peace, humanitarian, development and human rights NGOs with a view to sharing perspectives and understanding better one another's work. The government should discuss with NGO representatives any proposed regulatory regimes affecting NGOs. Sri Lankan

NGOs should begin a dialogue with representatives of the media with a view to developing a closer relationship between the two groups.

The Sri Lankan government should invite Francis Deng, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Internally Displaced Persons, to make a follow up visit to the country. The government and the LTTE should permit the Special Representative - who first visited the country in 1993 to have access to the conflict areas, and should facilitate his meeting with the internally displaced and local and foreign NGOs in those areas.

## The Right to Know

*The importance of media in a democratic society can only be assessed based on the free flow of information. The public's right to know is the worn slogan of modern journalism. Although, Sri Lanka's constitution upholds the freedom of expression, including publications, and Sri Lanka remains a signatory to the Civil and Political Covenant, the government of Sri Lanka, and in particular the Ministry of Information, has continued to come in for a great deal of criticism with regard to press and media freedom.*

*The following letter was written by French media agency-Reporters Sans Frontieres after the Sri Lankan government imposed censorship:*

Paris, 23 April 1996

Her Excellency  
Chandrika Kumaratunga  
President of Sri Lanka  
Office of the President  
Galle Face  
Colombo  
Sri Lanka

Your Excellency

Reporters Sans Frontieres a world wide independent organisation which works to defend press freedom is deeply

troubled by the complete censorship imposed on all military and police news.

According to our information on 19 April the Sri Lankan government imposed censorship on printing, publishing, distribution and transmission of all military information. This censorship provides that the local newspaper and news agencies must obtain the approval of a government-appointed censor to publish any information other than that reported by military spokesmen. It is applicable to local and foreign media but the Information Department said the censorship would not be implemented for foreign media. The censorship is imposed

under the island wide Public Security Ordinance, and follows the launching of military operation "Riviresa 2" in the northern Jaffna peninsula against separatist Tamil Tigers.

Similar censorship had already been introduced on 21 September 1995 and was lifted three months later.

Reporters Sans Frontieres recognises the right of government to protect its armed forces. Nevertheless it considers that censorship such as the one recently imposed is clearly disproportionate. Therefore it strongly condemns the censorship imposed on Sri Lankan media and requests that it be immediately suspended. Our organisation considers that the Sri Lankan government is using the censorship as an excuse to crack down on the media.

We thank you for your attention and would welcome your comments on this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Rober Menard  
Director

Reporters sans frontieres



The Bergen Conference 1996

# Conflict in Sri Lanka and International Response

*A Conference titled "Conflict in Sri Lanka and International response" organised by the Christian Michelsen Institute in cooperation with the All Parties Solidarity Group for Sri Lanka was held in Bergen, Norway on 26 February 1996. Representatives of the LTTE, UNP, the National Peace Council, the Colombo University, the NGO Forum on Sri Lanka and the Norwegian Government participated in the conference which was sponsored by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. The report of the conference lists the recommendations made by the conference, some of which are as follows:*

The long road towards peace must start by putting in place conditions that can encourage talks. Some seem already to be in place. The government must realise-as the President indeed seems to do-that it can win a military victory in Jaffna, but cannot completely defeat the LTTE militarily-at least not in the foreseeable future, and not without victimising large populations, Tamils, Muslims as well as Sinhalese. As a hardened guerrilla movement, the LTTE can simply withdraw, bide its time and resort to low-level military attacks at the time and place of its choosing. Colombo therefore needs a political solution. The LTTE, for its part, has to realise its vulnerability. Apart from the Tamil diaspora, the movement is increasingly isolated internationally, has lost its only patron (India), has no platform at international organisations or in the UN, and-as noted at the conference-has even poor access to international media. It is a measure of the growing realism of the LTTE that it is no longer focusing primarily on the demand for a separate state, but as the LTTE repre-

sentative pointed out at the conference, seems willing to negotiate on a wide range of power-sharing issues.

- *Mutual recognition and respect between the negotiation parties.* Given the separatist nature of the original conflict, full recognition of the LTTE as representing the "Tamil nation" is not the issue. If that were accorded as a procedural issue in the negotiations, substantive negotiations would not be necessary since LTTE would have obtained its principal aim. There are, however, numerous ways of according respect during negotiations short of formal recognition.

- *Humanising and de-escalating the war.* It is significant that all parties at the conference stressed the need to limit the war. Both parties are suffering from the continuous violence. The plight of the nearly half a million displaced persons in the Jaffna peninsula is a matter of immediate humanitarian concern, but is also a political matter for the government which needs to demonstrate its good faith internationally by cooperating with international aid agencies. Hence, there is a basis for continued cooperation on humanitarian issues.

- *Devolution of power.* The government's devolution package elicited considerable interest both as a frame work for concrete negotiations and as a subject of a national discourse that could promote and develop a consensus within and among the political parties. The two functions need to be kept distinct since a good case could be made for negotiations if talks between the LTTE and the government were resumed.

- *Elements of a settlement.* The nature of devolution will also form the centrepiece of negotiations and an

eventual settlement. A criticism of the devolution package has been that it does not provide for power-sharing at the centre. Central power sharing, e.g. by introducing a second chamber with representation of regional interests as the Liberal Party has proposed, could be a mechanism to encounter the centrifugal forces that a regional devolution of power will institutionalise.

The principle of asymmetry as between regions was also the subject of considerable discussion. It was pointed out that other states have accepted asymmetry as a way of dealing with particular minority problems.

- *Role of External parties.* The international community more generally has increasingly distanced itself from the conflict and its protagonists. A renewed peace process could serve a re-engage foreign states, as was emphasised at the conference. This might have positive consequences for the national economy and the development process. International re-engagement is also for the LTTE, which is increasingly conscious of its isolation.

Much of the NGO work for peace has sought to strengthen structures of conciliation on the grassroot level. According to a representative for the London-based NGOs forum on Sri Lanka, many NGOs turned to peace issues when they realise that the war made it impossible for them to carry out development projects. Apart from grassroot work, NGOs also work to promote peace by lobbying national governments and strengthen local NGOs working for peace.

## REPORT

## SRI LANKA: A Bitter Harvest

*The Minority Rights Group International, in a report entitled "Sri Lanka: A Bitter Harvest" says that the Sri Lankan government does not take issues of discrimination seriously. Written by a former head of Amnesty International South Asia Division, Elizabeth Nissan, the report analyses the roots and various stages of the ethnic conflict and has arrived at the following conclusions:*

1) Restructuring the state is a major, but necessary, undertaking if the conflict is to be resolved. It has been clear since independence that the very form of the State (as a unitary parliamentary structure) militates against the realization of minority rights. Majoritarian rule in Sri Lanka has resulted in the alienation of minorities with tragic consequences for all. Substantial devolution of powers is therefore a precondition for a lasting solution for the conflict. Negotiations over the years on these issues have shown some progress, notably in the acceptance by the major parties in the south that substantial devolution to the regions is necessary; nevertheless agreement on the actual

powers involved and especially on the units into which they would be devolved may still prove elusive. The fate of the proposals for devolution put forward by the government in August 1995 remained most uncertain in early 1996.

2) Devolution alone - however extensive - would not provide a complete solution. Issues of equity in the distribution of the state's overall resources, and the relative advantage, and disadvantage, of different communities and classes, remain important. And within the units of devolution, safeguards will also be needed to ensure the protection of basic human rights and that effective remedies are available for all.

3) The state does not take issues of discrimination seriously enough: it has not implemented the official language policy, for example; so Tamil-speakers remain at a severe disadvantage in their dealings with the state in very many contexts at local and national levels and are implicitly excluded from the "national community" that is being served or addressed by the state and its representatives. Much greater priority and resources need to be given to addressing this issue.

4) In the planning and implementation of development projects too, it is essential that a greater awareness of the ethnic dimensions of development be cultivated. In the planning of development programmes, overall attention needs to be paid not only to reaching the most deprived groups in society, but to the overall distribution of the benefits of development. Group perceptions of relative equity in development are of critical importance, and need to be addressed seriously. The impact of projects on ethnic relations needs to be considered at national as well as local levels.

5) The state also continues to provide to children an education

which does little to foster harmonious coexistence, while reinforcing prejudice based on exclusivist understanding of history and ethnicity. This helps people to "justify" the current conflict as being almost inevitable: the continuation of ancient, almost innate, hostilities. Considerable effort needs to be made to rethink the nature of the history and related subject-matter that is taught in schools and to develop new teaching materials. Associated with this task is the development of materials for more general use to promote democratic norms of pluralism and tolerance.

6) An associated issue is the nature of media coverage of Sri Lankan society and the conflict. Although the minority of intellectuals and political activists who challenge nationalist assumptions in history were given greater public voice after the PA government came into power in 1994, the mainstream media still generally reinforce the kind of images and prejudices already examined in the context of education. Few attempts are made to convey the reality of daily life for civilians living in the north and east. Even before censorship was imposed and access to the area became impossible, hardly any journalists attempted to cover the conduct of the war. They relied instead on the information supplied by the government, on the one hand, and the LTTE on the other. Yet the need for considerably greater awareness and understanding of the lives of others is abundantly clear if the major shifts in public understanding and consciousness that are so necessary for the resolution of these issues are to be achieved."

**Copies of the Report are available at:**

**Sales Department  
Minority Rights Group  
379 Brixton road  
London SW9 7DE**



## International concerns and recommendations: The Federation of Tamil Associations (UK) writes to OECD on Aid to Sri Lanka

*MEMORANDUM TO THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE OF THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION & DEVELOPMENT, AND MULTILATERAL AID AGENCIES*

**ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND AID TO SRI LANKA**

The civil conflict in Sri Lanka between the two nationalities of the island, the Sinhalese people and the Tamil people, has been escalating since 1983, and has now reached a new peak of intensity.

The consequence of this brutal war has been gross violation of human rights of its citizens, destruction of its societies, damage to its infrastructure, retardation of its economic progress and development. This has created a large refugee problem of both internally and externally displaced people. The civil war has taken a heavy toll on human lives and livelihood of the innocent and helpless.

Independent organisations for human rights and humanitarian assistance have reported extensively about conditions in Sri Lanka and there is international awareness on the plight and suffering of its citizens. The impact of this ongoing civil war on the social and economic decline of Sri Lanka has been acknowledged by multilateral aid agencies. This conflict unless resolved politically would plunge the country into instability and turmoil unprecedented in that region.

The successive Sri Lankan governments, despite their public pronouncements have been pursuing a military solution to resolve the national conflict. The size of the military and the defence expenditure, direct and indirect, have increased enormously

since 1983. The increase in defence expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure over the years is striking. Even more glaring is the increase in foreign aid. There is an obvious correlation between the increase in Foreign Aid and Defence Expenditure over the same period.

In 1983 the defence budget of the country was a meagre US\$ 76m representing only 4% of the total budget, and the defence personnel was around 10,000. Whereas, in 1996 the defence spending has spiralled to US\$ 775m representing almost 20% of the total budget with a military strength of over 120,000. These figures do not account for direct defence related expenditure.

The national resources are wasted in war effort at the expense of essential activities such as education, health, industrial and infrastructure development, which are starved of much needed funds. Due to unprecedented levels of increasing current account deficits over the years, external debt too has increased to unacceptable levels as a percentage of the GNP.

Interestingly, the foreign aid commitments to Sri Lanka in 1983 was US\$ 335m, whereas the amount pledged in Paris on April 1995 was as high as US\$ 850m. It appears that the total defence expenditure of the Sri Lankan Government in 1996 would be equivalent to the total foreign aid. In effect the donor countries to a large extent would be underwriting this inhumane and destructive war effort.

To us the Tamil people the response of the international community to the mounting tragedy in Sri Lanka and the plight of its people seems at best, muted, and at worst, cynical. What inducement or incentive is there for the Sri Lankan government to seek a negotiated political settlement with the LTTE on behalf of the Tamil People?

There is recognition by the international community that the conflict in Sri Lanka is essentially political and

that there should be a negotiated political solution. Successive Sri Lankan governments, including the present one, have demonstrated that they do not have the capacity to resolve this conflict via political means. They need persuasion and encouragement to seek a political settlement. Member countries in the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD have offered their good offices to facilitate talks between the warring parties towards this end.

Recently at an international conference held in Bergen, sponsored by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the LTTE spokesman expressed its position thus "the current situation demonstrates, that a negotiated settlement may become feasible only with active participation of the International Community. The rationale is that the distrust between the two parties is too deep, as effective communication is impossible in the absence of international mediation." The LTTE has also repeatedly announced its willingness to "consider a political arrangement short of an independent state". No serious attempts have been made by the International Community to bring the warring parties to the table.

The donor countries through their aid program, have the clout and capacity to persuade Sri Lanka to accept international mediation and seek a negotiated political settlement. They by supplying aid to Sri Lanka without any preconditions, and an internationally supervised peace process in place, would be abetting Sri Lanka in its strategy in using the peace process as an instrument to conduct war on the Tamil People. This is a moral and humanitarian responsibility from which the Donor Countries cannot abdicate.

**Signed:**  
*Dr N Satchithananthan*  
General Secretary

*J K Karan,*  
Secretary



## Provincial Director of Health Services of the North-East Province calls for a Quick response from International Community

attention. It lies 40 km from Batticaloa along Thirukovil Road and is badly neglected. It has to be upgraded to improve its facilities to provide health care services to a population of 750,000 people in the area. It needs drugs, equipments and beds. The hospital lacks specialised clinics in ENT, eye, skin and orthopaedics. Patients requiring specialised medical care are transported to the Batticaloa General Hospital or Colombo or Kandy with the greatest difficulty. This is causing social and economic problems. Facilities for transporting patients are inadequate. Batticaloa, Colombo and Kandy hospitals are also congested. Sixty percent savings can be made by poor patients, if resources are available to improve the facilities at the Base hospital. Travel time also could be reduced significantly. It would also relieve the congestion in other hospitals", says Dr Sellathurai, Provincial Director of Health Service, North-East province.

"There is a need to make improvements to the preventive and curative delivery system in the North-East province. We need lorries to transport drugs, Thiriposha and Malathion. Currently, drugs are being transported from Medical Supplies division of the Ministry of Health to all the regions in the North-East Province. To Jaffna the drugs and other items are transported from Colombo to Trincomalee in lorries and from Trincomalee items are sent by ship. From the Trincomalee Division drugs and other materials are transported to Vavuniya and using private lorries they are taken to Kilinochchi. Private lorries are used for transporting materials because of the prevailing security situation. The trouble with hiring private lorries and contractors is that they are very expensive and leads to appreciable amount of loss or

damage to the materials, says the Director.

According to Dr Sellathurai, if assistance to purchase two lorries is available to the PDHS, North-East Province, significant improvements could be made to the distribution system with reduced expenditure and loss or damage to materials being transported. It will also improve co-ordination and supervision of preventive health care activities. It will involve the "community of poor" and allow control over decisions and skills to be decentralised. "The prospects for employment will also increase", said the Director.

Drawing up a budget for such a complicated operation requires a fair degree of guesswork because of many uncertainties. Dr Sellathurai said his team's first assessment report proposed a budget of 75 million rupees for upgrading Kalmunai Base hospital and an additional 69 million rupees for improving access to primary health care in the North-East province. The costs include improvements to hospital building infrastructure, lorries for transporting medical supplies and other items, vehicles for the use of the medical officers of health, furniture and fixtures, medical equipments, printing of health education materials and stationery. "We are only asking for the minimum humanitarian requirements to help the people", says Dr Sellathurai.

Further information on the project proposals can be obtained from the Tamil Information Centre or Medical Institute of Tamils. We believe that Dr Sellathurai's plea for intervention of the international community is worthy of consideration by all.

For decades, Tamil people in Sri Lanka, have been complaining of discrimination and state control over nearly every aspect of their life. The North-East province of the island, where Tamils live, is a deprived area. Efforts made to persuade the government to change its discriminatory policies and to provide for improvements in the health service have yet to produce any results. The need for humanitarian assistance for local and war affected population in the North-East is as great as ever. Funding flows for humanitarian programmes are diminishing at a time when needs remain high.

"We are very much concerned about the deteriorating situation in the North-East. The government is short-sighted when it refuses to think about the long term, when it gives so little priority to the struggling health care system in the North-East" say health activists in the region.

"Primary health care in the North-East province is facing serious challenges. International assistance is required to improve facilities and access to health care services in the region. Kalmunai Base Hospital in the Batticaloa District needs immediate



## Hungry, insecure and caught in between

As the government pursues its war for peace policy vigorously, the numbers of dead and displaced victims of conflict keep rising. Mr Thillainadarajah, Government Agent (GA) Kilinochchi said between April 19 - 26 about 55,000 people moved to Kilinochchi. 16,841 individuals were accommodated in 35 welfare centres and 39,527 individuals were taken in by local residents. The TRO has asked the new arrivals to move to relocation sites as soon as possible.

The figures for Kilinochchi indicate that prior to July 1995 it had a population of around 160,000 which includes 47,000 individuals who had been displaced in September 1990. Operation *Leap Forward* in July 1995 led to 3,705 newly displaced joining the local residents. Operation *Riveresa I* led to an influx of 18,465 individuals in welfare centres and 146,046 individuals staying with local residents or on their own.

The registration of the displaced in Kilinochchi District is carried by around 100 Grama sevagas now referred to as Niladaris (GN). The GNs will then report to the Assistant Government Agent (AGA) who will report to the Project Director at the GA's office. "There are also families not registered", says the GA. "There is also room for double counting since some of those who don't get much assistance from the first GN go to another one and register".

Reports further indicate that the LTTE has relaxed controls on issuing of passes for people going south, but has introduced the pass system also for national NGO staff. The forms cost Rs. 150.00 and are required when entering or leaving the Vanni area. The processing of application takes two to three days and the agencies are unhappy about the system. "Up to 1,500 people, many of them traders are crossing Vavuniya", said a relief worker. People are crossing for mixed reasons - because of frustration, discomforts of the displacement, the prospect of forcible return by the government and the fear of an army advance towards Kilinochchi. The LTTE

is probably relaxing its attitude as it cannot provide for such large numbers, say the reports.

The GA Kilinochchi on his own authority had given instructions to issue the newly displaced people from *Riversea II* with three days of cooked meals and some dry rations. A government order of 02 May, however, denied the right to rations for the newly displaced alleging that people had chosen to move of their own volition and not because of a security threat. The government also argued that they were relatives of the LTTE cadre. UNHCR Vavuniya had apparently met two women of the new group, who had contrary to the government's statement, were found to be civilians and without any food relief in Vavuniya. The GA Kilinochchi had appealed to the international community to provide food assistance.

Relief workers are seriously concerned about the government's attitude. They say the government's decision to deny food assistance to the newly arrived marks a fundamental change of policy by the government towards entitlements for internally displaced. No drought-relief programmes have been activated in the Vanni region, unlike in the government controlled areas. The overall impression is that the military objectives are increasingly overriding the humanitarian ones and possibly even the political ones.

TIC sources say that international NGOs have no influence with the government. They cannot even get a meeting with the authorities, says the source. Meanwhile, local residents in the Vanni area are also becoming increasingly food insecure. The current inability to plant for this "Yala season" would result in the local population facing more risk, argued the relief workers.

The humanitarian agencies are also not keen to get involved in food aid. Only SEDEC which was previously sending food stuffs to Jaffna is currently sending to Vanni and they are distributed through the parishes. The agencies argue that the

government has taken explicit responsibility for food, and it has not made any request for assistance from them. They also say that they don't have the capacity to address the food shortage problem, even if all their efforts are combined. The LTTE however, would like the humanitarian agencies to either provide services denied by the government, or to put pressure on the government to provide rations. Humanitarian agencies also have probed the LTTE position regarding their work in the government controlled areas of the peninsula. After several meetings with the LTTE representatives, Thamichelvan and Karikalan, it was said that LTTE policy appears to be that the NGOs could provide assistance but their programmes should not provide assistance that supports the government's political strategy. This remains ambiguous and the practical implications will still need to be tested against developments in the near future, remarked an agency representative. "Ironically the LTTE and government policy towards humanitarian agency work are now converging: provide more assistance in the area that we control, and maintain a limited scale of operation in the area that the other party to the conflict controls".

Reports also indicate increased fighting in the East. Several civilians were reported killed in army shelling. Long range shelling affects people's life said one relief worker. Restrictions continue on the quantity of food and essential items people can take into the LTTE controlled areas. A very vulnerable food security situation exists in LTTE controlled areas. In Ampara district three Muslim and four Tamil model resettlement villages were opened in March 1996. There are some 2,500 displaced individuals and about 1,500 of them in welfare centres. Due to drought the rice harvest for the main season has been below expectation. The price of rice has gone up. In some areas like Pottuvil, not all lands are cultivated for security reasons. Low water levels in wells at welfare centres in Pollonaruwa district are also reported.

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