

Karuna



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Abductions and Forced Recruitment by the Karuna Group

Abductions in 2006

Sporadic reports of abductions and forced recruitment of boys and young men by the Karuna group began soon after the split from the LTTE in March 2004, but the reports were few until March 2006.¹³ According to local human rights groups and international agencies active in the eastern districts, around that time armed men from the Karuna group began to invite children to come with them for work in nearby Polonnaruwa district. Some of the children never returned.

June 2006 saw a dramatic jump in Karuna group abductions of boys and young men: families in Batticaloa district reported more than 40 abductions in that month alone, including 23 abductions on one day and 17 on another.¹⁴

The 23 abductions on one day occurred primarily in two villages. Human Rights Watch interviewed four of the eight families from one of those villages who had a son abducted that day. They gave detailed and consistent testimony about the abductions and the parents' efforts to get the boys and young men back, including visits to Karuna camps, where parents saw their sons and the men who took them away.

Three of the families, interviewed separately, said the Sri Lankan army had come to the village on the morning of the abductions. Soldiers gathered seven boys and young men in a nearby field, they said, checking their IDs and taking their photographs. Members of the Karuna group, who arrived that night, abducted four of these seven boys and young men, as well as four others from the village. It remains unclear whether the Sri Lankan army was purposefully cooperating with the Karuna group by identifying potential abductees or was conducting operations to identify LTTE supporters, as it has done in other villages of the district.

Human Rights Watch also spoke with four of the 13 families from the other village who had sons abducted that day. They explained how between 10 and 15 armed members of the Karuna group dressed in Sri Lankan army uniforms temporarily held the 13 boys and young men in a nearby shop before taking them away. They knew they were Karuna cadre because they later visited their abducted children in Karuna camps. Across the street from the shop stood an army post and some of the parents pleaded with the soldiers to intervene. Two soldiers spoke with the Karuna group members while they were holding the abductees in the shop, parents said, but the soldiers took no effective action to secure the abductees' release.

The spate of Karuna group abductions prompted UNICEF to issue a public appeal on June 22 in which it noted that it had verified 30 cases of child abduction in Batticaloa district alone. The agency called for immediate action to "halt the abduction and forced recruitment of children by the Karuna group." The statement also called on the Sri Lankan government to "investigate all abductions and ensure that children in affected areas are given the full protection of the law."¹⁵

The UNICEF statement seemed to have a positive effect, and for a short period abductions alleged to the Karuna group nearly ceased. However, this decline was reversed following the beginning of major military operations between government armed forces and the LTTE in late July. In August, UNICEF recorded nearly 50 child

abductions by the Karuna group, and an additional 84 cases from September through December.¹⁶

In July a group of aggrieved parents directly informed the government of the abductions. In a petition to the Supreme Court, 48 mothers submitted a list of their sons—boys and young men—with detailed information alleging that the Karuna group had abducted them. This submission was copied to President Rajapakse and Mahinda Samarasinghe, the minister for disaster management and human rights. Five months later the army began an initial investigation but, according to local human rights groups, the army pressured many of the families to label the perpetrator as an “unidentified armed group.”

Graffiti of Karuna's Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) political party in Trincomalee town. The TMVP office opened there in August 2006 and abductions by the Karuna group jumped.
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After July the public presence of the Karuna group grew. Its military wing expanded its presence in Polonnaruwa district near Welikanda, and the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal political party opened offices in more towns and villages across the east. The new political offices and the abductions appear linked. The TMVP office in Batticaloa town had already opened in March, when the abductions in that area jumped. Events in Trincomalee town followed a similar course: a TMVP office opened there in late August, and over the next six weeks the Karuna group was implicated in the abductions in Trincomalee of between 15 and 20 young men, according to a member of the local town government.¹⁷ On September 24 the TMVP opened a new office in Chenkalady next to the Siththandy Sri Lankan army camp, about 18 kilometers north of Batticaloa town. That day, Karuna forces allegedly abducted 12 boys and young men from the area. In Ampara district the first reported Karuna abduction came in July, shortly after the TMVP opened an office in Akkaraipattu town in the district.

Throughout July, August, and September, international aid workers in Batticaloa town reported seeing Karuna cadre with weapons in bags moving openly around the town. When Human Rights Watch visited Batticaloa and Trincomalee towns in October the Karuna presence was pronounced. TMVP signs and graffiti were prominent on many buildings and street corners. Local residents said they sometimes recognized Karuna cadre manning checkpoints together with the Sri Lankan army or police. In both Batticaloa and Trincomalee towns the government security forces are firmly in control, with regular checkpoints and patrols. In some areas of Trincomalee, military checkpoints lay only 200 meters apart.

By September abductions had taken place throughout Batticaloa district, in places such as Kiran, Mankerni, Santhiveli, Chenkalady, Valaichchenai, Manmunai (North and Southwest), Porativupattu, Koralaipattu (North, South, and West), Kattankudy, Eravur town, and Eravurpattu. Most of these areas lie within three kilometers of police or army camps.

Karuna forces abducted boys and young men from their homes, work places, temples, playgrounds, public roads, and even a wedding. Human Rights Watch heard reports from multiple sources of abductions from a camp for internally displaced persons, but did not directly investigate these reports.

At least some of the children are being trained for combat and have been deployed in military operations. The father of an abducted young man who visited his son at a Karuna camp in Karapola said his child had been wounded in combat. “His ear and his leg were black,” the father said. “He said that a mine had exploded near him during a fight and that his friend next to him had been killed and he had been wounded.”¹⁸

Human Rights Watch conducted a brief interview with a distraught mother in Batticaloa district whose son was abducted in June. In October she received a notice from the TMVP informing her that her child had died in battle.¹⁹ According to neighbors, Karuna forces held a funeral in Theevuchenai where they have a camp. "The Karunas refused to give the body back to the family and the boy was buried there," a neighbor said.²⁰ It is not known if this casualty was the same person as the friend of the young man mentioned above.

A school in Batticaloa town. Some parents in rural areas have stopped sending their boys to school for fear of abduction by the Karuna group.

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The abductions have sent fear through families in the east, who were already struggling to deal with regular abuses by government forces and the LTTE. "We stopped sending them to school about seven months ago," said one mother with two children, aged 14 and 15. "My husband was killed two years ago so I have to protect my kids," said another.²¹ Other parents said they escorted their children to and from school.

According to parents in Batticaloa district and local human rights activists, some children were volunteering to join the Karuna group, along with young men. International law prohibits armed groups from recruiting children, even "voluntarily." (See Chapter IX.) "In a neighboring village some children are volunteering, even as young as 10 or 12," the mother of an abducted 14-year-old said. "Kids are attracted by other kids, and they get paid too."²²

In January 2007 the UN made public the secretary-general's report on the situation of children and armed conflict in Sri Lanka, which documents child recruitment by both the LTTE and the Karuna group between November 1, 2005 and October 21, 2006. In the section on the Karuna group, the report notes allegations "that certain elements of the Sri Lankan security forces are involved in aiding the recruitment and/or abduction of children by the Karuna faction in the East."²³ In particular, the report mentions reports that on June 14 and 26, 2006 in Batticaloa district, armed Sri Lankan army personnel accompanied Karuna group members who abducted and recruited nine children, aged 14 to 17.

Patterns of Karuna Group Abductions

Eyewitness accounts of abductions attributed to the Karuna group frequently followed the same pattern. Typically a group of at least six men, usually armed with assault rifles, arrived in a village. Sometimes they were dressed in black pants and shirts, but often they wore uniforms of the Sri Lankan army. Sometimes they had masks but other times their faces were visible and villagers occasionally recognized the men as members of the Karuna group. They always spoke fluent Tamil (army personnel and police, overwhelmingly ethnic Sinhalese, are unlikely to be fluent Tamil speakers). The armed men often knew who they were looking for, suggesting they had intelligence about the local population.

In response to repeated allegations of abducting children, the Karuna group frequently claims that the LTTE is responsible for these crimes. But the parents of abducted children in the eastern districts, as well as eyewitnesses to abductions, local human rights activists, and staff of international aid agencies, while acknowledging that the LTTE continues to commit abductions, have consistently rejected that claim. They note that LTTE forces could not have moved so freely in government-controlled territory, often during the day. In some cases, the abductors identified themselves as members of the Karuna group, or villagers recognized them as such because they are from the area. Finally, many of these accounts were confirmed by parents who later

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saw their abducted son in a TMVP office or visited them in a Karuna camp (see below).

Throughout 2006 the Karuna group primarily targeted males between the ages of 15 and 30. The youngest confirmed abducted child was 11. The group tended to spare young men who were married or boys who attended school, but this was not a strict rule. Human Rights Watch is aware of two cases when the Karuna group abducted girls.²⁴

The targets are frequently poor and uneducated families in rural areas, who have a limited ability to protect themselves or to seek redress. Particularly vulnerable to abduction are families who have or had a child in the LTTE, either because they volunteered or were abducted. In a few cases, local human rights activists and international agencies said, the LTTE abducted one son and the Karuna group abducted another. Human Rights Watch interviewed families in two such cases: According to the mother of a young man abducted by Karuna forces from Batticaloa district in May 2006, the abductors knew that another son was with the LTTE. "You gave a son to the LTTE, so you have to give a son to us," she said they told her. The LTTE had abducted one of her sons in 2001.²⁵

Another vulnerable group is boys and young men whom Karuna released after the split with the LTTE in March 2004. At that time, the newly formed Karuna group released more than 1,800 boys and girls who had been abducted by the LTTE (see Chapter III).²⁶ In the months following the split, many of these children were aggressively re-recruited by the LTTE. In 2006, some were also re-recruited by the Karuna group. According to UNICEF, of the 208 children reported recruited by the Karuna group between January 1 and December 31, 2006, fifteen of them were recruited for a second time.

After abducting boys and young men, the Karuna group often holds them temporarily in the nearest office of the TMVP. Parents in Ampara and Batticaloa districts told Human Rights Watch that they either saw their abducted sons in these offices in the days after the abduction, or TMVP officials confirmed they had been there. In Akkaraipattu, Ampara district, members of humanitarian organizations said they had seen children on the TMVP premises: "I saw a little boy between 12 and 14 at the TMVP office," one aid worker said. "He had a wound on his left arm and a walkie talkie in his pocket. Within the compound I saw several other boys, some of whom were getting visits from their families, all of them no more than 15 or 16 years old."²⁷ Parents of abductees and international aid agencies told Human Rights Watch that by September they frequently saw armed children guarding the TMVP office in Batticaloa town.

The mother of a teenager abducted in September 2006 from a village in Batticaloa district said that she first went looking for her child in the TMVP office in Chenkalady but the officials there said her child was in Batticaloa town. She went to that TMVP office with three other mothers and told Human Rights Watch what she saw:

We saw our children on the top floor of the TMVP office. We were three mothers of children taken from here. The children signaled to us that we should go or they would get hit.²⁸

After a few days the Karuna group usually transferred the abducted boys and young men to one of its camps in the Welikanda area in the Polonnaruwa district, about 50 kilometers northwest of Batticaloa town (see map). According to parents who visited the camps and local humanitarian workers familiar with the area, the Karuna group maintains four or five camps in the area north of the main A11 road around Sewanpitiya. The area is firmly under government control and there is no way for an

organized armed group to operate there, let alone maintain a network of camps, without the Sri Lankan military's knowledge and at least tacit support.

A man stands in front of the TMVP office in Batticaloa town, where parents said they saw their abducted children. In October 2006 the Sri Lankan police guarded the building on three sides.

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The most detailed description of the area came from a Sri Lankan aid worker who had seen five Karuna camps. Three of them are in Mutugalla, he said, two in the village and one just outside. All of them are behind thatched fences. According to the aid worker, Mutugalla has a Sri Lankan army post. A fourth camp, a field hospital, is in a building in Madurrangala. A Sri Lankan police post was originally nearby, he said, but it was removed. A fifth camp is in Karopola.²⁹

Family Contact

After a period of between two weeks and a month, the Karuna group allowed some parents to visit their sons in a Karuna camp. Some of the parents who visited their sons said their child was armed and being trained as a combatant.

In some cases, families with an abducted son received a "payment" (*koduppanavu*) for their child's services, either given by the son during a visit or sent by postal order. The amount was typically 6,000 rupees per month (US \$55). A laborer's monthly wage is roughly 5,000 rupees. On some occasions, the Karuna group let abducted boys and young men go home on supervised visits to their families for a night. In one case documented by Human Rights Watch, a young man visited his family with the men who had abducted him from his home.³⁰

Releases and Escapes

In a few cases during 2006 the Karuna group released abducted children, but this was rare. According to local human rights activists, the families with released children frequently did not report the release for fear that their son could be abducted again, either by the Karuna group or the LTTE. Some families also did not want others to know how they secured their child's release, especially if money was paid. According to UNICEF, the Karuna group released 23 children it had abducted during the year; 18 children ran away; and two died.³¹

Children who escape or are released face special risks. They can be targeted again by the Karuna group and they are susceptible to attack or abduction by the LTTE because they are branded as Karuna fighters. Families previously often sent their vulnerable children to Colombo but, with abductions and attacks against Tamils there on the rise, many families no longer consider the capital safe.

"If my son escaped or was released I would be unable to keep him at home, it would be too dangerous," the mother of an abducted 18-year-old said. "Depending on the case, either the Karuna group, the army, or the LTTE would look for him. I really don't know where he could go to get protection. If there were more efficient protection programs, maybe more kids would escape from the Karuna camps."³² The mother of an abducted 21-year-old agreed. "I want to say that if our kids escaped, they will have problems coming back home," she said. "They can't be protected at home. In addition to that, if our kids escaped, the Karuna group would come home and take our other kids."³³

Numbers

The total number of boys and young men abducted and forcibly recruited by the Karuna group remains unknown. The only two organizations publicly keeping track are the Norwegian-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) and UNICEF. Both of their figures are low because they depend upon families reporting the abductions. Some families are unwilling to report, either out of fear of reprisals or because they doubted that reporting the abduction would facilitate their child's release.

According to the SLMM, throughout 2006, in Batticaloa district 167 adults and 117 children were abducted by non-signatories to the 2002 ceasefire agreement that the SLMM is mandated to monitor.³⁴ Although "non-signatories" could include criminal elements or other armed groups, available evidence suggests that the vast majority of these abductions are attributable to the Karuna group. In Ampara district, the figures are seven adults and three children.³⁵

According to UNICEF, as of December 31, 2006, families in Ampara, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee districts had reported 208 abductions of children by the Karuna group. The vast majority of these reported abductions were of boys (206 out of 208). Most of the abductions took place in Batticaloa district (181), followed by Ampara district (23), and then Trincomalee district (4).³⁶ By UNICEF's estimation, the real figure of abducted children is three times higher because many families do not report. It also should be noted that UNICEF figures do not reflect abductions of people age 18 or older.

Unlike the SLMM, UNICEF provides a breakdown by age of the abductions it has recorded. According to the November 2006 statistics the age distribution of Karuna abductions in the three eastern districts looked like this:

Ages 10 to 12: two abductions

Ages 12 to 14: eight abductions

Ages 14 to 16: 59 abductions

Ages 16 to 18: 109 abductions³⁷

Inaction by Police

As noted above, many cases of abduction and forced recruitment go unreported. This includes non-reporting to the police. Families that did not report their cases to the police expressed two main concerns. First was fear. The Karuna group has threatened many families not to report the abduction to international agencies like the SLMM, the International Committee of the Red Cross, or the police. "If the TMVP knows I'm here talking with you they'll come at night and shoot me," the aunt of an abducted 18-year-old said to Human Rights Watch.³⁸ The second concern was that formally registering the case with the police would not help retrieve their missing son. Even the families that did report their case expressed skepticism that the authorities would take any steps against the Karuna group. "They are all working together—right?" the grandmother of one abducted boy asked rhetorically.³⁹

Fifteen of the 20 families interviewed by Human Rights Watch said they reported the abduction of their son to the local police. In all of these cases, the police recorded the complaint, although human rights groups and aid agencies told Human Rights Watch that in many other cases the police had refused. In none of the 15 cases, however, did the police undertake what the family considered a thorough investigation, and in no case did the police secure the abductee's release. "We told the police it was Karuna," the mother of a teenager abducted in September said. "We have heard nothing from them since."⁴⁰

The families in Batticaloa district who reported their cases to the police experienced varying responses. In a few cases the police were polite and agreed to record the case. But in the majority of cases, as recounted by families to Human Rights Watch, the police were rude and aggressive, and some initially refused to record the crime. "We reported to the police [in Eravur town]," the mother of an abducted child said. "They said we'll take the entry but we're not going to look for them." She continued, "They treated me like a dog."⁴¹

"The Karuna group took your child so why don't you complain to them?" the police allegedly told another family who tried to register a complaint.⁴² Aside from this being a shirking of police responsibilities to the public, a local human rights activist pointed out the speciousness of such a police response. "Where do you go to seek redress with Karuna?" he asked. "With the police or the STF [Special Task Force] there is a mechanism, and with the LTTE too. But with Karuna there is no one with authority anywhere."⁴³

When the police did record the allegations, they often took only minimal details and they frequently refused to provide the complaint number. The mother of an abducted child said that her husband went to the Eravur police station to report the case. "The police opened a file but they didn't communicate the complaint number," she said. "They said they would investigate the case but they didn't do anything. Like the other parents, I brought a photo of my child but they didn't take it."⁴⁴

On December 1 Sri Lankan Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe told Human Rights Watch that the government had recently instructed the police to record complaints from families of abducted children. He repeated this to a journalist six weeks later.⁴⁵ Some investigations by the army reportedly began in December. As of January 15, 2007, however, there was no evidence that the police were any more responsive to abduction complaints.

¹³ UNICEF reported a total of 19 cases of child recruitment by the Karuna group from October 2004 through March 2006. Data supplied to Human Rights Watch by UNICEF, January 12, 2007.

¹⁴ UNICEF reported 43 abductions of children in June 2006. Ibid.

¹⁵ "UNICEF Condemns Abduction and Recruitment of Sri Lankan Children by the Karuna Group," UNICEF news note, June 22, 2006, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/media_34677.html (accessed December 28, 2006).

¹⁶ UNICEF reported 47 abductions of children in August, 18 in September, 37 in October, 21 in November, and 8 in December. Data supplied to Human Rights Watch by UNICEF, January 12, 2007.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Trincomalee town, October, 2006.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with father of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

²¹ Human Rights Watch interview with widowed mother, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

²² Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

²³ "Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Sri Lanka," December 20, 2006.

²⁴ According to UNICEF, the Karuna group abducted two girls in Ampara district, but the date is not provided. Data supplied to Human Rights Watch by UNICEF, January 12, 2007.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch interview mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

²⁶ UNICEF recorded the return of 1,825 children to their homes in April 2004. Data supplied to Human Rights Watch by UNICEF, January 12, 2007.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with aid worker, Ampara district, October 2006.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with aid worker, Colombo, October 2006.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

³¹ Data supplied to Human Rights Watch by UNICEF, January 12, 2007. It is not known whether the deaths reported by UNICEF include the case confirmed by Human Rights Watch.

³² Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

³³ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

³⁴ Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, Summary of Recorded Complaints and Violations from SLMM Batticaloa, December 27, 2006. Signatories to the 2002 ceasefire agreement are the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. SLMM's statistics go up to December 27, 2006.

³⁵ Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, Summary of Recorded Complaints and Violations from SLMM Ampara, December 27, 2006. For all districts in Sri Lanka, the SLMM reported 248 abducted adults and 131 abducted children by non-signatories of the ceasefire agreement.

³⁶ Data supplied to Human Rights Watch by UNICEF, January 12, 2007.

³⁷ Ages are at date of abduction. Apparently UNICEF does not know the ages of all reported abductees.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with aunt of abducted young man, Ampara district, October 2006.

³⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with grandmother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁴² Human Rights Watch interview with aid worker, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁴³ Human Rights Watch interview with aid worker, Ampara district, October 2006.

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁴⁵ Namini Wijedasa, "Tiger Pledge on Child Recruits no Honoured—Human Rights Minister," *The Island* (Colombo), January 14, 2007.

V. Government Complicity and Official Denials

Residents of Sri Lanka's eastern districts frequently spoke of government complicity in Karuna group abductions as an obvious fact. Tamils in Ampara, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee districts say they have seen Karuna members working with the army and police at checkpoints—an allegation the government denies—and that armed Karuna cadre walk freely through villages and towns in areas under government control, sometimes wearing Sri Lankan army uniforms.

Among international monitors and aid workers the connection is also clear. "We have known for some time that there is a level of co-operation between certain elements of the security forces and the Karuna faction," a spokesperson of the Sri Lanka

Monitoring Mission said in November 2006. "We are compiling more information and will present the government with a comprehensive report on the matter."⁴⁶

Regarding recruitment of children by the Karuna group, the staff member of one international agency was more blunt. "Recruitment is happening openly and with impunity," the person said. "It's incomprehensible for us that the government would say they don't know what's going on."⁴⁷

Until mid-November 2006, the government denied any knowledge of abductions by the Karuna group. But the following, each already noted above, demonstrate that government officials must have known of the abductions, at least since the middle of June 2006, and probably before.

- In June 2006 the Karuna group abducted 13 boys and young men from one village in the Batticaloa district. Four families of abductees told Human Rights Watch that the Sri Lankan army witnessed the abductions from its camp across the road. The parents requested help and soldiers spoke with members of the Karuna group but did not take effective action to secure the abductees' release. (See Chapter VI, Case #3.)

- On June 22, UNICEF issued a public statement about abductions by the Karuna group and called on the Sri Lankan government to investigate:

UNICEF in Sri Lanka is calling for immediate action to halt the abduction and forced recruitment of children by the Karuna group. Over the past week, the agency has verified reports of thirty cases in Batticaloa district. Reports of abduction and forced recruitment of boys under the age of 18 from the area have increased since March of this year.⁴⁸

- In July a group of mothers from Batticaloa district submitted a petition to the Supreme Court about abductions allegedly by the Karuna group. The 48 mothers sent the names of their children with all relevant information about the abduction to President Rajapakse, the minister for disaster management and human rights, and the Human Rights Commission, as well as to the United Nations.

On December 1 Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe told Human Rights Watch that he had only seen the petition about two months before, although he conceded that it might have been sent in July.⁴⁹

Investigations by the army into some of the 48 cases began in December 2006. According to local human rights groups, the army pressured many of the parents not to identify the Karuna group. In January 2007 Samarasinghe told a journalist that the police were also asked to investigate.⁵⁰

Additional evidence of government knowledge and complicity in Karuna abductions can be gleaned from the location of Karuna camps where abducted children are held. According to parents who visited their children in these camps near Welikanda, the area is under close government control, to such an extent that in some places Karuna checkpoints are within eyesight of the army or police (see map). Communication and coordination between the Karuna group and Sri Lankan army and police was evident from accounts of parents going to Karuna camps to see their sons. To get to the Karuna camps, most parents took a bus to the Sewanpitiya junction with the main A11 road, where the Sri Lankan army has a checkpoint. There, visiting parents sometimes had to give their names to the soldiers (sometimes also their identification cards), who informed persons indicated to be members of the Karuna group that the parents were on their way. Then the parents took trishaws or buses to the Karuna camp. Karuna forces speaking Tamil and wearing green Sri Lanka army uniforms were in the area, they said. "I had to go through a Sri Lankan army checkpoint at the junction. The head of our group gave the names of our kids to the army officer at the

checkpoint and the camp we were going to," the mother of an abducted 16-year-old said. "The army let us go."⁵¹

In one case documented by Human Rights Watch, Sri Lankan soldiers spoke with the mothers while they were trying to visit their sons. The mother of a young man who with other parents saw her son in a Karuna camp said the soldiers based nearby were aware of the reason for the visit but did nothing to secure the abductee's release:

The first time we went to the camp in Mutugalla, two Sri Lankan army soldiers came from the army camp within 30 minutes and asked the Karuna guys what the mothers were doing there. The Karuna guys replied that we came to visit our children. The two soldiers asked us questions and asked what happened. They were speaking Sinhala and we didn't understand very well. They spoke in Sinhala with the Karuna members. After they spoke to the soldiers, the Karuna guys asked us to leave the camp and we left.⁵²

In one of the most egregious reported cases of government complicity, local human rights activists and the mother of an abducted young man told Human Rights Watch that one child who escaped from a Karuna camp had gone to the Sri Lankan army for protection, but the soldiers handed him back to the Karuna group.⁵³ Human Rights Watch did not independently verify this case.

The main road from the eastern districts to the Welikanda area is firmly under government control and highly militarized. Transporting several hundred abducted boys and young men during the year to the Karuna camps would have been impossible without the knowledge of government security forces. Travel in the area requires going through numerous checkpoints of the army and police.

A security checkpoint on the A11 road between Batticaloa town and Valaichchenai. Karuna forces transporting abducted boys and young men would have had to pass through multiple checkpoints like this.

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Along the A15 road, which runs north-south from Trincomalee down the coast to Batticaloa, and along the A11, which runs east-west from north of Batticaloa town to Welikanda, it is impossible to travel more than 10 kilometers without some form of security control. When Human Rights Watch drove the roughly 50 kilometer stretch between Welikanda and Batticaloa town on October 13, researchers counted more than 14 checkpoints, ranging in size from mobile controls to permanent camps. According to a humanitarian agency active in the east, government security forces typically maintain about nine checkpoints between Welikanda and Valaichchenai on the A11 alone; two of them are where passengers get out of their vehicles and are searched.⁵⁴

Transporting abducted boys and young men from Ampara district would prove even harder. The coastal A4 road from Ampara to Batticaloa town has a strong presence of the police Special Task Force (STF). On October 17, Human Rights Watch observed three large STF camps along the route.

Another place where parents have seen their abducted sons is the TMVP office in Batticaloa town. International aid agencies have also seen armed children on the premises. When Human Rights Watch walked by the office on October 16, it was guarded on three sides by the Sri Lankan police. International aid workers said that the police had been protecting the building since construction began in early 2006. Human Rights Watch also observed the TMVP office in Akkaraipattu, which was guarded by the STF. The TMVP office in Trincomalee was guarded by the navy.

Government protection of the TMVP is understandable because party offices have come under repeated attack by the LTTE. But the presence of security forces around the buildings makes it highly unlikely that they failed to see abducted children on the premises.

Both the government and the Karuna group deny any coordination between them. Sri Lankan defense spokesperson Keheliya Rambukwella told the media: "We have been right throughout denying that we are involved with them," referring to the Karuna group.⁵⁵ Karuna told Human Rights Watch in late November 2006: "We do not cooperate with the army and the army does not cooperate with us." As if to suggest that cooperation would mean impunity for his forces, he added: "Thirty of our cadres have been arrested by the army for carrying arms."⁵⁶

But residents in eastern districts routinely observed the close ties between government and Karuna forces. Staffers from two international agencies working in the eastern districts told Human Rights Watch that the easiest way for them to contact the Karuna group was through the Sri Lankan military.

The Sri Lankan government is ultimately responsible for providing security to ensure that civilians are not abducted by armed groups and that children are not recruited, voluntarily or otherwise, to take part in armed conflict. This is particularly the case in areas under the government's effective control.

Forces in the East

The government security forces active in the eastern districts are the Sri Lankan army, the navy, the regular police, and the police's Special Task Force, which is engaged in counterinsurgency operations. Unless stated otherwise, officers noted below were, according to the information available, in command during Human Rights Watch's visit in October 2006.

In Batticaloa district responsibility for security is primarily with the army, which maintains a network of outposts and camps. Three army brigades operate in the district: The 231 brigade, commanded by Colonel Veeraman, is responsible for the district's west. The 232 brigade, commanded by Colonel Napagoda, is responsible for the north.⁵⁷ The 233 brigade, commanded by Lt. Col. Anura Sudasingha, is in Batticaloa town. All of the Batticaloa brigades report to the army's 23rd division headquartered in Welikanda, commanded by Brigadier Daya Ratnayaka. For most of 2006, Commander of Security Forces Headquarters-East was Major General Nissanka Wijesinghe. In late December he was replaced by Major General Parakrama Pannipitiya.

In Trincomalee district, the army's 22nd division has official responsibility, commanded by Maj. Gen. Samarasinghe. Trincomalee has a large navy presence because of its major naval base, and knowledgeable sources say that Navy Commander Rear Admiral Samirathunga is the de facto commander.

President Rajapakse is the commander-in-chief of Sri Lanka's armed forces, and he holds the portfolio of Minister of Defense. The Secretary of Defense, Public Security, Law and Order is the president's brother, Gotabaya Rajapakse.⁵⁸ Chief of the Defense Staff is Air Chief Marshal Donald Perera. Commander of the army, since December 6, 2005, is Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka.

In Ampara, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee districts the STF also plays an important role, especially since July 2006 when the military mobilized for the fighting further north.⁵⁹ Around that time the STF assumed security responsibility for Batticaloa town.

It remains unclear who are the leaders of the Karuna group in the eastern districts. According to the parents of abductees, local human rights activists, and international aid workers, the TMVP political leader for Ampara and Batticaloa is a man named Pradipan, who runs the office in Batticaloa town. Another leader mentioned is a man called Mangalan. In Akkaraipattu, the TMVP office is run by a man named Sindujan. A man named Bharathy has been implicated in conscription by the Karuna group in Welikanda.

Denunciation by the UN

In early November 2006, a special advisor to the UN special representative for children and armed conflict, Allan Rock, visited Sri Lanka to investigate conditions for children, primarily in the north and east. He focused on compliance with the 2003 Action Plan for Children Affected by Conflict, which the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE had endorsed. Both sides had pledged to work with UNICEF to end child recruitment and to release children in their ranks.

At the end of his 10-day mission, Rock met with President Rajapakse and later held a press conference in Colombo to announce his preliminary findings. First, he said, the LTTE had not respected its commitments under the Action Plan. The recruitment of children continues and the LTTE had failed to release several hundred children in its ranks.⁶⁰

Rock also criticized the Karuna group for continuing to abduct and recruit children, particularly in Batticaloa district. Between May and November 2006, he said, UNICEF has recorded 135 cases of underage recruitment, and the evidence suggested the trend was on the rise.

Rock also charged "certain government elements" of complicity in abductions by the Karuna group. He said that his mission:

[F]ound strong and credible evidence that certain elements of the government security forces are supporting and sometimes participating in the abductions and forced recruitment of children by the Karuna faction.

The mission met with the parents of many of the abducted children in Batticaloa district. As a result, it learned of eye-witness evidence that links the Karuna faction abductions to certain government elements. Based on the evidence as a whole, the mission concluded that some government security forces are actively participating in these criminal acts.⁶¹

Rock announced that the Karuna group and the Sri Lankan government had responded constructively to the allegations. The TMVP told him it would forbid underage recruitment and release any children in the Karuna group. The party also agreed to work with UNICEF to arrange the release of abducted children.

Rock said that he received assurances from President Rajapakse that he would order an immediate investigation to determine whether any security forces were complicit in Karuna abductions. Should such evidence emerge, the president said, he would hold accountable those who violated the law.⁶²

Other sectors of the government sought to discount Rock's allegations. Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera criticized Rock's diplomatic skills. "A responsible member of the international community would not have made such unfounded public statements in such an irresponsible manner," he said. "Even if they were true, a person of that nature should have had the decency to bring it to the notice of the government discreetly."⁶³ The state-owned *Daily News* newspaper stated in an

editorial: "The UN representative needs to take stock of the adverse repercussions his groundless allegations could have on Sri Lanka's national interest."⁶⁴

The Sri Lankan military denied any connection to the Karuna group and in a statement said Rock's allegations were "completely misleading" and "deserve a deep sense of revulsion and explanation in view of their serious nature and repercussions."⁶⁵ The most scathing denunciation came from the Media Centre for National Security, a website run by the media wing of the Sri Lankan armed forces. In an article entitled "Who is this Rock?," the military website accused the UN official, a former Canadian government minister, of taking money from a pro-LTTE community in Canada during his political campaign and then blocking the Canadian government from banning the LTTE. "However, with the help and support from the Tamil community living in Canada and certain LTTE sympathizers Rock managed to secure a position in the UN," the article said.⁶⁶

Notwithstanding its agreement to work against underage recruitment, the TMVP still denounced Rock for repeating "fictitious, fallacious and frivolous information" provided by "quislings" in the east.⁶⁷

One of the government's complaints against Rock, Sri Lanka's minister of disaster management and human rights stressed to Human Rights Watch, was that Rock failed to provide evidence to support his claims.⁶⁸ On November 27, 2006, Rock sent a letter to President Rajapakse, together with a detailed memo on his findings. In his letter, Rock called on the president to establish a credible, objective and effective investigation of the government's involvement in the Karuna abductions.⁶⁹

The government's public expressions of surprise were disingenuous. As documented above, the government knew of Karuna abductions since at least June 2006. Parents of abducted children were reporting their cases to the police, and in some cases to the military. Both failed to take any meaningful steps to get the children back.

On November 28, 2006 Human Rights Watch issued a statement about Karuna abductions based on its mission to Sri Lanka in October, which formed the basis for this report. The statement said that "the Sri Lankan military and police are complicit and, at times, directly cooperating with the Karuna group."⁷⁰ Defense spokesman Kehiliya Rambukwella promptly denied any state involvement with the Karuna group. "Human Rights Watch should give us this credible evidence that they're talking of. Once we have that, we can pursue it," he said. "We will certainly take necessary action to control it and completely take the perpetrators to justice."⁷¹

Karuna's Response

The day after Human Rights Watch issued a press release on abductions by the Karuna group, V. Muralitharan, a.k.a. Colonel Karuna, contacted the organization to discuss the allegations. In a telephone interview from an undisclosed location, Karuna denied any involvement in child abductions or forced recruitment. "I do not like these things," he said. "I don't like child recruitment and abduction."⁷²

He said the minimum age to join the Karuna group was 20, and that the group would take action against any commander who recruited a person below that age. "We would send him out of the movement," he said.

His comment contradicted the statement of a TMVP spokesman, who in an interview with a Sri Lankan newspaper did not deny that the Karuna group had children among its ranks. "We don't abduct children, we enlist only those who offer to join us," a spokesman in the party's Chenkalady office said.⁷³

Karuna said his forces had a code of conduct. He agreed to share a copy with Human Rights Watch but, as of January 15, 2007, the group had not sent any text.

Regarding contact with the Sri Lankan military, Karuna said the relationship was of a political nature. "We have no military contacts, but we have some political contacts," he said. When asked to explain how his military supporters operate freely in government-controlled areas, he said: "As far as political cadres are concerned, they have contact with the police, because the police provide protection. The military is working in restricted areas, Karuna areas. We have captured some areas from the LTTE, so we control some areas."

According to Karuna, the TMVP has 16 political offices throughout Sri Lanka. When asked why families had seen their abducted children in TMVP offices, he replied, "Anybody can come and see our offices. It is very transparent, like an MP's [Member of Parliament's] office." He continued, "Definitely there are no underage children in our political offices. Anyone can come and inspect." He attributed the reports of abductions by the Karuna group to the LTTE and their supporters. "All these things are propaganda campaigns by the LTTE and the diaspora," he said.

Regarding Allan Rock, Karuna was adamant that the LTTE was behind Rock's statements. "The LTTE set up families to make accusations to Allan Rock," he said. "There was no way for Rock to verify their stories. When Rock was in our office, we explained these things very clearly."

Five days after the interview with Human Rights Watch, Karuna contacted UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Radhika Coomaraswamy to discuss child abductions, in particular the inclusion of the Karuna group in the latest report of the Secretary-General to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict.⁷⁴ According to the UN, Karuna denied abducting children and said he would cooperate with UNICEF to guarantee the protection of children. He said he would take the following steps, to be formalized in an action plan between UNICEF and the Karuna group:

1. Re-issue a policy statement to inform all Karuna commanders that using and recruiting children is not an acceptable practice.
2. Train all commanders on children's rights with assistance from the international community.
3. Release to their families children who may be found among Karuna ranks, in collaboration with nongovernmental organizations and/or UNICEF.
4. Give UNICEF free access to Karuna camps to ensure that no children remain associated with the armed group.⁷⁵

Special Representative Coomaraswamy welcomed Karuna's statement. "This is a major step forward that will help to prevent children from being used by armed groups in Sri Lanka," she said. "I hope that this will lead to effective actions on the ground."⁷⁶ The office of the special representative said it hoped to receive a similar commitment from the LTTE granting access to their camps for independent verification.⁷⁷

On January 2, 2007 the TMVP provided UNICEF with what it called "regulations for the military division of Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP)." (See Appendix V.) The regulations state that all recruits must be over 18, provide a birth certificate to prove their age, and consent to join the military group. The regulations state that members of the Karuna group who conscript children into the force will be immediately subjected to punishment. Examples specified include cooking in the camp or farming for a period of at least three months.

In contrast, the regulations state that violations such as murder, sexual abuse, and looting will result in the member being removed from the organization and handed over to the police. Violations such as smoking, consuming liquor, and the abuse of women result in expulsion from the organization.

As of January 15, 2007, discussions with UNICEF were ongoing regarding the content of the regulations and implementation of Karuna's commitments. According to the agency, the Karuna group released six children in November and December, but it also abducted at least 21 others during that time.⁷⁸

Abductions Persist

To date, abductions of boys and young men in the eastern districts by the Karuna group persist. Although no complete figures are available, local human rights activists and international aid workers report that abductions have continued, both by the Karuna group and the LTTE. According to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, in late November both the LTTE and Karuna group were "under suspicion for assassinations and abductions."⁷⁹

According to UNICEF, parents and others reported 21 abductions by the Karuna group in November, and another eight in December. The group released four children in November and two in December.⁸⁰ The UNICEF statistics do not specify whether any of the November abductions took place after November 13, when the UN made its allegations against the Karuna group and government security forces. According to human rights activists and aid agencies working in the eastern districts, however, some abductions took place in the second half of the month.

According to University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna), Karuna forces abducted three boys in Batticaloa district around December 10. It is not known if these three cases were also reported to UNICEF.⁸¹

On November 21, Human Rights Watch wrote to President Rajapakse and to the minister for disaster management and human rights to convey the organization's initial findings on Karuna abductions and government complicity from the research mission in October (see Appendix I). The letter welcomed the president's stated willingness to investigate the allegations of state involvement and asked the president to provide details on how that investigation would be pursued. The letter was resent in early December. As of January 15, 2007, neither the president's office nor the human rights ministry had replied.

⁴⁶ Namini Wijedasa, "UN's Allan Rock Ridiculed in Sri Lanka," Toronto Star, November 23, 2006. SLMM confirmed for Human Rights Watch that it had prepared the report but said its contents were not public. (E-mail communication from SLMM to Human Rights Watch, December 27, 2006).

- ⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with international aid agency staff member, Batticaloa town, October 2006.
- ⁴⁸ "UNICEF Condemns Abduction and Recruitment of Sri Lankan Children by the Karuna Group," UNICEF news note, June 22, 2006, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/media_34677.html (accessed January 9, 2007).
- ⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe, Geneva, December 1, 2006.
- ⁵⁰ Namini Wijedasa, "Tiger Pledge on Child Recruits no Honoured—Human Rights Minister," *The Island* (Colombo), January 14, 2007.
- ⁵¹ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.
- ⁵² Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.
- ⁵³ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.
- ⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with international aid agency staff member, Batticaloa town, October 2006.
- ⁵⁵ Anthony Deutsch, "Government-condoned Militia Abducting Hundreds on Sri Lanka's East Coast," Associated Press, October 4, 2006.
- ⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with V. Muralitharan, a.k.a. Colonel Karuna, November 29, 2006.
- ⁵⁷ Col. Napagoda commanded the 232 brigade at least since July 2006 (see "Sri Lanka: ICRC Hands Over Soldiers' Remains to the Sri Lankan Army," ICRC press release, July 15, 2006, <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/srilanka-regnews-150706> (accessed January 9, 2007)). His predecessor was Col. Chandana Rupasinghe, but it is not known when he left the post.
- ⁵⁸ Gotabaya Rajapakse is a retired army infantry officer. He became minister of defense, public security, law and order in November 2005. On December 1, 2006 he survived an LTTE suicide attack on his convoy in Colombo.
- ⁵⁹ For official background on the STF, see <http://www.police.lk/divisions/stf.html> (accessed January 9, 2007).
- ⁶⁰ Statement from the Special Advisor on Children and Armed Conflict, Colombo, November 13, 2006, <http://www.un.org/children/conflict/pr/2006-11-13statementfromthe127.html> (accessed January 9, 2007).
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Namini Wijedasa, "UN's Allan Rock Ridiculed in Sri Lanka," *Toronto Star*, November 23, 2006.
- ⁶⁴ "Watch Your Words, Mr. Rock," Daily News (Colombo), November 15, 2006, http://www.dailynews.lk/2001/pix/PrintPage.asp?REF=/2006/11/15/main_Editorial.asp (accessed January 2, 2007).
- ⁶⁵ Krishan Francis, "U.N. Accuses Sri Lanka Government Forces of Aiding Child Soldier Recruitment," Associated Press, November 13, 2006.
- ⁶⁶ "Who is this Rock?," Media Centre for National Security, December 5, 2006, <http://www.nationalsecurity.lk/fullnews.php?id=2665> (accessed January 3, 2007).
- ⁶⁷ "UN Rock Repeats Tiger Accusations—Karuna Group," Asian Tribune, November 16, 2006, <http://www.asiantribune.com/index.php?q=node/3241> (accessed January 2, 2007).
- ⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe, Geneva, December 1, 2006.
- ⁶⁹ Personal communication from Allan Rock to Human Rights Watch, January 16, 2007.
- ⁷⁰ "Sri Lanka: Stop Child Abductions by Karuna Group," Human Rights Watch news release, November 28, 2006, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/11/28/slanka14678.htm>.

⁷¹ "Rights Group Criticizes S. Lanka over Child Soldiers," Reuters, November 28, 2006. See also Krishan Francis, "Rights Group Asks Sri Lankan Troops to Stop Aiding Child Recruitment," Associated Press, November 28, 2006.

⁷² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with V. Muralitharan, a.k.a. Colonel Karuna, November 29, 2006.

⁷³ Ranga Jayasuriya, "Who Manipulated the UN Envoy?" *Sunday Observer* (Colombo), November 19, 2006, <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2006/11/19/fea02.asp> (accessed January 9, 2007).

⁷⁴ Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, October 26, 2006, S/2006/826, <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/577/95/PDF/N0657795.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed January 5, 2007).

⁷⁵ "Karuna Commits to Work with the UN to Prevent Recruitment and Use of Children," Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict press release, December 4, 2006, <http://www.un.org/children/conflict/pr/2006-12-07srilankakarunaco134.html> (accessed January 3, 2007).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Data supplied to Human Rights Watch by UNICEF, January 12, 2007.

⁷⁹ Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, "SLMM Weekly Situation Report, 20-26 November 2006," http://www.slmm.lk/W_Report/SLMM%20WSR%2020%20-%2026%20Nov%20public.pdf (accessed January 3, 2007). The SLMM reported in its weekly situation report for December 4-10, 2006 that it was aware of 12 abductions in Batticaloa, several of which were of children, but the report did not indicate the responsible party.

⁸⁰ Data supplied to Human Rights Watch by UNICEF, January 12, 2007.

⁸¹ University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) communication to Human Rights Watch, December 20, 2006. For more from UTHR, see www.uthr.org.

VI. Accounts of Karuna Group: Abductions and Forced Recruitment

Below are several accounts provided to Human Rights Watch from parents and witnesses of abductions attributed to the Karuna group in 2006. Certain specific information concerning these cases, such as names, places, and dates, has been removed due to security concerns.

Case 1 — Boy and Young Man in Batticaloa District, May

In May 2006 Karuna forces abducted a boy and a young man from a village in Batticaloa district. Both were subsequently seen by their families in the custody of the Karuna group.

The mother of the young man told Human Rights Watch that her son might have been targeted because the LTTE had abducted another of her sons in 2001. She explained how the May 2006 abduction took place:

Around 8 p.m. my son was having dinner behind the house in our backyard with me and my daughter. A few people entered the compound and surrounded us. Two men went directly to the main yard while two men turned around the house and went to the backyard where we were eating. They took my son. More people were waiting outside our compound. I think they were a total of 10. They all wore Sri Lankan army uniforms and were masked. There were no ranks or insignia visible on their uniforms. I grabbed the leg of one of the assailants and I begged him not to take my son away. He kicked me violently. One of them said, "We are investigating your son and once

cleared we will release him." They said that in Tamil. They were all armed with rifles. I don't know what kind. They belonged to the Karuna group.

They didn't come on vehicle. They walked in and left the same way. We followed them for a while but at some point they turned right onto a smaller lane and we stopped.⁸²

According to the mother, she begged the Karuna group members not to take her son. "You gave a son to the LTTE, so you have to give a son to us," she said one of the men replied.

The family reported the abduction at the police station in Valaichchenai. A police officer opened a file and took a few notes, the mother said. He asked a few questions and provided the family with the complaint number. One month later, the family received the police report, which was inspected by Human Rights Watch. According to the family, however, the police have done nothing since.

After the abduction, the family went three or four times to the TMVP office in Karapola in the Welikanda area. On the final visit, officials in the office agreed to set up a meeting in two weeks for the parents to see their son.

About two weeks later, the parents were allowed to see their son in what the mother called "a special house where parents can meet their abducted children." She explained,

The Karunas took us to a house in Karapola where we saw our son.... My son told us, "I am not allowed to leave. I have to stay." He was wearing a Sri Lankan army uniform and he had a weapon. He added, "I can't escape from here." We stayed three hours with him, from noon to 3 p.m.

The family saw their son two more times after that when he came home for a visit together with the Karuna group members who had abducted him. They were all armed and wearing Sri Lankan army uniforms, the mother said. Her son seemed changed:

My son was another person. His behavior had changed. His way of speaking was different too. He talked a lot about politics. At some point, he was alone with me and I suddenly retrieved my boy. He sounded normal without the other guys around.

Human Rights Watch also interviewed the mother of the boy who was abducted from the same village that day, although she did not witness the abduction. "It was night around 9 p.m.," she said. "I was home, I didn't hear anything. Then I heard noise and people crying."⁸³

The mother said she also reported the case to the Valaichchenai police, where the police opened a file but did not provide the complaint number. "The police didn't ask any questions, didn't ask for a description of my son or for a photo," she said.

The boy's mother went with other families of abducted boys and young men from the area to the TMVP office in Karopola, where she saw her abducted son. The office is within eyesight of an army base and police station, she said.

After that, her son visited her at home on two occasions. He wore plain clothes but was armed both times, she said. "He had changed, he was not the same," she explained. "He said he was supporting Karuna now. But he told me that he would come home if he could."

Case 2 — Eight Boys and Young Men in Batticaloa District, June

In June Karuna forces abducted eight boys and young men from a village in the Batticaloa district. Human Rights Watch interviewed four of the families with a son abducted that day. They gave consistent testimony about the abductions and the parents' efforts to get their children back, including visits to Karuna camps. According to three of the families, Sri Lankan army soldiers had come to the village on the morning of the abductions, gathering and photographing seven boys and young men, four of whom were later abducted by the Karuna group. Whether the Sri Lankan military was directly cooperating with the Karuna group by identifying potential abductees or was conducting regular operations to identify LTTE members or supporters remains unclear.

The mother of one of the abducted young men explained how Sri Lankan army soldiers came to the village around 10 a.m., gathered a group of boys and young men in a nearby field, and took their photographs:

They rounded up our children, took them to a field a few yards away, kept them there and took pictures of the kids. They also asked for the IDs of the kids. There were a lot of soldiers surrounding the whole area. They came on army trucks. They came house to house and took our children only, not the parents. Then they took them to the field nearby. I was afraid that they were in the process of apprehending the kids. Seven kids were taken to the field by the soldiers. Four of these seven kids were kidnapped [by Karuna forces] that same night. The soldiers just said, "We want to take photos of the kids and then they will be allowed to go." They asked for the IDs. They ordered the parents not to come. A soldier said, "We are going to take the photos to protect your kids. Karunas won't kidnap your children now." They had a small camera. There were many soldiers. I can't say how many, maybe 200. Then the kids were abducted the same night.⁸⁴

According to the young man's father, Karuna forces arrived in the village around 11 p.m. that night. They were wearing Sri Lankan army uniforms and had black masks. They spoke Tamil and he knew they belonged to the Karuna group because he later visited his abducted son in a Karuna camp. He explained,

I saw everything, I was there. I tried to stop it from happening but the kidnappers said they would shoot me. My son was crying. My wife tried to stop them too but they pushed her back.⁸⁵

The parents of the abducted boys and young men made several trips to visit their sons in Karuna camps in the Welikanda area, the mother and father said. To get there they took a bus to the Sewanpitiya junction with the main A11 road, where there is a checkpoint with army and police. The visiting parents had to give their names to the soldiers posted there, who informed the Karuna group that the parents were on their way. Then they took trishaws (motorcycle taxis) for two or three miles to the Karuna camp. Karuna forces speaking Tamil and wearing green Sri Lanka army uniforms were in the area, they said.

According to the mother, she saw her son on the third trip. He was at a different camp from the seven other boys and young men with whom he had been abducted. "We informed the guards at the gate and we waited an hour at the entrance, but inside the camp, in a place near the jungle," she said. "My son was wearing a Sri Lankan army uniform and he had a weapon. He cried when he saw me."

Two days after the abduction, the father went to the Eravur police station to report the case. The police opened a file, he said, but they refused to provide a complaint number. "When Karunas capture your children, you come here to complain, but when the LTTE capture them, you never come," the father said a police officer remarked.

The mother of a boy abducted that day, interviewed separately, gave a similar account of the day's events, from the visit of the Sri Lankan army to the Karuna abductions that night:

The night of the abduction, we were sitting behind the house when suddenly around 1 a.m. armed guys wearing Sri Lankan army uniforms showed up. We were surrounded by seven or eight armed men. I don't know how they came, I didn't hear anything.

The same day, but in the morning at 10 a.m., the army came, surrounded the area, and took our kids to a field just near the house on the other side of the path. They took my son to the field. They had come on vehicles. They asked the kids to come with their IDs. The soldiers were speaking broken Tamil. They said, "No parents, only boys." They took seven boys to the field and took their pictures. That same night, four of these seven kids were kidnapped. There were 20 army soldiers. I am pretty sure of the number. They came in one car and one tractor. They freed the kids and left.

The guys who showed up the same night wore the same uniforms as the soldiers in the morning but they were masked and they spoke perfect Tamil. There were seven or eight and they were armed. We tried to stop them from taking the kids but they pushed us back and kicked us. My son was crying. Eight kids from the area were abducted that night.⁸⁶

Shortly thereafter, the families of the abducted boys and young men went to the Eravur police station, the mother said. She was not present in the police station, but her husband explained to her what took place:

One police officer said that he knew about the abduction. The police asked for the names of those responsible. My husband said he didn't know the names but he knew they were Karunas. He recognized some of them. My husband knows this area very well. When the LTTE was here he performed some work for them. He knows the guys who were with the LTTE at the time and who are with the Karunas now. The police didn't give the complaint number and they have done nothing since.

The mother was among the group of parents who subsequently visited their sons in the Karuna camps. "I went there and I saw my son three times," she said. "He was armed and was wearing a Sri Lankan army uniform."

According to the mother, the first time she saw her son was in the Karopola camp near Welikanda. To get there, the parents took a bus to a road junction near Welikanda but she did not remember the name. A Sri Lankan army checkpoint is at the junction she said, and the leader of the families' group gave the soldiers the names of the boys and young men with whom they wanted to visit. The army let the parents pass and they took trishaws to the camp. For the second visit, this mother's son was at what she called the Theevuchenai camp, near Welikanda.

"He was very sad when I saw him," the mother said. "He had lost weight." He told her that he receives a monthly salary that he will send home. The family received two postal orders from their son worth 5,000 rupees (US\$46).

The father of another young man abducted that day also corroborated the testimony of the other families, and provided additional details about visits to the Karuna camp.

Between 25 and 30 men from the Karuna group in Sri Lankan army uniforms surrounded the area where his family lives around 10 p.m., he said. They were not masked but were wearing black bandanas, and they were armed with rifles, which the father identified as either T 56 or AK 47 assault rifles. One or two of the men had submachine guns, he said. All of them spoke Tamil.⁸⁷

The men rounded up eight boys and young men and took them towards the main road. The father followed them to the road, where one of the Karuna group members told him that the boys were under suspicion of helping the LTTE and therefore under investigation. They would be returned soon, he said. They walked away with the eight boys.

Shortly after the abduction, the father reported the crime at the police station in nearby Eravur. The police took notes and opened a file, the father said, but they refused to provide the family with the complaint number.

Six weeks later, the family heard a rumor that their abducted son was in a Karuna camp in Karopola, near Welikanda. The father called a friend who lived in that area, asking that person to inquire. Three days later the friend called back to say the man's son was there. The father described for Human Rights Watch how he and members of the other families with abducted children went looking for their sons:

We took a bus to Sewanpitiya and then once there a trishaw to Karapola. First there is an army camp and then the Karuna camp. It's a government-controlled area. The trishaw driver knew the place perfectly. It is located three miles from Sewanpitiya and it cost us 30 rupees per person.

He continued,

We went to the gate. There were Karuna guys at the gate, some in uniform and some in plain clothes. One of them said, "What are you doing here? Why did you come?" I replied, "I want to see my son." "Wait, wait," they said and brought two chairs. They then brought food and water. We waited from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. We then entered the camp. There were people in plainclothes inside. We were not far from the gate of the camp and they brought our children.

My son was wearing a Sri Lankan army uniform. He had a gun and a rocket propelled grenade launcher. The seven other boys were like my son, wearing an army uniform and armed. My son told me he was all right there and that I should not worry. I was not alone with my son. Karuna people were all around us. He looked very sad. The meeting lasted for two hours.

The father visited his son twice after that. During the first visit, he saw that his son had been wounded. "His ear and his leg were black," the father said. "He said that a mine had exploded near him during a fight and that his friend next to him had been killed and he had been wounded." The young man's mother tried to visit twice but the Karuna group members at the camp said her son was not there.

According to the father, he and the parents of four other abductees received 5,000 rupees each from their sons by postal order.

The family recognized the men who abducted their son but did not know their names. "They were with the LTTE before," the young man's mother said.⁸⁸

The mother and father said this was the second time a son had been abducted by an armed group, the LTTE having captured an older son two years before. The son abducted in June 2006 had also been abducted by the LTTE in 2005, the father said, but released.

Case 3 — Thirteen Boys and Young Men in Batticaloa District, June

In June Karuna forces abducted 13 boys and young men from a village in the Batticaloa district. Human Rights Watch spoke separately with four families who had sons abducted that day. They gave consistent testimony on how between 10 and 15 Karuna group members, armed and mostly in Sri Lankan army uniforms, detained the boys and young men in a nearby shop, ostensibly for “investigation.” The shop was across the street from an army post and some of the parents pleaded with the soldiers to intervene. Several soldiers spoke with the Karuna group members but the soldiers took no effective action to stop the abduction from taking place. Many of the family members subsequently visited their abducted children in a Karuna camp.

According to the father of a boy abducted that day, the incident began around 9 a.m., when four armed Karuna group members came to his home. He explained,

They said there was a meeting and they asked my son to come. He went with them. The four men who came to our house wore Sri Lankan army uniforms and had caps on their heads but were not masked. They were armed with rifles. They spoke Tamil. They belong to the Karuna group. My son refused to go and they took him by force. My son is a student, grade 9. I tried to go with them, to follow them but they didn't let me do that. They said that the parents could not come and they pushed me back.

There were a lot of these same guys that day in the village. We later heard that many kids in the village had been abducted that day. If we had known, we would have hidden him somewhere.⁸⁹

The man's wife went to the Valaichchenai police station to report the crime. The police opened a file, the father said, but they did not ask for a photograph or any identification for his son. “They did ask how tall he was, his hair color, what he was wearing,” he said. “They didn't give us the complaint number. They haven't done anything since. They didn't even bother to come here to investigate.”

A few days later, the boy's parents heard that the Karuna group was holding their son in a camp in Mutugalla near Welikanda. The father went there a few days after the abduction. He explained,

The Karuna camp is located near a Sri Lankan army camp. I took a bus from Valaichchenai to Welikanda and then another bus from Welikanda to Mutugalla. In Welikanda there was an army checkpoint and they checked my ID....The camp is guarded by armed men wearing Sri Lankan army uniforms and speaking Tamil. There is no sign outside.

The first time I couldn't see my son. I waited outside the camp but I didn't see him. They didn't bring him and I went home. One month later, I came back to the same camp in Mutugalla. There is a special place close to the camps to meet those who have been abducted. I waited there a little bit and they brought my son. I saw him. He looked sad. He wore plainclothes and was not armed.

The father made this trip to the camp in Mutugalla three times, he said. He also received two months of salary from his son, totaling 12,000 rupees (US\$112). The son gave the money to his father directly when they met.

Human Rights Watch interviewed the family of a young man also abducted that day. His older brother provided consistent testimony on how the Karuna group abducted the 13 boys and held them in the shop, as well as the involvement of Sri Lankan soldiers from a base across the street:

When [my brother] was coming back from fishing that day, he heard that boys had been kidnapped in the village. He went home very fast but he was kidnapped in front of the house on his way home. They were six guys who said that they needed him for an investigation and took him. They were between 25 and 30 years old. They were wearing plainclothes but they were armed. They spoke Tamil. They took my brother to a house nearby. My brother didn't try to resist. My parents were not home when it happened. I decided to follow my brother and the kidnappers.

The kidnappers took all the kids they captured to the shop on the main road. When I reached the shop, I saw the parents of the other kidnapped kids around. They were looking for their children. Thirteen kids were kidnapped that day and were at the shop. My brother was among them. Then my mother joined me. We asked the kidnappers to release my brother. We stayed with the other parents and every hour the kidnappers said they were going to release my brother. At 5 p.m. they all left the shop and took Alamkulam road. They walked and then a van came and picked them up.⁹⁰

According to the brother, there is a Sri Lankan army camp across the street from the shop where the boys and young men were held, but the soldiers did not take any action to stop the abduction. He told Human Rights Watch,

A few mothers of the abducted kids went to the [Sri Lankan army] camp and asked for the army's help. Two soldiers finally came out and talked to the Karuna guys in broken Tamil. Then the soldiers told us that the Karunas said they were investigating the boys and that they would soon be released. The soldiers said that the Karunas said the parents could go home now, it was OK. Then the soldiers went back to the camp.

The abducted young man's mother was one of those who tried to get the soldiers to help. She explained her efforts:

Two soldiers came out and went to Alamkulam Road to talk to the Karuna guys. Then they went back to the camp and told us that we should not worry and that the kids were going to be released. We waited for two more hours and nothing happened. We then went to the police station.⁹¹

That evening the abducted young man's father went to the Valaichchenai police station with a group of parents, the brother said. The police opened a file and told the parents that they should not worry because the abductees would soon be free. The police initially refused to provide a copy of the police report but eventually did give it for a fee of 125 rupees (normally the report costs between 10 and 15 rupees, the brother said); only two parents got a copy of the police report. The family said the police have done nothing on the case since.

Two months after the abduction, the family visited the abducted young man in a Karuna camp in Mutugalla. They visited him four times in total, the brother said.

The mother of the young man claimed that she knew two men from the Karuna group responsible for the abductions that day. She told Human Rights Watch,

I know who planned the kidnapping of the kids. Their names are [names withheld]. They are from here. [One of the men] was even here during the kidnapping, I saw him. I saw only nine or ten of the Karunas that day, but they were more than that, maybe 13. They wore t-shirts and pants and were armed. [The two men] come back here regularly. I talked to them and pleaded for my son. They refused to release him.

Human Rights Watch interviewed the mother of another young man abducted that day. The mother has three sons, and one of them had previously volunteered to join

the LTTE, which may have been why her second-oldest son was targeted for abduction by the Karuna group. She told Human Rights Watch what she saw on the day of the abductions, including her interaction with the Sri Lankan army:

The day of the abduction, I was fishing. I am the only breadwinner for my family. When I came back to the village, many villagers were out shouting and crying. Several children of the village had been abducted by Karuna's guys....

I joined the other parents [at the shop] and we stayed there until 2 p.m. While there, I saw my son and I pleaded for his release. I implored the Karunas to free him. They replied they were going to investigate our kids and that they would be released after that. Thirteen boys had been abducted that day in the village and I saw them all at the shop.

At 5 p.m., Karuna guys took our kids to Alamkulam Road. A van came and picked up the boys on Alamkulam Road. A white van with tinted windows....

At some point, four Sri Lankan army soldiers came and talked to the Karunas. The soldiers then talked to us near the shop and said that the Karunas were going to investigate our children. They added: "Don't worry, the Karunas will release your kids after that."⁹²

According to the mother, she went to the Welikanda area the next day to look for her son:

We went to the Karuna camp [at Mutugalla] and we saw the guys who kidnapped our children walking inside the camps. We asked for our children. They replied that they had been sent for training. I saw a few boys who had been abducted but not my son. We waited there until 5 p.m. and we came back here at 9. There is an army camp very close to the Karuna camp there.

Between Sewanpitiya and Mutugalla are a police camp and an army camp, the mother said. Near the army camp is what she called a TMVP camp. While the parents were waiting, soldiers came out to inquire what was going on. She said,

The first time we went to the camp in Mutugalla, two Sri Lankan army soldiers came from the army camp within 30 minutes and asked the Karuna guys what the mothers were doing there. The Karuna guys replied that we came to visit our children. The two soldiers asked us questions and asked what happened. They were speaking Sinhala and we didn't understand very well. They spoke in Sinhala with the Karuna members. After they spoke to the soldiers, the Karuna guys asked us to leave the camp and we left.

Two months later, the mother saw her son at the Karuna camp, and she saw him twice more after that, she said. "I want to come home but I can't escape," she said he told her. She continued, "The last time I saw him was two weeks ago. He was wearing a uniform, a Sri Lankan army green uniform, as during all my previous visits except one. Many people wore the army uniform in the camp."

According to the mother, she has received 5,000 rupees on three occasions.

The mother of a boy taken that day said she did not witness the abduction, but she saw the armed men in the village, as well as the van that took them away. "Give me back my son!" she said she yelled at the Karuna group members before they drove away. "Only if you give us your elder son," she said they replied.⁹³

“These Karuna guys are from the area, they know everything about us,” the mother told Human Rights Watch. She added, “Those responsible for the abduction are the Karunas. I know the head of this group, the one who was in charge of kidnapping the 14 kids. His name is [name withheld]. He belongs to Karuna’s group.”

About two months later the mother reported the case to the police in Valaichchenai, who opened a file and provided her with a copy of the document, which Human Rights Watch inspected.

The police investigation led to no results, the mother said, so her husband decided to visit the Karuna camps to find their son. In early October he took a bus to the Sewanpitiya junction on the A11 road. At an army checkpoint there the soldiers asked where he was going. He explained that the Karuna group had abducted his child and they let him pass. The father succeeded to see his son in a Karuna camp, and the mother visited the camp herself on two other occasions.

Case 4 —Two Cousins in Batticaloa District, June

In a joint interview, Human Rights Watch interviewed two sisters who had their sons, both young men, abducted together in June from a village in Batticaloa district. The mother of the younger man said,

My third son was abducted with his cousin, my nephew, around 8 p.m. We were all at home, inside the house listening to the news when three armed men wearing plain clothes came. They spoke Tamil. They ordered all the children out of the house and asked the parents to stay inside, otherwise they would shoot us. They said they were going to investigate the kids and then release them. They took seven children who were present at the time, three of my sons and four of my sister’s who were home. Half an hour later, all the children came back except two, who were missing. We stayed home the rest of the night.⁹⁴

The family went looking for the abducted men at the TMVP office in Mankerni the following day. According to the two mothers, at the office officials admitted that they were holding the young men but they had been transferred elsewhere for training.

Shortly thereafter the family reported the abductions to the police in Valaichchenai. The police opened a file and provided the complaint number. “They didn’t ask for a photo or an ID of the kids,” the mother said. “They asked for their height, weight and description. The police didn’t do anything since.”

About six weeks later, three members of the Karuna group brought the two young men home to visit their families for two hours, the mothers said. “They were wearing Sri Lankan army uniforms and were armed, all of them, the five of them,” the mother said. “At some point our two boys told us that they couldn’t escape because they would shoot them.” The group came back the next morning for another visit of about three hours. “They said they were based in Mutugalla camp,” the mother said.

The two mothers went twice to the Mutugalla camp. The mother of the younger man explained,

There is a Sri Lankan army and a police camp near the Karuna camp in Mutugalla. You have to pass by the army camp to reach the Karuna camp. From Sewanpitiya to Mutugalla, there is a Karuna checkpoint. We were stopped and they asked, in Tamil, where we were going. Some wore Sri Lankan army uniforms and some had plain clothes. Near the Karuna checkpoint there is a Sri Lankan army checkpoint, very close, in eye contact. Inside the camp, there is a kind of kitchen area where we could

meet people nearby. The last time I went there was one month ago. I received 5,000 rupees twice from my son while visiting him.

Case 5 — Fourteen Boys and Young Men in Batticaloa District, September

On one day in September 2006 Karuna forces abducted 14 boys and young men from villages north of Batticaloa town. Human Rights Watch visited one village where three children were taken. The mother of the youngest abducted child said she subsequently saw her child and the other two abductees in the TMVP office in Batticaloa.

One teenage boy, a witness to the abductions, explained how a group of four boys were playing in a sandy lot when about 15 men with automatic weapons dressed in black pants and black shirts approached the children and clapped—a sign that the children should come. In fluent Tamil the men told the children that they were needed to deliver some notices. “When we were playing here they called us,” the boy told Human Rights Watch. “They said which of you is going to school. I gave them my name and my school and they said I should leave.”⁹⁵

The mother of the youngest abducted child said she tried to prevent her son from going. “I held him by the hand and they said, ‘Don’t worry, we’ll take him to distribute some notices,’” she said. “I didn’t believe them so I followed. It was in the village. They said, ‘Go away!’” The men spoke fluent Tamil, she said. “They told us they were from the Karuna group.”⁹⁶

An elderly man in the village also saw the group of armed men take the three boys away. “I followed the Karuna guys as they took them away,” he told Human Rights Watch. “They raised their guns at me and shouted, ‘Go away!’ One man said, ‘Take me,’ and they hit him with a rifle butt.”⁹⁷

The parents of the abducted children, as well as some of the parents of the 11 other boys and young men abducted from the area that day, tried to get their children back. They reported their cases in the coming days to the International Committee of the Red Cross, SLMM, and UNICEF, and some went searching in Karuna offices and camps.

“I went to the Chenkalady camp of Karuna and they said the boys are in Batticaloa,” the mother of the youngest abducted child said. “I went to the office [of the TMVP in Batticaloa. I saw the children in a trishaw. It was at the bus depot on the main road. I saw them in a trishaw going to Batticaloa.”

The mother was too afraid to approach the children because of the Karuna men in the area, but she went to the TMVP office in Batticaloa two days later. She told Human Rights Watch what she saw:

We saw our children on the top floor of the TMVP office. We were three mothers of children taken from here. The children signaled to us that we should go or they would get hit. When we went the second time they [TMVP officials] told us to go away. “Go to the camp at Sewanpitiya on October 24 after they finish training,” they said. We went again and they said, “Go away. Come again on November 5.”

This mother also reported the abduction of her son to the national Human Rights Commission and to the police in Eravur. The police at the station were cordial, she said. They took her information and she spoke with the officer in charge but the police have taken no action since. “We told the police it was Karuna,” the mother said. “We have heard nothing from them since.”

The grandmother of one of the other abducted boys said she thought the abducted children were being held in Karuna's camp at Karapola. Parents of two of the 14 children abducted from the area that day saw some children working as guards at the TMVP office in Batticaloa, she said. The children said that the others were at the Karapola camp.

The grandmother said her family had not reported the case to the police because they did not believe it would do any good.⁹⁸

Case 6 — Two Boys in Batticaloa District, September

In September 2006 Karuna forces abducted two young boys from an area north of Batticaloa town.

According to the mother of the older abducted child, she went to the TMVP offices in Morakkottanchenai and Chenkalady after hearing the news. "I also went to all five [Karuna] camps," she said. "They said, 'No, he is not here.' Then they said, 'Come again after one month.'" She continued, "We showed a photo and they said, 'Maybe. But even if we have him we will only show him to you after one month.'"⁹⁹

Three days later the TMVP office in Batticaloa told her to come in late October, although they did not confirm that they had taken her son.

She reported the case to the police, four days after the abduction and after her fruitless search at the camps. They took the information, she said, but treated her "like a dog":

We reported it to the police. They said we'll take the complaint but we're not going to look for them. It was the Eravur police. They didn't want to take it. We argued for two hours and finally they took it.... "We'll record your complaint but we'll keep it in a corner," the police said. They treated me like a dog... The police say, "This is your Tamil people taking your children so talk with them."

The mother of the younger abducted child, interviewed together with the mother of the older child, did not report her son's abduction to the police. "Because I'm scared," she said.¹⁰⁰

Case 7 — Boy in Trincomalee Town, September

In September 2006 members of the Karuna group abducted a teenage boy from a shop in town. The boy's mother told Human Rights Watch what took place:

Karuna's people came to our home and asked for my son. He was out that day and I told them that he had gone to work. They left. [Some days thereafter] around noon, my son went to the nearby shop, 50 meters from the house, to buy bananas. Karuna's guys came to the shop and took him.¹⁰¹

Human Rights Watch spoke with the sister of the abducted boy, who was in the shop when the abduction took place. She explained,

I was already in the shop when [my brother] came alone on his pushbike to buy bananas. Then two guys showed up on a motorcycle and called [him]. He replied, "I am not coming." Then they flashed a pistol. Only one of them had a pistol, a black one he kept in his pocket. [He] then said OK and the three of them went on the motorcycle, with [my brother] in the middle. They were wearing plain clothes and were a little bit older than [the abducted boy], but not much. They were Tamil.... I

don't know their names but they said they were from Batticaloa ... I haven't seen them since.¹⁰²

According to the mother of the abducted boy, her husband subsequently went to the TMVP office in town, where he saw his son with his legs chained.

A few days later the husband went back to the TMVP office, she said, but their son was not there. "I then went to the office myself and asked for my son," she said. "They replied, 'We don't have him. We didn't take anybody.' But another guy told me I'll be able to see my son three months from now."

The family did not report the abduction to the police, out of fear.

Case 8 — Twelve Boys and Young Men in Ampara District, October

In October Karuna forces abducted 12 boys and young men from a village in the Ampara district. As of October 18, they had released seven of the abductees.

According to the aunt of one of the abducted young men, the abductions took place on a main road around 6 p.m. The young man was riding home from work on a motorbike with two colleagues on another bike when they were stopped by Karuna group members with a white car and white van, both with tinted windows. The Karuna group members took the three young men in the car and van, along with their motorbikes. The family learned of the abduction shortly thereafter, when a witness informed them of what he had seen.

That night, the young man's mother went to the TMVP office in Akkaraipattu to look for her son, the aunt said. She saw a white car and white van with tinted windows leaving the office as she arrived. Officials at the office told her to come back the following day.

The next day, the young man's mother and other relatives returned to the TMVP office in Akkaraipattu. Officials there told them that they were not responsible for the abduction, the aunt said. Rather, it was another Karuna group from Welikanda commanded by a man called Bharathy. The TMVP officials in Akkaraipattu gave the family the young man's motorbike, which suggests that at some point he had been held at the office. The young man's older brother went to collect it.

Around the same time, a group of relatives of the other boys and young men abducted that day gathered outside the TMVP office to complain. "Please release our sons!" they yelled, according to the aunt and another witness who saw the group.

According to the aunt, some of the mothers went to a Karuna camp in the Welikanda area—she did not know which one—to speak with the commander Bharathy. She explained,

Some mothers went to Welikanda and met Bharathy. He said he would release six of the boys after six days. He released seven. Not our boy. And not the other four. My sister is there now to try and get her son back.¹⁰³

According to the aunt, Bharathy released the seven abductees only after obtaining detailed information about each family's financial affairs, health, and work status. The four boys and young men not released were sent for military training, she said.

Case 9 — Two Boys and a Young Man in Batticaloa District, October

On one day in October 2006, Karuna forces abducted two children and one adult in a village in Batticaloa district. Human Rights Watch researchers arrived at the scene about three hours after the abductions had taken place.

Local residents were visibly afraid to speak and gave only cursory information. One man, who did not want to give his name, said that armed men from the Karuna group had come that morning around 8 a.m. and taken two boys and a young man.¹⁰⁴

Human Rights Watch spoke with the distraught mother of the abducted young man. She said that the Karuna forces had released the two boys but continued to hold her son. Maybe they suspected him of being an LTTE supporter, she said, although this was untrue.¹⁰⁵

Human Rights Watch was unable to confirm the abductions or whether the two boys were in fact released. While in the village, researchers observed approximately two dozen Sri Lankan soldiers patrolling the area, but it is not known if they were present when the abductions took place.

⁸² Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁸³ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with father of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with father of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with father of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with brother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹² Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹³ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with teenage boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with elderly man, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with grandmother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Batticaloa district, October 2006.

¹⁰¹ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted boy, Trincomalee town, October 2006.

¹⁰² Human Rights Watch interview with sister of abducted boy, Trincomalee town, October 2006.

¹⁰³ Human Rights Watch interview with aunt of abducted young man, Ampara district, October 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with local resident, Batticaloa district, October, 2006.

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with mother of abducted young man, Batticaloa district, October, 2006.

[TamilNet, Tuesday, 06 November 2007, 14:09 GMT]

Karuna, a former Tamil Tiger commander and later the leader of TMVP paramilitary group that has been deployed by the Sri Lankan forces in their war against the Tigers, has been arrested in Britain on suspicion of immigration offences, including traveling on a false passport, British press reports said this week. International human rights groups are now calling on the UK government to investigate Vinayagamoorthi Muraleetharan (Karuna) for war crimes and are assembling evidence to see whether they can trigger a prosecution, reports said. Amid fears by rights groups that Karuna would be deported to Sri Lanka, some press reports said he had applied for asylum in Britain.

Muraleetharan alias Karuna was detained last Friday in a combined operation by immigration officials and the Metropolitan police, The Guardian newspaper reported.

It is thought the raid took place in London; his wife is also understood to be in the country, the paper said.

He was reportedly ousted last month following an internal coup in his paramilitary organisation, the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), which runs armed camps in eastern Sri Lanka.

Karuna, the Tamil Tigers' former eastern commander, had formed the TMVP in 2004 after his six week rebellion against the LTTE leadership collapsed, whereupon he defected to his erstwhile enemy, the Sri Lankan armed forces. He was also allegedly used by the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's foreign intelligence agency, in a failed attempt to forge a front between a India based paramilitary group, the ENDLF and the Karuna Group in the east.

Sri Lanka Government issued National Identity Card under the name "Vigneswaran Mathankumar" on 10.05.2004, a month after renegade LTTE commander Mr. Vinayagamoorthy Muraleetharan (alias Karuna) fled Batticaloa.

This year the TMVP itself split, with the second-in-command, Pillaiyaan, breaking away, apparently with Sri Lankan government support.

The Hindustan Times said that the Sri Lankan armed forces did not need Karuna any more and were promoting Pillaiyaan instead.

The UK Home Office confirmed to The Guardian newspaper that former Tamil Tiger commander was being held in an immigration detention. It would not say whether his case was being studied by its internal war crimes unit.

The LTTE is banned in the UK as a terrorist group.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Coalition to Stop Child Soldiers are all investigating the possibility of initiating an official investigation.

Charges can be brought in the UK by the government against those suspected of war crimes or torture committed anywhere in the world.

"Under article six of the Geneva conventions," an Amnesty spokesman said, "if the UK is satisfied there's reasonable testimony of torture the government would have to start a preliminary inquiry under UK law.

"If one person was to complain with credible evidence then there would have to be an investigation. We are in touch with international groups about bringing evidence to this country to help the police and prosecution services."

James Ross, legal and policy director of Human Rights Watch in New York, said: "We have raised our concerns with the UK government. We would like [the government] to see whether there's a valid basis under the principle of universal jurisdiction to prosecute Col Karuna for possible war crimes or human rights abuses such as torture."

Lucia Withers, Asia programme manager of the Coalition to Stop Child Soldiers in London, said a possible prosecution of Col Karuna would be an "exemplary" case.

The question is whether in Britain universal jurisdiction for war crimes extends to the use of children, she added.

Karuna has been accused of conscripting children.

The Home Office said: "We have a war crimes unit, formed in 2004, to ensure that we are not providing sanctuary to [war criminals]. Where appropriate we refer cases to the Metropolitan police for criminal action."

Human rights groups, such as Amnesty International, fear Karuna will be deported by the Home Office before he can be charged in Britain.

Meanwhile, the Hindustan Times reported that Karuna, who had been arrested by the UK authorities for traveling on a false passport, had applied for asylum.

Govt smuggled Karuna to London on forged DPL passport

Passport in the name of Kokila Gunawardena

Foreign Ministry sends third party note for visa

Karuna asks for asylum when arrested

Visa requested to attend climate change conference

By Lasantha Wickrematunge

Damning evidence has surfaced that the Government smuggled LTTE renegade commander Karuna to Great Britain on a forged diplomatic passport.

An investigation by The Morning Leader revealed that the forged diplomatic passport was issued by the Immigration Department on the orders of higher authorities in the name of Kokila Gunawardena on August 30, 2007.

It has been further revealed that Karuna was issued a valid British visa in the name of Kokila Gunawardena by the High Commission in Colombo on September 5 on a recommendation by Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry.

The Morning Leader investigation revealed that the Foreign Ministry had sent a Third Party Note to the British High Commission in Colombo together with a number of passports recommending visas for a group of persons to attend a climate change conference in Britain and included in the set of passports was a diplomatic passport in the name of Kokila Gunawardena.

Gunawardena was recommended for the visa as an official representing a department coming under the Environment Ministry of JHU's Champika Ranawaka.

It is now revealed that Karuna travelled to Britain on the passport which was in the name of Kokila Gunawardena and landed at the Heathrow airport on September 18. It had also been reported that Karuna was accompanied to the aircraft at the Bandaranaike International Airport to board the London flight by Airport and Aviation deputy chief Shalitha Wijesundera who is yet to deny the reports.

Sources in England said Karuna was arrested by the British authorities in London in a house in the affluent Kensington area where his wife and three children were residing. The diplomatic passport in the possession of Karuna under the name 'Kokila Gunawardena' was also taken into custody by the British authorities at the time of arrest.

The Morning Leader further learns, Karuna had asked for political asylum upon being arrested. Karuna's wife and three children had earlier entered Britain legitimately and applied for political asylum and those applications are now being processed.

The Morning Leader also learns Karuna is currently under interrogation by the British Anti Terrorism Liason Unit.

Secretary to the Foreign Affairs Ministry Palitha Kohona contacted by The Morning Leader said he was certain his ministry would not have recommended a visa for Karuna to the British high Commission. He however refused to comment when asked whether a visa could have been recommended for him under a false identity stating he was not obliged to answer such questions or be subjected to cross examination.

On the question of the procedure involved in the issuance of a diplomatic passport, Kohona said that question should be directed to the department of Immigration since they were the issuing authority.

Asked who decides whether an individual is entitled to a diplomatic passport, Kohona said it was the department of Immigration.

However a spokesperson for the Department of Immigration told The Morning Leader that on the issuance of a diplomatic passport they only act on the directives and recommendations of the President, President's office or the Foreign Ministry.

The spokesperson said the President's office sends a list of persons entitled to a diplomatic passport by virtue of their office and that in addition the President can authorise the issuance of such a passport to any individual. He said the Foreign Ministry can also recommend the issuance of a diplomatic passport.

The British High Commission when contacted declined to comment on the issue stating there was an on going investigation following Karuna's arrest in London.

SOUTH ASIA INTELLIGENCE REVIEW

Weekly Assessments & Briefings



SRI LANKA

Karuna's Lengthening Shadow

Ajit Kumar Singh

Research Assistant, Institute for Conflict Management

The leader of the breakaway faction of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (**LTTE**), Vinayagamurthy Muralitharan alias Karuna, also known as 'Colonel' Karuna, has finally openly accepted that he has areas under his control. Karuna, who heads a political party, Tamileela Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), and a military setup (often labelled 'paramilitary') now admits that his group is "involved in civil administration" in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. In a telephonic interview with *The Sunday Times* of March 11, 2007, Karuna said,

We are indeed functioning in this area for the past two years although it is not known. We reached an agreement with the UNICEF last month, for them to visit our camps in the East. We are involved in civil administration in the areas under our control. We have no intention of having a massive military build up in the areas under us nor are we going to fight the Government forces. We have cadres in these camps only to defend ourselves against LTTE attacks. We have a strong political base and we have opened many

political offices in Batticaloa and Trincomalee. Today we represent a section of the Tamil people.

Karuna accepted that the TMVP has a 'close relationship' with the Government and that his party's members have a close relationship even at a ministerial level. He, however, declined the charges that the group operated as a 'paramilitary' and claimed that they functioned independently. On this, he echoes the Government position. Speaking in a 'Hard Talk' program with the *BBC World Service* on March 15, 2007, Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rohitha Bogollagama, refuted the charges that Karuna's forces were operating as a paramilitary organisation on territory controlled by the Sri Lankan Government and claimed that the TMVP was a 'political party' registered with the Government.

Karuna's split with the LTTE goes back to his March 3, 2004, refusal, as the LTTE's 'special commander' of the Batticaloa-Ampara region, to send an additional 1,000 troops to the North as requested by the rebel chief, Prabhakaran. Sources suggest that, since there was no operational requirement for this transfer, unless Prabhakaran was planning the resumption of hostilities against the Sri Lankan Army about which he had not consulted Karuna, the latter suspected that this was possibly a prelude to his removal from the leadership of the East, and he consequently revolted. Operations carried out by Pottu Amman, chief of the LTTE's intelligence wing in the East, without consulting Karuna, had also angered him. Soon after defying Prabhakaran's directives, Karuna simultaneously informed the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission that he and his Eastern troops would thereafter act independently. Later, in a leaflet dated March 4, 2004, Karuna set out his faction's grievances against the Vanni leadership. Among them were:

- Exclusion of the Batticaloa – Amparai District from development work in spite of the region's highly disproportionate contribution to the LTTE's war effort (4,550 killed in mainly Northern battles);
- Northern leaders, who headed all 30 departments, lived in luxury, while 600 Eastern cadres posted far from home, manned bunker lines and provided security for them;
- The Northern leadership's demand for the dispatch of thousands of more Eastern cadres to the North in order to prepare for war;
- Intelligence Unit cadres under Pottu Amman unleashing murder and plunder in the East.

Further, on March 7, 2004, in an interview with the *BBC Tamil Service*, Karuna stated that, as a condition for a settlement, Prabhakaran should remove his intelligence chief, Pottu Amman; financial chief, Thamilenthi; and police chief, P. Nadesan.

The Eastern component comprising Batticaloa and Ampara was almost indispensable to the LTTE. The active cadre strength of the LTTE was about 18,000, of which 7,500 were drawn from the Batticaloa and Ampara Districts. More than 2,000 cadres had been recruited or conscripted from the Eastern region after the cease-fire came into force. Being the battle-hardened leader of the East, Karuna was a prize scalp for the Government, which was trying to pressurise the LTTE.

In April 2004, when the LTTE launched a searing attack against the Karuna faction, he disbanded his forces and escaped with a small group of supporters, allegedly to be welcomed in Colombo. According to a *BBC* report of June 24, 2004, he was helped to escape by opposition United National Party (UNP) Member of Parliament, Ali Zahir Mowlana. It was also reported that Karuna was seen in hiding in Army safe-houses in Colombo for more than two months, masterminding a series of killings of LTTE cadres and their supporters in an attempt to weaken the outfit. The Government Information Minister Mangala Samaraweera also accepted the allegation and admitted that Military personnel were involved, adding, however, "I mean that we cannot deny, but not with the knowledge or connivance of the Government."

The 'close ties' between the Sri Lanka Government and TMVP are said to have been the decisive factor behind the recent successes of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) in Mavil Aru and Sampur in the Trincomalee District and Vakarai in the Batticaloa District. The Government forces are also making

inroads with the ongoing operations in the Thopigalla jungles and other LTTE-held areas. The SLA has used Karuna's knowledge of the hinterland to weaken the LTTE and go for a final assault. According to sources, Karuna cadres, including children, helped security forces push North through the mined no-man's land, allowing the Army to claim about 600 square kilometres of territory from the LTTE so far. Sri Lanka, however, continues to maintain that no link exists between the Army and the Karuna faction. According to a March 17 report, Sri Lanka's National Security Minister, Keheliya Rambukwella, said, "It can be inevitable assistance. (But) it is unplanned. We don't request assistance from an illegal organisation."

Estimates regarding the military strength of the TMVP range between 300 to 700. The TMVP reportedly aims to increase their number to 2000 cadres. E. Pradeep, the political leader of the TMVP in the East, 'Commander Pillaiyan', and 'Senior Commander' Jeyam, are some of the top leaders of the group. The group is active in all three districts of the Eastern Province – Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee – as well as in Polonnaruwa in the North Central Province. The TMVP has three military camps in Mutugalla, and one each in Maduarrangala and Karopolla as disclosed by an aid worker, according to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) January 2007 report. The report further claimed that the group was active in abduction and conscription of children in Mankerni, Valaichechenai, Kumpurumollai, Korakallimaddu, Maavidivembu, Vantharumoolai, Chenkalady and Eravur areas. The political wing of the group has its offices established in Valaichechenai, Korakallimaddu, Morakkottanchenai, Chenkalady and Batticaloa Town. All these places where TMVP has its presence – political, military or operational – are allegedly closely connected with security forces check posts, giving credence to the claim that they have tacit support from Government troops to carry out their 'limited operations' to nullify the LTTE's advantage.

Apart from the tactical advantages brought in by the Karuna faction, his renunciation of the idea of a separate state is in perfect rhythm with the official vision of a conflict-free Sri Lanka. While addressing a passing out parade of his cadres at an undisclosed military base in the East on March 3-4, 2007, Karuna declared,

We believe, today, in the rule of law, democracy and pluralism. Sri Lanka is our Motherland. We want to live equally with the majority Sinhalese and minority Muslims. We consider that it is our duty to respect the country's Constitution and also the President and the Government of Sri Lanka. The TMVP is thankful to the Sri Lankan Government and the Sri Lankan Security Forces for liberating the Tamil people who were held as human shields at Vaharai. The Tamils should remember the few hundred soldiers who sacrificed their lives to liberate Vaharai from the ruthless Vanni Tigers.... When we left the LTTE on March 03, 2004, we decided to enter into the main stream politics of Sri Lanka. When we left the LTTE, we also gave up the policy of separate State or Tamil Eelam. We do not believe in such a utopian politics any more.

Using faction against faction, however, could prove a double edged weapon. The Government is currently using the Karuna faction's strength to advantage in the entrenched battle to regain lost territories from the LTTE, but the future is fraught with risk. Karuna, the most dreaded and ruthless of the LTTE 'commanders' before he split from the mainstream 'Wanni faction', has already adopted his former leader, Prabhakaran's, methods in the areas of his dominance. He has reportedly banned several Tamil dailies in Batticaloa for not carrying the TMVP's propaganda and allegedly trying to 'create conflict' among the Tamils and Muslims in the Eastern Province. Reports indicate that the TMVP is going the same way as the LTTE, levying taxes and harassing people.

Karuna, who encouraged some 2,000 child soldiers to return home in 2004, once again began to abduct children and forcibly recruit cadres into his forces around June 2006. According to UNICEF data, they had recorded 208 complaints of children and adults having been abducted by the Karuna Group in 2006. HRW claims the actual number could be three times higher, since victimised families are often to frightened to lodge reports. Evidence received by HRW indicates that the abductees were first held in political offices operated by the TMVP in the townships, which were guarded by Sri Lankan Security Forces personnel, and further, that such a large number of abducted persons could not have been taken past numerous military checkpoints *en route*, without the knowledge of the Sri Lankan forces. Both HRW and Allan Rock, a UN Special Envoy on Children in Armed Conflict, who visited the country in November 2006, have pointed a finger at the Army for enabling the abductions. Although the

Government has denied these allegations on numerous occasions, these charges will eventually hurt the Government in its dealings with the International community in long term.

The TMVP says it sees itself as the regional Government of the future. "Karuna is the leader of the political and military wing, he is the overall leader now and forever," E. Pradeep, the political leader of the TMVP in the East, declared on March 17, 2007. The Government needs to be wary cautious in its dealings with an organisation that is still being led by one of the toughest separatist extremists – though he has declared a shift in his agenda. There is no guarantee that he will not switch his game plan once again, if he sees an advantage in, or a threat from, a different direction.

Karuna threats prevent Batticaloa MPs from visiting electorates

[TamilNet, Monday, 09 April 2007, 11:57 GMT]

"Due to death threats from Sri Lanka Army (SLA) backed Karuna group in Batticaloa district, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarians representing constituencies in the district have not been able to go to their electorates for the last six months, affected parliamentarians said. Batticaloa MPs have been unable to even participate in high level planning meetings where the district's urgent needs are discussed and decisions taken, TNA parliamentarians told media Sunday.

"Therefore we have been forced to conduct the next Development and Integration meeting for Batticaloa district, which usually takes place in Batticaloa district Government Secretariat, in Colombo Parliamentary Complex on Wednesday," MPs said.

"If the elected representatives are not in a position to go their constituencies it reveals the power Karuna paramilitary group wields due to State support it enjoys," T. Jeyanandamoorthy, one of the TNA parliamentarians for Batticaloa district said.

"Karuna paramilitary group, openly aided by the SLA in Batticaloa, are running many camps located almost next to SLA camps. Abductions, killings, robberies, intimidation and harassment by Karuna group are increasing at an alarming rate in Batticaloa and the victims of human right violations have been effectively prevented from meeting their Members of Parliament to express their complaints," he added.

"We are unable to learn first hand of the urgent needs of the thousands of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) lodged in interim refugee camps and take steps to provide even the basic facilities to them," he said.

Mavai Senathirajah, General Secretary, had sent letters to Disaster Management Minister Mahintha Samarasinghe and Defence Secretary Gothabaya Rajapakse requesting helicopter facility to visit the IDPs, 17 March.

The decisions taken on the future development plans and activities of the district are customarily made in Batticaloa Government Secretariat in meetings presided by

Disaster and Relief Service Minister, M. S. S. Ameer Ali along with the district s' parliamentarians, Government Agent, Departmental heads and various Non-governmental organizations functioning in the district.

"The Batticaloa TNA parliamentarians also face obstruction in transferring funds received from expatriates to help the destitute people of Batticaloa district while private business people too are unable to function freely because of death threats, extortion and intimidation from Karuna group paramilitary personnel," the MP said.

Tamil dailies, Thinakural and Virakesari week-end edition, are not allowed to reach the people of Batticaloa due to restriction laid down by Karuna group in order to prevent the people from learning local and outside news, civil society members in Batticaloa said.

Karuna group "bans" Tamil dailies in Trincomalee

[TamilNet, Wednesday, 10 January 2007, 14:55 GMT]

Karuna paramilitary group imposed a "ban" to sell Thinakural, Sudaroli and other newspapers in Trincomalee district, the proprietors of the news papers said. The News agents were summoned by the Karuna group in Trincomalee Tuesday and threatened they would be shot to death if they fail to comply, according to sources.

Karuna group had banned the sale of Thinakural and Sudaroli in Batticaloa and Amparai districts six months ago.

Paramilitary threatens Tamil MPs from Batticaloa, Amparai to resign their seats before Monday

[TamilNet, Tuesday, 21 November 2006, 07:35 GMT]

A paramilitary Karuna Group operative, identifying himself as Gunanan, operating from the office of the group located in Sri Lanka Army controlled Batticaloa town, has issued death threats to Tamil parliamentarians from the East, Tamil National Alliance said in a letter to the Speaker of the Sri Lankan Parliament Tuesday. If the 8 parliamentarians from Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai, did not resign their posts before coming Monday, November 27, they would be assassinated, the group has warned. 4 key members of the the TNA, 2 MPs, an ex-MP and a to-be-nominated MP, have been assassinated during the past 2 years.

TNA consists 22 members of Parliament of the 23 Tamil members elected from the NorthEast.

Full text of the letter from Tamil National Alliance parliamentary group follows:

Parliamentary Housing Complex,
Madivela,
Sri Jayawardenapura, Kotte.

21 November 2006

Hon. W.J.M. Lokubandara,
The Speaker,
Parliament,
Sri Jayawardenapura,
Kotte.

Hon. Speaker,

DEATH THREATS TO TAMIL NATIONAL ALLIANCE (ITAK) MEMBERS FROM BATTICALOA AND AMPARAI

On the Sunday the 19th of November 2006 between 8.00pm and 8.30pm, we the undersigned Members of Parliament from the Batticaloa and Amparai Districts and the National List of the Tamil National Alliance (ITAK) received death threats over the phone. We were informed specifically that if we did not resign from being Members of Parliament we would be killed.

The person who spoke to each of us introduced himself as Gunanan of the Thamil Eela Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) Batticaloa Office. He warned that if the eight MPs belonging to the Tamil National Alliance (ITAK) from the Eastern Province did not resign by the 27th of November 2006, all eight MPs will end up receiving the “Maamanithar” (Great Human Being) award posthumously as all eight MPs would be killed. The caller stated that this was the order of their leader.

Considering the fact that the Tamil National Alliance (ITAK) has already lost several of its members due to assassinations, these latest death threats must be viewed with utmost seriousness. We would like to take this opportunity to point out that MPs Joseph Pararajasingham and Nadarajah Raviraj were also assassinated after receiving similar death threats.

You will appreciate that these threats to our lives greatly affect our ability to duly perform our duties. Therefore in view of the aforementioned we strongly urge you as the custodian of the rights and privileges of the Members of Parliament to take all necessary steps to enable us to safely carry out our duties by the people who voted us to office. Thanking you.

T. KANAGASABAI M.P.
(Batticaloa District)

THANGESWARI KATHIRAMAN M.P.
(Batticaloa District)

S. JEYANANDAMOORTHY M.P.
(Batticaloa District)

P. ARIYANETHRAN M.P.
(Batticaloa District)

K. PATHMANATHAN M.P.
(Amparai District)

TamilNet, February 26, 2006 22:41 GMT]

Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) met in Geneva Wednesday and Thursday and reconfirmed their commitment to honour and uphold the February 2002 Ceasefire Agreement (CFA). The issue of paramilitary groups figured prominently in the discussions and the GoSL delegation undertook a commitment: that no armed group or person other than its security forces will carry arms or conduct armed operations in GoSL controlled territory."The GOSL is committed to taking all necessary measures in accordance with the Ceasefire Agreement to ensure that no armed group or person other than Government security forces will carry arms or conduct armed operations," the joint statement released at the conclusion of Geneva talks read.

"There is a two month space for it [the next round of talks]. We have to see whether the government is going to disarm these [paramilitary] groups. And if they are disarmed and made dysfunctional and their operations halted then we will send our political cadres into Jaffna and Batticaloa," LTTE's Chief Negotiator and Political Strategist, Anton Balasingham, said in a press interview commenting on the commitment undertaken by the Government of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Balasingham, in his opening address in Geneva on Wednesday, named and defined the Tamil paramilitary groups operating in NorthEast.

Karuna group, EPDP group, PLOTE group, EPRLF (Varathar) group and a Muslim group called Jihad group were categorized by the LTTE as the major five paramilitary groups involved in subversive warfare against the LTTE.

These Tamil paramilitary groups are "sustained, supported and controlled by the Sri Lanka military," Mr. Balasingham described.

Mr. Anton Balasingham,
LTTE's political strategist
and chief negotiator.

"They are not simply 'armed elements' functioning independently in a political vacuum," he further explained , adding that these groups are organized militant forces, "properly trained and armed in subversive warfare and function covertly in connivance with the Sri Lanka armed forces."

The LTTE submitted documents detailing the nature of the paramilitary operations sponsored by the Sri Lankan armed forces.

The term paramilitary, in press usage, means "an illegal group, armed with assault weapons."

Some argue that the above usage stems, as with “paranormal” opposed to “normal”, paramilitary means an entity “other than” or “outer” of "military."

The US Department of Defence Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms [12 April 2001, amended through 31 Aug 2005] definition of the paramilitary force, in practical usage has come to “apply everything from home guard-style militias to the counterguerilla "death squad," writes Michael McClintock, the author of Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism.

The U.S. DoD dictionary definition reads: “Forces or groups distinct from the regular armed forces of any country, but resembling them in organization, equipment, training, or mission.”

Paramilitary groups in the Sri Lanka political discourse refer to the armed groups collaborating with the Sri Lankan state forces against the Liberation Tigers.

Wounded paramilitary Karuna Group cadres at Polannaruwa Base hospital in March 2005. A key paramilitary operative Mangalam [right] and two other cadres [left], wounded in a predawn attack in Theevuchenai, an interior hamlet near the Batticaloa-Polannaruwa district border, were later transferred to Colombo Hospital. Mangalam runs the paramilitary camp at Theevuchenai.

During the war, Sri Lanka Military deployed Tamil paramilitary cadres in covert operations, both defensive operations against the Tiger infiltrations in SLA controlled territories in the NorthEast and South, and offensive operations using Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP), also known as Deep Penetration operations.

Two classic model operatives were EPRLF Razeek and PLOTE Mohan.

The Tigers successfully employed pre-emptive counter strategies to cope with the threat of covert operations and to contain paramilitary groups as evidenced from the fate that befell the two paramilitary operatives from Batticaloa.

On 29 of May 1999, P. Ganeshmoorthy, known as Razeek was killed by an assassin riding a bicycle with explosives in an alleged suicide mission. Razeek's death was one of the first major blows to Sri Lankan Army's counter-insurgency operations in Batticaloa.

Razeek, who was recruited by the Indian Army, had led a ruthless death squad in Batticaloa during IPKF forces operations in Sri Lanka.

The Razeek group was the military wing of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF).

Later, Razeek's paramilitary group was incorporated into the official structure of the Sri Lanka Army as the 9th Auxiliary Force.

Razeek's group, once had an estimated number of 250 cadres when Razeek was its leader. His cadres were trained at SLA's Infantry Training School in Minneriya, Polannaruwa, west of Batticaloa.

He was slain when Annamalai Varatharajaperumal, former chief minister of the defunct north east provincial council, who returned to the island after a ten-year exile in India, was planning to re-establish himself as the EPRLF political leader, with the assistance of Razeek.

It was under Varatharajaperumal, the Indian Military trained and developed a paramilitary force named Tamil National Army (TNA). According to ex-militant EPRLF sources, there were nearly four thousand cadres in the North and five thousand cadres in the East, all conscripted, and many underage. Most of the youths were freed by the Tigers when they entered the cities as the Indians withdrew from the island. More than 400 were ex-militant hardcore cadres, and most of them escaped to India. Some returned later to engage in paramilitary activities (ENDLF collaborating with Karuna loyalist paramilitary cadres is a recent example).

The Razeek group which enjoys auxiliary force status in SLA has steadily losing its counter insurgency role since the slaying of Razeek.

Sri Lankan Defence analysts in late 1999 opined that the killings of Manikadasan, a PLOTE operative, and Razeek severely undermined the morale amongst the paramilitary cadres.

The surviving co-founder of the Razeek Group, Sivaguru Navaratnam, known by his nom de guerre Gandhi, appointed the leader of the Razeek group by the SLA Commander in Batticaloa after Razeek's killing, was killed in a grenade attack by unidentified attackers on 14 September 2005 when the covert-war intensified again. He was slain within the high security zone in Batticaloa town where Razeek group maintained a well fortified military camp attached to Sri Lanka Army base at Lake Road.

On 31st of July 2004, PLOTE Mohan, a key Military Intelligence Corps (MIC) operative, and described by Sri Lanka defense the most successful paramilitary operative in the Sri Lankan conflict ever, was gunned down in the heart of Colombo when he was riding in a autorikshaw.

Kandiah Yogarajah (36), known by nom de guerre PLOTE Mohan, was a key Military Intelligence Corps (MIC) operative, who was shot dead in the heart of Colombo on 31st of July 2004.

Kandiah Yogarajah, 36, known by nom de guerre Mohan, was a member of PLOTE, an ex-militant organisation now collaborating with the Sri Lankan Army against the Tigers. Yogarajah was from Vavunathivu in Batticaloa (PLOTE later distanced itself from Mohan.)

He was recruited as a paramilitary agent by the Indian Army Intelligence when the Indian military was fighting the Tigers in the NorthEast in the late 80's.

Later, he became an indispensable part of Sri Lanka's intelligence and counter insurgency operations against the LTTE.

In 1993, a Special Presidential Commission headed by a retired supreme court judge which inquired into 1990-1992 massacres, rapes and murders by Sri Lanka Army and its collaborators, named Mohan and his Military Intelligence handler called Richard Dias alias Munaz as persons who were the perpetrators of the mass murder of more than 350 innocent civilians, including children and women, from the refugee camp in the Eastern University and the village of Saththurukkondaan near Batticaloa.

But the Sri Lankan government, ignored the commission report and continued to nurture Mohan as an invaluable military intelligence asset.

Tamil sources claim PLOTE Mohan was responsible for more than 600 killings and many disappearances.

Mohan successfully managed to escape Karuna, while the latter was in command of the LTTE in the East.

The top paramilitary operative, who became a multi millionaire through his paramilitary assignments, was forced to shift to Colombo to escape from the Tigers.

In Colombo, Mohan worked as a counter intelligence operative against the Tigers and played a key role in the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP).

The LRRP was attributed to a deep penetration attack that claimed the life of an LTTE top official and the commander of Tigers air-wing, Col. Shankar. The LRRP, according to Sinhala press, has also claimed to have killed a high ranking Sea Tiger official and a senior Intelligence official of the Tigers in the East in separate ambushes.

The Sinhala newspaper Lakbima, in an appraisal article on PLOTE Mohan on 08 August 2004, states that Mohan was assigned the duties of a Major rank Military Intelligence Corps officer, Major Karunaratne, who was sent on leave.

Mohan treated as a VIP figure was respected higher than any Major rank official, worked closely with Major T.N.Muthaliff, the Military Intelligence Corps (MIC) official who was assassinated in May 2005.

However, when Mohan was slain, Sri Lankan defence sources did not acknowledge the significance of their slain VIP and did not honour him duly, charges another article that appeared on Lakbima.

This caused panic and enraged the other collaborators and paramilitary operatives, according to a Sinhala Daily Divaina report that appeared on 08 August 2004.

The article also states that there were attempts by the MIC, upon Karuna's defection, to enlist the former enemies to work together as paramilitary duo.

The LTTE which employed a preemptive strategy to neutralize paramilitary threat, by containing the paramilitary operatives domain to function, sustain and develop, has also been successful during peace time, in running a Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt (FUD) campaign against the paramilitary operatives, and successfully containing them, say military analysts.

Deployment of paramilitary groups has been a widely adopted tactic in counter-insurgency offensive doctrine applied in various conflicts throughout the world.

The CIA's paramilitary projects that were run by its Special Operations Group (SOG) in Central America had "checkered results", writes Douglas Waller in a TIME magazine article in January 2003. "Because of past scandals the agency had largely dropped its paramilitary operations," he notes.

"The governments that the CIA destabilized in Iran, Guatemala and Chile were replaced by repressive regimes that ended up doing more damage in the long run to U.S. foreign policy," the writer further notes adding that the war on terrorism has brought the SOG back into the business.

Another TIME article on October 20, 2003, gives a personal account of an Iraqi underground operative, al-Jaburi, who had earlier served in Iraqi regime's most feared Special Security Organisation (SSO) before defecting to Jordan based Iraqi National Accord (INA) in 1999. The INA had close ties with the CIA.

Al-Jaburi is considered as a hero of the CIA on the battle for the Saddam International Airport, one of the keys to taking Baghdad. Upon successful completion of his mission, al-Jaburi was arrested by Saddam's secret police and tortured till his jailers fled the prison in Ramadi from the advancing Americans. Describing the prison as a slaughterhouse, al-Jaburi tells TIME that he was highly exposed and the U.S. was not doing enough to protect him. Two of his relatives were shot dead while driving his car. "The Americans are good-hearted. When they love you, they really love you, but when you finish your job, they forget you," he tells. Al-Jaburi who has appeared on a hitlist of the Fedayeen Saddam, complains that the U.S. has not given him a license to carry a gun to protect himself.

A classic example of paramilitary group in Latin America is the Colombian AUC (Auto Defensas Unidas de Colombia), a right-wing paramilitary group.

Numbering around 10,000 cadres, it is the largest paramilitary group to ever exist in the western hemisphere. The AUC, a state-loyalist paramilitary group, was formed to liquidate sympathizers of the left-wing guerrillas who control about 40 percent of the territories in Columbia and is responsible for the majority of civilian massacres and human rights abuses. The AUC earned the nickname "The Head Cutters" because its victims are usually tortured, mutilated, and then decapitated.

Mark Bowden, in his book "Killing Pablo" alleges that the U.S. Special Forces had ties with the paramilitary death squad.

Carlos Castaño Gil, the supreme leader of the AUC, who formed the paramilitary group in 1997, in an unsuccessful attempt to turn clean, lost his grip of the organisation in 2004.

Carlos Castaño, leader of Colombia's feared AUC paramilitary group, in a photo dated Feb. 20, 2001 (Photo: AFP)

U.S had sought extradition of Castaño in 2002.

Castaño reportedly suffered an attempt on his life on April 16 2004 by paramilitary cadres.

Although the matter of his death is not yet clear, the fate of Castaño, serves as a verdict for paramilitary operatives, that they fall prey to their own plans in the end.

In "My Confession," a self biography styled Interview in 2001, he said: "I didn't start this war. We're an effect, not the cause," and adds that only a country in the chaos of war could produce a man like him.

Follow-ups:

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The victims were shot at close range and lay face down in a group.

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Rajasingham was involved in stoking the flames of the fratricidal war between Karuna and Pillayan

Closed door hour long meeting President Rajapakse had with Rajasingham in the company of EPDP Leader,

Minister Douglas Devananda at the Presidential Suite No. 1727 Intercontinental Hotel in Geneva

Government plotted on how to get rid of a colossal international embarrassment that was Karuna

Karuna was to be discarded as a spent force who had outstayed his usefulness as he had nothing further to add on either the LTTE atrocities or details of the northern terrain

Rajasingham suggested that even Pillayan be eventually discarded while the government caused a third rift in the LTTE in the Wanni in order to tap a more knowledgeable source.

Forged diplomatic passport was issued by the Immigration Department on the orders of top authorities in the name of Kokila Gunawardena on August 30, 2007

Karuna was recommended for the visa as an official representing the Wildlife Department coming under the Environment Ministry of JHU's Champika Ranawaka

Karuna landed at Heathrow Airport on September 18 and was accompanied to the aircraft at the Bandaranaike International Airport to board the London flight by Airport and Aviation Deputy Chief Shalitha Wijesundera

Evidence has surfaced of an elaborate plan by the government to dump Karuna who was becoming an embarrassment to the Rajapakse regime, given the heightened international focus on gross human rights violations and to replace him with Pillayan.

Karuna who waged an internecine and bloody war in the east was smuggled out of the country by the government on a forged diplomatic passport and arrived in the UK on September 18. He was later arrested in London on November 3 for travelling on a forged passport on a tip off largely thought to be by the Pillayan faction within his own breakaway group.

Documentary evidence in our possession now reveals that the government was in the know at the highest levels on the dirty deeds of Karuna with some possibly having aided and abetted Karuna in a sordid drama of kidnapping, white vans, murder, abductions and extortion and the lynch pin in this game was one K.T.Rajasingham based in Sweden who was hatching the scheme for a variety of reasons including to promote his own business.

Our documentation suggests that as reported in our sister paper The Morning Leader on Wednesday not only did Karuna reach the UK to join his wife and three children with the help of the Rajapakse government but also that he was allegedly able to spirit away a colossal sum of Rupees 500 million said to be moneys collected through abductions and other funds allegedly given by the government for the support of his cadres.....

[Diplomatic scandal over Karuna, ties with Britain dip - Sunday Times](#)

http://www.uktamilnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1521&Itemid=1

[Breakaway Tamil faction hit by in-fighting -](#)

http://www.uktamilnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1510&Itemid=1

[Abductions and Forced Recruitment by the Karuna Group - www.UKTamilnews.com](#)

http://www.uktamilnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1503&Itemid=1

Pillayan takes over

Not 48 hours later armed Pillayan forces took over all the TMVP offices in Batticaloa while political head V. Thileepan still loyal to Karuna became the latest victim of in-fighting. He was reported to have swallowed a cyanide capsule and admitted to hospital.

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government but also that he was allegedly able to spirit away a colossal sum of Rupees 500 million said to be moneys collected through abductions and other funds allegedly given by the government for the support of his cadres.

Hatching the plot

In fact these details are part of an official report sent by Rajasingham to President Rajapakse's advisor Sunimal Fernando as recently as October 24 for follow up action. That is just 10 days before Karuna was arrested. And it is based on a meeting Rajasingham had with President Rajapakse no less in Geneva in June 2007.

Taped telephone conversations and other evidence also suggest that Rajasingham was involved in stoking the flames of the fratricidal war between Karuna and Pillayan and making efforts to project Pillayan as the political face of the Karuna Group and helping the second in command in a mad race to register his faction as a political party before Karuna did. (See box for conversation)

K.T. Rajasingham if readers care to know is the editor of the Asian Tribune, an on-line daily newspaper launched in Bangkok in 2001 now based in Sweden plugging the government line evidently for its own monetary benefit. He is a man originally from Point Pedro.

While pugnacious nationalists often accuse peaceniks of using the war to raise funds for their NGOs, written evidence in our possession show how the war scoundrels continue to spread the message of hatred and misguided patriotism in order to promote their own businesses, collect funds and expand their personal business empires.

Closed door meeting

Most of the damning evidence surfaced following a closed door hour long meeting President Rajapakse had with Rajasingham in the company of EPDP Leader, Minister Douglas Devananda at the Presidential Suite No. 1727 Intercontinental Hotel in Geneva from approximately 4-5 pm on June 15, 2007 where the Karuna issue was discussed at length.

Rajapakse arrived in Geneva at 5.10pm on June 14, for the International Labour Organisation Conference. Dayan Jayatilleke at the time one recalls had newly been appointed the UN Permanent Representative in Geneva for Sri Lanka. It was not 24 hours after his arrival that the President was to meet Asian Tribune Editor Rajasingham in his Presidential rooms at the Intercontinental.

And it is here the government plotted on how to get rid of a colossal international embarrassment that was Karuna. The entire discussion was reduced to paper and sent as a confidential report to President's Advisor Sunimal Fernando for follow up action via email. The Sunday Leader is in possession of that communication and much more.

Many aspects were discussed at the meeting from education to advertising which this newspaper will reveal in the weeks to come. But today we focus on the east.

The discussion according to Rajasingham's communication which basically were the minutes of the discussion with Rajapakse, starts with the President thanking the Asian Tribune for the great service rendered to the country. Rajapakse commends the Editor for his services to the country and assures his wholehearted support and assistance to the Asian Tribune.

Indian relations

Rajasingham also makes various suggestions on Sri Lanka's relationship with India. President Rajapakse after discussion agrees a special delegation would be sent to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Pranab Mukherjee, Sonia Gandhi and M.K.Narayanan to find out what India actually expected Sri Lanka to do regarding the ethnic issue.

In fact Rajasingham said he too was prepared to go with a delegation that included H. L.D.Mahindpala for the Sinhala perspective and President Rajapakse directed Devananda to make the necessary arrangements.

Rajasingham was to propose the launch of a satellite TV to disseminate news feeds from Rupavahini and ITN and President Rajapakse immediately gave him the necessary permission to do so.

The Editor also said such an ambitious project would cost some Euro 22,000 per month per continent to which President Rajapakse said he would extend his full assistance and support. Rajasingham said he would also launch a 24 hour EuroAsian radio for government propaganda and grumbled he did not receive any advertising from the government institutions. Rajapakse was to then assure all assistance and support for the radio channel and promised to look into the latter complaint.

Getting rid of Karuna

Rajasingham was to now detail an elaborate scheme to oust Karuna and appoint Pillayan in his place. Karuna was to be discarded as a spent force who had outstayed his usefulness as he had nothing further to add on either the LTTE atrocities or details of the northern terrain. Further he was described as a liability to the government.

In this regard Rajasingham also said that though Pillayan being a child recruit himself was better aware of the Wannu and Jaffna terrain than Karuna, neither of them would be of use to the army top brass in its military push in the north. Therefore Rajasingham suggested that even Pillayan be eventually discarded while the government caused a third rift in the LTTE in the Wannu in order to tap a more knowledgeable source.

President Rajapakse agreed to discuss this matter with defence officials and do the needful according to the document.

It is not three months after this discussion that Karuna was spirited out of the country by government officials on a diplomatic passport bearing number D1944260.

Forged passport

The forged diplomatic passport was issued by the Immigration Department on the orders of top authorities in the name of Kokila Gunawardena on August 30, 2007.

Karuna was issued a valid British visa stamped on the forged travel document in the name of Kokila Gunawardena by the British High Commission in Colombo on September 5 on a recommendation by Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry sent a Third Party Note to the British High Commission in Colombo together with a number of passports recommending visas for a group of persons to attend a climate change conference in Britain and included in the set of passports was a diplomatic passport in the name of Kokila Gunawardena.

Gunawardena was recommended for the visa as an official representing the Wildlife Department coming under the Environment Ministry of JHU's Champika Ranawaka.

What is even more damning is that his visa application to the British High Commission under the false name Kokila Gunawardena states 'Director General, Wild Life Conservation Department.'

A week later on September 22, Ranawaka would travel with President Rajapakse to New York to attend a climate change conference in New York. Funnily enough somewhere in between a group of officials from the Wildlife Department of which one was the renegade Karuna was purportedly visiting a climate change conference in Great Britain.

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In fact Karuna landed at Heathrow Airport on September 18 and was accompanied to the aircraft at the Bandaranaike International Airport to board the London flight by Airport and Aviation Deputy Chief Shalitha Wijesundera.

Karuna was arrested in a house in the affluent Kensington area where his wife and three children are residing. His wife and children have already lodged their papers for asylum and are in England legally.

Karuna immediately upon arrest was to claim political asylum but it is unclear how the British Home Office would view the case given his track record as a human rights offender.

Aiding and abetting

The Rajapakse government and or several state departments now stand accused of aiding and abetting Karuna Amman to obtain a passport not an ordinary one but a diplomatic document. The Deputy Aviation Chief accompanied Karuna to the aircraft. A fact he has yet not denied.

Remember Thilanga Sumathipala. The man was incarcerated without bail for having aided and abetted one Dammika Perera to travel on a forged passport by giving him funds from the Cricket Board.

Now the highest in this land stand accused of the same crime. If Dammika Perera was a criminal Karuna Amman is an international terrorist. He has been accused of war crimes by the apex world body - the United Nations. How long will the arm of the law be when the perpetrators are whole governments?

Be that as it may below we give a synopsis of what transpired at the meeting in June as minuted by Rajasingham and sent to Presidential Advisor Sunimal Fernando.

The discussion focused on the split between Vinyamoorthy Muralitharan alias Col. Karuna Amman and Pillayan.

K.T.Rajasingham was to tell the President that it was he who had contacted UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy and assured her on behalf of Karuna, during a conference call that the group would not recruit under age children any further.

Note this. Rajasingham by stating that an undertaking was given not to recruit children any further admits that children were being recruited thus far. Recall that Alan Rock, Special Rapporteur for Coomaraswamy gave the UN representative a damning report which not only stated Karuna recruited children but alleged that some sections of the government forces aided Karuna in such recruitment.

In fact an official communication by the UN office announced that Karuna had contacted Coomaraswamy on December 4, 2006 regarding the listing of his group in Annex 2 of the latest report of the Secretary General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict as a group that recruit and use children.

Child soldiers

Coomaraswamy in an official statement from her office welcomed Karuna's move stating "This is a major step forward that will help to prevent children from being used by armed groups in Sri Lanka. I hope that this will lead to effective action on the ground."

Be that as it may Rajasingham tells President Rajapakse in this June discussion that Karuna had assured to him as well as Coomaraswamy that he will not recruit under age children and will allow his bases to be inspected by the UNICEF representatives to ascertain that there are no underage child recruits with him.

Rajasingham also informed Rajapakse that he had taken part in a conference call with Advocacy Director, Children's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch together with Karuna where Karuna had

given an assurance again that he will not recruit underage children and in turn Rajasingham too gave an assurance on behalf of Karuna.

Note: The very fact that Rajasingham finds he can speak on behalf of Karuna vis-a-vis the international community on the one hand and on behalf of the government on the other is damning in itself.

Rajasingham then told Rajapakse that on May 4 this year after Karuna attacked his own cadres and ordered Pillayan's supporters to be killed he had also got to know that Thileepan and Jeventhiran were ordered by Karuna to have their own teams. Among them said Rajasingham, they have 190 underage recruits. Even to Inniyabarathy Karuna had instructed to recruit underage children.

By this Rajasingham was effectively telling the President that Karuna had underage children among his cadre which even if Rajapakse did not know upto that point he was from that point on aware of.

Ironically it is the very man Rajasingham, who had given such assurances to the likes of Radhika Coomaraswamy on behalf of Karuna in December 2006, who now in June 2007 admits that Karuna in fact has underage recruits.

Rajasingham explains to Rajapakse that the Asia Tribune supported Karuna because he was to enter mainstream politics and had promised not to get involved in abductions, collecting ransoms, killings and recruitment of children as cannon fodder.

A stick to hit Pirapaharan

Rajasingham explained that Karuna with his parochial political approach looked down on those from Jaffna using pejorative terms like Yarlapani but Rajasingham supported him despite hailing from Jaffna as he wanted to use him as a 'stick to hit at Pirapaharan and LTTE.'

Rajasingham lamented that while he supported Karuna thinking that though he started his career as a terrorist he could be rehabilitated, he was mistaken. He tells the President that while Karuna speaks vociferously about wanting to enter mainstream politics he follows his erstwhile leader Pirapaharan and is bent on ethnic cleansing and driving the Jaffna Tamils who have lived for three-four generations in the east.

Murder most foul

Rajasingham now says; "I was told that he is the one responsible for the abduction and killing (yes he has killed him according to unconfirmed reports) of Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ravindranath of the Eastern University."

Karuna is then described to the President as a liability to the Rajapakse government and a spent force who should be got rid of.

Vital to note is that Rajasingham says to the President, "We have already made use of his narration about the LTTE's atrocities, plans and targets. It is now nearly three years has lapsed (sic) since he came out of the LTTE and he has no more real stories to narrate and he will be of no use to anyone."

Limited knowledge

Rajasingham also says that though Karuna was a regional commander of the LTTE for the Batticaloa-Ampara districts his knowledge of the Wannu and Jaffna terrain is limited.

Of Pillayan, Rajasingham says he was also a child recruit at the tender age of 14 years and today is only 30 years of age (infact 29) as an ordinary cadre he has roamed in Jaffna and Wannu and knows the terrain better than Karuna.

But listen to this well. For it reflects not only the warped thinking of the government but its callous attitude towards those it uses to further its own ends. For now Rajasingham tells President Rajapakse that in fact neither Pillayan nor Karuna will be of any use to the security forces. And if the top brass think they can use them in the battle against the LTTE in the north, it is wrong.

In fact it is now suggested that it is better to cause another split within the LTTE from the Jaffna District itself to work with the security forces in the north.

Karuna useless

Rajasingham suggests strongly that the government gets rid of Karuna who is a liability and work with Pillayan and his men who are more popular in the east than Karuna. As far back as in June he tells the President that Pillayan is planning the arrest of Karuna, but only hesitate as they are unsure of the reaction of the Defence Ministry.

Rajasingham also states that if there is going to be an election in the east and if Karuna's faction is pitted against the LTTE's proxy party, TNA or any independent groups led by leading personalities, the Karuna Group would not even be in a position to retain their deposits. But he says they can of course "use their lethal weapons and through threat and intimidation rig the election and stuff the ballot boxes."

It is in that context, Rajasingham tells the President Karuna should be got rid of if the Defence Ministry agrees.

To this President Rajapakse agrees and according to the minutes promises to take the matter up with his defence people and 'do the needful.'

Rajasingham then informs Rajapakse that Karuna has threatened him, Rajasingham, through his sidekick Inniyabarathy and has sworn that he will give a contract to kill him and his family.

Devananda stabbed in the back

Ironically however, in his October 24 report to Sunimal Fernando of the June meeting with the President, where Devananda was also present, Rajasingham questions in bold print and in parenthesis the usefulness of Minister Douglas Devananda himself.

At one point he states in the written minutes having in June suggested Devananda's name in his presence as a minister in charge of overseas Sri Lankans as follows:

"(At Present Mr. Rajasingham is of the view that Hon. Douglas Devananda has never come forward to promote the government other than promoting his EPDP politics. Therefore Mr. Rajasingham suggests that best person to take up the portfolio as minister in charge of overseas Sri Lankans is no other than Mr. Basil Rajapakse.)"

Thus Rajasingham demonstrates he is no spring chicken in the dirty game of politics.

Devious

In fact with regard to Indo Lanka relations when Rajasingham in June suggested Sri Lanka must try its best to find out what India expects from her, Rajapakse had responded by stating that he had told Douglas Devananda to visit New Delhi on his way back to Colombo from Geneva and discuss certain aspects that had been raised.

Rajasingham then suggested he was prepared to go along with a Sinhalese and a Muslim person and suggested to include H. L.D.Mahindpala in the delegation who will be able to convey the Sinhalese aspirations to the Indian leaders.

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Rajapakse agreed with the suggestions according to the report and conveyed to Devananda to make the necessary arrangements while it was also agreed to keep this decision highly confidential.

Deviously however Rajasingham in his report of October 24 to Fernando says again in Parentheses, "(It was unfortunate that Hon. Douglas Devananda has failed to show interest in this project. Therefore I am of the opinion that he should not be entrusted with the arrangement of this meeting with the Indian leaders.)"

But back to the meeting in June. The Asian Tribune Editor and Rajapakse now discuss diplomatic representation.

Bad diplomats

Rajasingham condemns the Sri Lanka High Commission in the United Kingdom as uncooperative with the Asian Tribune. He states that the lady High Commissioner Kshenuka Seneviratne and First Secretary Maxwell Keegel are uncooperative and avoid responding to telephone calls.

He suggests that the entire London High Commission be completely revamped right from the lady High Commissioner downwards.

The Asian Tribune Editor who seems to have been elevated to Presidential Advisor at Large next turns his vitriolic eye on Sri Lanka's Embassy in France as well, castigating the lady ambassador as a woman very hesitant to divulge information. She is to leave at the end of 2007, Rajasingham confirms at the meeting.

Funnily enough recall that Ambassador Wagiswara was recalled by Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama recently in a surprise move and another person appointed in her place. The jigsaw pieces held up against the master plan drawn up in Geneva in June seems to now slowly fall in to place.

Be that as it may Rajasingham continued to grumble wanting Rajapakse to secure its sources for stories. 'If the Diplomatic mission fails to come forward to work and cooperate with us then how it is possible for us to fight the anti-government elements in Europe?' he asks Rajapakse.

But France and England were not the only offenders. Rajasingham points out that Sri Lanka's Embassy in Oslo, Norway was not coming forward to talk with other Tamil groups in Norway. He also said that Ahmed A. Jawad who was the ambassador earlier had been accused of being very close to the LTTE in Oslo and with Erik Solheim and others.

Missions a failure

Even the new ambassador, Rajasingham complains is the same.

The discussion also focused on Sri Lanka's embassies in the West which Rajasingham said were concerned only with country to country diplomatic affairs. He said missions were sending weekly reports by interacting with a handful of the diaspora but there was no machinery available to interact politically and otherwise with these diasporas and churn them into diaspora organisations in favour of the government to promote the interests and welfare of Sri Lanka.

New diplomatic position

Suggesting a new position in the overseas mission Rajasingham said there should be officials from the Ministry with a crash course in foreign diplomacy who may be appointed as counselors with independent charge in all our missions abroad. These officials he said could function according to instructions of the Ministry of Overseas Sri Lankans.

Rajapakse had at the June meeting agreed with Rajasingham that such a portfolio was good to embrace the Tamils, Muslims and the Sinhalese in the West and in Australasian countries.

Funding for Asian Tribune

The June meeting also discussed funding and business expansion for...yes, you've guessed it, the Asian Tribune. Here's how it went.

Rajasingham proposed that he was willing to make use of the news feeds and other Sri Lanka material put out by Rupavahini and ITN in a new satellite TV transmission simultaneously so that viewers in Asia, Europe, Africa and America would be able to see the official position of the government.

Of course he explained this would cost a tremendous amount of money to make use of the Hot Bird satellite platform. Nearly 22,000 Euros per month per continent he told Rajapakse. He explained the footprints of this satellite was only seen clearly within a particular continent.

President Rajapakse agreed saying it was prudent to begin the transmission of the TV in the beginning to one continent and gradually expanding the transmission to other continents. Rajapakse promised Rajasingham he would extend all the assistance and support.

According to minutes of the meeting sent to Presidential Advisor Sunimal Fernando President Rajapakse had granted the necessary permission to Rajasingham to transmit the programmes from Rupavahini and ITN.

Rajapakse had also said that necessary instructions would be given to the officials of the two TV stations to assist Rajasingham in his new media programme.

No govt. advertising

Of course Rajasingham was quick to slip in that he had not obtained any sponsorship from any government organisations such as SriLankan Airlines, Tourist Board, Tea Board, Bank of Ceylon, People's Banks etc., etc. He pointed out that so far none of those government corporations had come forward to advertise in the Asian Tribune.

President Rajapakse helpfully promised to look into the matter forthwith.

Rajasingham also informed Rajapakse of Asia Tribune's grandiose plans to launch the EuroAsian satellite radio explaining it would be a satellite radio which would be a new media outlet of the World Institute of Asian Studies (WIAS) that publishes the Asian Tribune.

EuroAsian Radio will be accessible through satellite receivers and internet initially. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, Rajasingham said he was planning to have it broadcast through FM radio throughout the island and requested Rajapakse to grant FM radio licences to cover the entire island for the EuroAsian Radio and also transmitting tower facilities.

Behind the breakup

Be that as it may, in other communication in our possession Rajasingham claims he was instrumental in getting rid of Karuna on behalf of the government and was also behind his breakaway from the LTTE. Rajasingham claims he promoted Karuna and encouraged him to spike the LTTE but fell out with him when he got involved in a fratricidal war in May this year with his second in command Pillayan.

It is Rajasingham who had been doing the ground work for the registering of the new party and for making Pillayan the new leader of the Karuna Group. According to taped telephone conversations he was in touch with Pillayan and other eastern cadres in order to register a new political party and find a new logo for the party.

Rajasingham in fact was to speak to Pillayan before Karuna registered his political party the Thamil Makkal Viduthalai Pullikal (TMVP) and push for Pillayan to quickly get in on the act.

Rajasingham advises Pillayan to quickly draft a constitution and make a members list but Pillayan is apprehensive saying the other faction may register themselves sooner with the help of Krishnan, Karuna's deputy.

Sinister soul

It is then that Rajasingham's sinister soul is bared. "We must do something there to Krishnan before he comes," he says. And just for a minute the human face of Pillayan takes over. 'Paavam' he says in a moment's weakness. 'Sin.. I feel sorry.'

But Rajasingham, Editor of Asian Tribune is adamant. 'No .No,' he says. 'He is a dangerous man. If he comes he should be locked up.'

Be that as it may the Asian Tribune Editor, according to communications under his hand reveal, not only met President Rajapakse in June but has also been in close touch with Minister Jeyaraj Fernandopulle in order to get the Pillayan faction registered as a new political party.

As recently as November 1, 2007 Rajasingham in written communication states that Pillayan will not trust anyone in his outfit but that he is in the process of getting the names and addresses of 2000 people and drafting a constitution in Tamil as he has to outsmart Karuna by registering the political party very secretly and consolidate his hold.

For this purpose Raghu, a man purporting to be Pillayan's lawyer with the full backing of Rajasingham devises a scheme to cook up party minutes and even get approval of the political party from the elections commissioner by fax.

In touch with the top

Rajasingham has also been in touch with government lackeys, defence officials and top Foreign Ministry officials including persons close to President Rajapakse in order to implement the tangled plan hatched in the cool climes of Switzerland in June.

It is to top all this that the publishers of Asian Tribune WIAS has launched into another project that would stoke the ego of President Rajapakse on the one hand and give WIAS a firm platform in the south on the other. That is to write the biography of President Mahinda Rajapakse called 'Power of Southern Grassroots - Journey of Mahinda Rajapakse.'

The ego centric Mahinda Percival Rajapakse who gets his photograph plastered not only on every billboard but also on monuments to the 2008 Olympic Games in China is not likely to reject such an exciting prospect for the sake of posterity.

But for Rajasingham it was not all about Mother Lanka. He was determined to link this entire sordid mess together with funding for his business. To this end he sent a large funding proposal prepared by him and dated May 9, 2007 on November 1, 2007 to the government.

But of course as seen the matter of funding and advertising had already been discussed by Rajasingham at the highest levels in Geneva.

Funding

As part of its funding efforts with the government Rajasingham and the Asia Tribune liberally used in its document the names of several persons such as H.L.D. Mahindapala, head of its Australian Bureau, Daya Gamage, US Bureau head, and Sugeeswara Senadheera, head of the Sri Lankan Bureau,

As contributing columnists he cites Dayan Jayatilleke who is also Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative for the UN in Geneva and Tisaranee Gunasekera and Leel Pathirana, an ex jailed JVPer.

Rajasingham estimates according to his proposal that his budget for 2007 would be a conservative USD 518,000. Remember this is an on-line edition and therefore there are no recurrent costs.

It is as a culmination of this elaborate plot as enumerated above hatched in the Presidential Suite of the Intercontinental Hotel in Geneva that on September 17, Karuna was smuggled out of the country on a diplomatic passport in the name of Kokila Gunawardena.

Rajasinghan phones Pillayan

An English translation of a taped conversation in Tamil between Editor, Asian Tribune, K.T.Rajasingham and Pillayan that took place a few days before Karuna's arrest in London. Pillayan also talks of a Padmini. Krishnan who is spoken of is Karuna Amman's deputy who it is said will be coming down from London to Colombo shortly.

Rajasingham: Hello

Pillayan: Hello

R: Now the time is 10:15, today is Friday.he might go out (third person)

P: Yes

R: You'll have to draft a constitution and members list

P: OK

R: Meanwhile I will try to contact him before that

P: How long will it take you because I think they will draft one before us. How can we block that?

R: Who will give them support to register

P: I think Krishnan

R: Before Krishnan comes we can do it. But we must do something there to Krishnan before he comes

P: Sin.I feel sorry

R: No No he is a dangerous man. If he comes he should be locked up..Paper called Theepoli says that Padmini has run away, have you heard about it.

P: Yes, Yes I heard

Sunimal has a memory lapse

The Sunday Leader contacted Presidential Advisor Sunimal Fernando who said he could not recollect an email sent to him by Rajasingham but would check his mail box on Monday. When it was pointed out the email contained a very important report on a meeting Rajasingham had with President Rajapakse he said his subject as an advisor was very limited and confined mainly to the teaching of English and he was unable to understand how a report of this nature would be forwarded to him. Fernando did not deny receiving the email nor knowing Rajasingham. Sources close to the Asia

Tribune Editor however told The Sunday Leader K.T. Rajasingham claimed he was a close friend of Sunimal Fernando.

KT declines to comment

The Sunday Leader wrote to Asia Tribune Editor K.T.Rajasingham on the matter and asked to speak to him but he replied as follows; "Vanakam.

Regret, unable to speak on the subject you have mentioned in your e-mail. Thanks and regards.
K.T.Rajasingham www.asiantribune.com"

Saga of ASIAN TRIBUNE – editor K.T. RAJESINGHAM based in SWEDEN

AID FREEZE!

Canada, Netherlands and Germany stop all development aid to Sri Lanka

"The Nations", 11 November 2007 - Three donor countries – Canada, Netherlands and Germany – have decided to freeze all development aid to Sri Lanka with effect from January next year, highly placed sources said.

These countries have informed some of the local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that they would not be diverting their monetary allocation to Sri Lanka as there was a severe lack of development projects aimed at building peace and harmony in Sri Lanka at present.

Local NGO officials believe the just presented war budget was one of the main reasons for the donors to take this drastic decision.

However, they said the donors had also decided to freeze aid because the per capita income in Sri Lanka has shown a slight upward trend.

“Owing to these two reasons, the donors will not send us any more money for development work,” they said.

They further said, however, there would be no change in the allocation already made by these donors for the calendar year of 2008.

Local NGOs said that more donors were likely to pull out if the present war situation continued with no sign of peace in the future.

“While emphasising on war, the government also must adopt a mechanism to build peace in the country. This is the kind of confidence-building measure that would attract foreign countries,” they said. <http://www.nation.lk/2007/11/11/news1.htm>

Saga of ASIAN TRIBUNE editor K.T. RAJESINGHAM - based in SWEDEN

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Plot to get rid of Karuna was hatched
at a presidential suite in Geneva

by Sonali Samarasinghe

Courtesy: The Sunday Leader - November 11, 2007

"The Sunday Leader" - November 11, 2007 - Evidence has surfaced of an elaborate plan by the government to dump Karuna who was becoming an embarrassment to the Rajapakse regime, given the heightened international focus on gross human rights violations and to replace him with Pillayan.

Karuna who waged an internecine and bloody war in the east was smuggled out of the country by the government on a forged diplomatic passport and arrived in the UK on September 18.

He was later arrested in London on November 3 for travelling on a forged passport on a tip off largely thought to be by the Pillayan faction within his own breakaway group.

Pillayan takes over

Not 48 hours later armed Pillayan forces took over all the TMVP offices in Batticaloa while political head V. Thileepan still loyal to Karuna became the latest victim of in-fighting. He was reported to have swallowed a cyanide capsule and admitted to hospital.

Documentary evidence in our possession now reveals that the government was in the know at the highest levels on the dirty deeds of Karuna with some possibly having aided and abetted Karuna in a sordid drama of kidnapping, white vans, murder, abductions and extortion and the lynch pin in this game was one K.T.Rajasingham based in Sweden who was hatching the scheme for a variety of reasons including to promote his own business.

Our documentation suggests that as reported in our sister paper The Morning Leader on Wednesday not only did Karuna reach the UK to join his wife and three children with the help of the Rajapakse government but also that he was allegedly able to spirit away a colossal sum of Rupees 500 million said to be moneys collected through abductions and other funds allegedly given by the government for the support of his cadres.

Hatching the plot

In fact these details are part of an official report sent by Rajasingham to President Rajapakse's advisor Sunimal Fernando as recently as October 24 for follow up action. That is just 10 days before Karuna was arrested. And it is based on a meeting Rajasingham had with President Rajapakse no less in Geneva in June 2007.

Taped telephone conversations and other evidence also suggest that Rajasingham was involved in stoking the flames of the fratricidal war between Karuna and Pillayan and making efforts to project Pillayan as the political face of the Karuna Group and helping the second in command in a mad race to register his faction as a political party before Karuna did. (See box for conversation)

K.T. Rajasingham if readers care to know is the editor of the Asian Tribune, an on-line daily newspaper launched in Bangkok in 2001 now based in Sweden plugging the government line evidently for its own monetary benefit. He is a man originally from Point Pedro.

While pugnacious nationalists often accuse peaceniks of using the war to raise funds for their NGOs, written evidence in our possession show how the war scoundrels continue to spread the message of hatred and misguided patriotism in order to promote their own businesses, collect funds and expand their personal business empires.

Closed door meeting

Most of the damning evidence surfaced following a closed door hour long meeting President Rajapakse had with Rajasingham in the company of EPDP Leader, Minister Douglas Devananda at the Presidential Suite No. 1727 Intercontinental Hotel in Geneva from approximately 4-5 pm on June 15, 2007 where the Karuna issue was discussed at length.

Rajapakse arrived in Geneva at 5.10pm on June 14, for the International Labour Organisation Conference. Dayan Jayatilleke at the time one recalls had newly been appointed the UN Permanent Representative in Geneva for Sri Lanka. It was not 24 hours after his arrival that the President was to meet Asian Tribune Editor Rajasingham in his Presidential rooms at the Intercontinental.

And it is here the government plotted on how to get rid of a colossal international embarrassment that was Karuna. The entire discussion was reduced to paper and sent as a confidential report to President's Advisor Sunimal Fernando for follow up action via email. The Sunday Leader is in possession of that communication and much more.

Many aspects were discussed at the meeting from education to advertising which this newspaper will reveal in the weeks to come. But today we focus on the east.

The discussion according to Rajasingham's communication which basically were the minutes of the discussion with Rajapakse, starts with the President thanking the Asian Tribune for the great service rendered to the country. Rajapakse commends the Editor for his services to the country and assures his wholehearted support and assistance to the Asian Tribune.

Indian relations

Rajasingham also makes various suggestions on Sri Lanka's relationship with India. President Rajapakse after discussion agrees a special delegation would be sent to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Pranab Mukherjee, Sonia Gandhi and M.K.Narayanan to find out what India actually expected Sri Lanka to do regarding the ethnic issue.

In fact Rajasingham said he too was prepared to go with a delegation that included H. L.D.Mahindpala for the Sinhala perspective and President Rajapakse directed Devananda to make the necessary arrangements.

Rajasingham was to propose the launch of a satellite TV to disseminate news feeds from Rupavahini and ITN and President Rajapakse immediately gave him the necessary permission to do so.

The Editor also said such an ambitious project would cost some Euro 22,000 per month per continent to which President Rajapakse said he would extend his full assistance and support. Rajasingham said he would also launch a 24 hour EuroAsian radio for government propaganda and grumbled he did not receive any advertising from the government institutions. Rajapakse was to then assure all assistance and support for the radio channel and promised to look into the latter complaint.

Getting rid of Karuna

Rajasingham was to now detail an elaborate scheme to oust Karuna and appoint Pillayan in his place. Karuna was to be discarded as a spent force who had outstayed his usefulness as he had nothing further to add on either the LTTE atrocities or details of the northern terrain. Further he was described as a liability to the government.

In this regard Rajasingham also said that though Pillayan being a child recruit himself was better aware of the Wannu and Jaffna terrain than Karuna, neither of them would be of use to the army top brass in its military push in the north. Therefore Rajasingham suggested that even Pillayan be eventually discarded while the government caused a third rift in the LTTE in the Wannu in order to tap a more knowledgeable source.

President Rajapakse agreed to discuss this matter with defence officials and do the needful according to the document.

It is not three months after this discussion that Karuna was spirited out of the country by government officials on a diplomatic passport bearing number D1944260.

Forged passport

The forged diplomatic passport was issued by the Immigration Department on the orders of top authorities in the name of Kokila Gunawardena on August 30, 2007.

Karuna was issued a valid British visa stamped on the forged travel document in the name of Kokila Gunawardena by the British High Commission in Colombo on September 5 on a recommendation by Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry sent a Third Party Note to the British High Commission in Colombo together with a number of passports recommending visas for a group of persons to attend a climate change conference in Britain and included in the set of passports was a diplomatic passport in the name of Kokila Gunawardena.

Gunawardena was recommended for the visa as an official representing the Wildlife Department coming under the Environment Ministry of JHU's Champika Ranawaka.

What is even more damning is that his visa application to the British High Commission under the false name Kokila Gunawardena states 'Director General, Wild Life Conservation Department.'

A week later on September 22, Ranawaka would travel with President Rajapakse to New York to attend a climate change conference in New York. Funnily enough somewhere in between a group of officials from the Wildlife Department of which one was the renegade Karuna was purportedly visiting a climate change conference in Great Britain.

In fact Karuna landed at Heathrow Airport on September 18 and was accompanied to the aircraft at the Bandaranaike International Airport to board the London flight by Airport and Aviation Deputy Chief Shalitha Wijesundera.

Karuna was arrested in a house in the affluent Kensington area where his wife and three children are residing. His wife and children have already lodged their papers for asylum and are in England legally.

Karuna immediately upon arrest was to claim political asylum but it is unclear how the British Home Office would view the case given his track record as a human rights offender.

Aiding and abetting

The Rajapakse government and or several state departments now stand accused of aiding and abetting Karuna Amman to obtain a passport not an ordinary one but a diplomatic document. The Deputy Aviation Chief accompanied Karuna to the aircraft. A fact he has yet not denied.

Remember Thilanga Sumathipala. The man was incarcerated without bail for having aided and abetted one Dammika Perera to travel on a forged passport by giving him funds from the Cricket Board.

Now the highest in this land stand accused of the same crime. If Dammika Perera was a criminal Karuna Amman is an international terrorist. He has been accused of war crimes by the apex world body - the United Nations. How long will the arm of the law be when the perpetrators are whole governments?

Be that as it may below we give a synopsis of what transpired at the meeting in June as minuted by Rajasingham and sent to Presidential Advisor Sunimal Fernando.

The discussion focused on the split between Vinyamoorthy Muralitharan alias Col. Karuna Amman and Pillayan.

K.T.Rajasingham was to tell the President that it was he who had contacted UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy and assured her on behalf of Karuna, during a conference call that the group would not recruit under age children any further.

Note this. Rajasingham by stating that an undertaking was given not to recruit children any further admits that children were being recruited thus far. Recall that Alan Rock, Special Rapporteur for Coomaraswamy gave the UN representative a damning report which not only stated Karuna recruited children but alleged that some sections of the government forces aided Karuna in such recruitment.

In fact an official communication by the UN office announced that Karuna had contacted Coomaraswamy on December 4, 2006 regarding the listing of his group in Annex 2 of the latest report of the Secretary General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict as a group that recruit and use children.

Child soldiers

Coomaraswamy in an official statement from her office welcomed Karuna's move stating "This is a major step forward that will help to prevent children from being used by armed groups in Sri Lanka. I hope that this will lead to effective action on the ground."

Be that as it may Rajasingham tells President Rajapakse in this June discussion that Karuna had assured to him as well as Coomaraswamy that he will not recruit under age children and will allow his bases to be inspected by the UNICEF representatives to ascertain that there are no underage child recruits with him.

Rajasingham also informed Rajapakse that he had taken part in a conference call with Advocacy Director, Children's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch together with Karuna where Karuna had given an assurance again that he will not recruit underage children and in turn Rajasingham too gave an assurance on behalf of Karuna.

Note: The very fact that Rajasingham finds he can speak on behalf of Karuna vis-a-vis the international community on the one hand and on behalf of the government on the other is damning in itself.

Rajasingham then told Rajapakse that on May 4 this year after Karuna attacked his own cadres and ordered Pillayan's supporters to be killed he had also got to know that Thileepan and Jeventhiran were ordered by Karuna to have their own teams. Among them said Rajasingham, they have 190 underage recruits. Even to Inniyabarathy Karuna had instructed to recruit underage children.

By this Rajasingham was effectively telling the President that Karuna had underage children among his cadre which even if Rajapakse did not know upto that point he was from that point on aware of.

Ironically it is the very man Rajasingham, who had given such assurances to the likes of Radhika Coomaraswamy on behalf of Karuna in December 2006, who now in June 2007 admits that Karuna in fact has underage recruits.

Rajasingham explains to Rajapakse that the Asia Tribune supported Karuna because he was to enter mainstream politics and had promised not to get involved in abductions, collecting ransoms, killings and recruitment of children as cannon fodder.

A stick to hit Pirapaharan

Rajasingham explained that Karuna with his parochial political approach looked down on those from Jaffna using pejorative terms like Yarlapani but Rajasingham supported him despite hailing from Jaffna as he wanted to use him as a 'stick to hit at Pirapaharan and LTTE.'

Rajasingham lamented that while he supported Karuna thinking that though he started his career as a terrorist he could be rehabilitated, he was mistaken. He tells the President that while Karuna speaks vociferously about wanting to enter mainstream politics he follows his erstwhile leader Pirapaharan and is bent on ethnic cleansing and driving the Jaffna Tamils who have lived for three-four generations in the east.

Murder most foul

Rajasingham now says; "I was told that he is the one responsible for the abduction and killing (yes he has killed him according to unconfirmed reports) of Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ravindranath of the Eastern University."

Karuna is then described to the President as a liability to the Rajapakse government and a spent force who should be got rid of.

Vital to note is that Rajasingham says to the President, "We have already made use of his narration about the LTTE's atrocities, plans and targets. It is now nearly three years has lapsed

(sic) since he came out of the LTTE and he has no more real stories to narrate and he will be of no use to anyone."

Limited knowledge

Rajasingham also says that though Karuna was a regional commander of the LTTE for the Batticaloa-Ampara districts his knowledge of the Wannu and Jaffna terrain is limited.

Of Pillayan, Rajasingham says he was also a child recruit at the tender age of 14 years and today is only 30 years of age (infact 29) as an ordinary cadre he has roamed in Jaffna and Wannu and knows the terrain better than Karuna.

But listen to this well. For it reflects not only the warped thinking of the government but its callous attitude towards those it uses to further its own ends. For now Rajasingham tells President Rajapakse that in fact neither Pillayan nor Karuna will be of any use to the security forces. And if the top brass think they can use them in the battle against the LTTE in the north, it is wrong.

In fact it is now suggested that it is better to cause another split within the LTTE from the Jaffna District itself to work with the security forces in the north.

Karuna useless

Rajasingham suggests strongly that the government gets rid of Karuna who is a liability and work with Pillayan and his men who are more popular in the east than Karuna. As far back as in June he tells the President that Pillayan is planning the arrest of Karuna, but only hesitate as they are unsure of the reaction of the Defence Ministry.

Rajasingham also states that if there is going to be an election in the east and if Karuna's faction is pitted against the LTTE's proxy party, TNA or any independent groups led by leading personalities, the Karuna Group would not even be in a position to retain their deposits. But he says they can of course "use their lethal weapons and through threat and intimidation rig the election and stuff the ballot boxes."

It is in that context, Rajasingham tells the President Karuna should be got rid of if the Defence Ministry agrees.

To this President Rajapakse agrees and according to the minutes promises to take the matter up with his defence people and 'do the needful.'

Rajasingham then informs Rajapakse that Karuna has threatened him, Rajasingham, through his side-kick Inniyabarathy and has sworn that he will give a contract to kill him and his family.

Devananda stabbed in the back

Ironically however, in his October 24 report to Sunimal Fernando of the June meeting with the President, where Devananda was also present, Rajasingham questions in bold print and in parenthesis the usefulness of Minister Douglas Devananda himself.

At one point he states in the written minutes having in June suggested Devananda's name in his presence as a minister in charge of overseas Sri Lankans as follows:

"(At Present Mr. Rajasingham is of the view that Hon. Douglas Devananda has never come forward to promote the government other than promoting his EPDP politics. Therefore Mr. Rajasingham suggests that best person to take up the portfolio as minister in charge of overseas Sri Lankans is no other than Mr. Basil Rajapakse.)"

Thus Rajasingham demonstrates he is no spring chicken in the dirty game of politics.

Devious

In fact with regard to Indo Lanka relations when Rajasingham in June suggested Sri Lanka must try its best to find out what India expects from her, Rajapakse had responded by stating that he had told Douglas Devananda to visit New Delhi on his way back to Colombo from Geneva and discuss certain aspects that had been raised.

Rajasingham then suggested he was prepared to go along with a Sinhalese and a Muslim person and suggested to include H. L.D.Mahindpala in the delegation who will be able to convey the Sinhalese aspirations to the Indian leaders.

Rajapakse agreed with the suggestions according to the report and conveyed to Devananda to make the necessary arrangements while it was also agreed to keep this decision highly confidential.

Deviously however Rajasingham in his report of October 24 to Fernando says again in Parentheses, "(It was unfortunate that Hon. Douglas Devananda has failed to show interest in this project. Therefore I am of the opinion that he should not be entrusted with the arrangement of this meeting with the Indian leaders.)"

But back to the meeting in June. The Asian Tribune Editor and Rajapakse now discuss diplomatic representation.

Bad diplomats

Rajasingham condemns the Sri Lanka High Commission in the United Kingdom as uncooperative with the Asian Tribune. He states that the lady High Commissioner Kshenuka Seneviratne and First Secretary Maxwell Keegel are uncooperative and avoid responding to telephone calls.

He suggests that the entire London High Commission be completely revamped right from the lady High Commissioner downwards.

The Asian Tribune Editor who seems to have been elevated to Presidential Advisor at Large next turns his vitriolic eye on Sri Lanka's Embassy in France as well, castigating the lady ambassador as a woman very hesitant to divulge information. She is to leave at the end of 2007, Rajasingham confirms at the meeting.

Funnily enough recall that Ambassador Wagiswara was recalled by Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama recently in a surprise move and another person appointed in her place. The

jigsaw pieces held up against the master plan drawn up in Geneva in June seems to now slowly fall in to place.

Be that as it may Rajasingham continued to grumble wanting Rajapakse to secure its sources for stories. 'If the Diplomatic mission fails to come forward to work and cooperate with us then how it is possible for us to fight the anti-government elements in Europe?' he asks Rajapakse.

But France and England were not the only offenders. Rajasingham points out that Sri Lanka's Embassy in Oslo, Norway was not coming forward to talk with other Tamil groups in Norway. He also said that Ahmed A. Jawad who was the ambassador earlier had been accused of being very close to the LTTE in Oslo and with Erik Solheim and others.

Missions a failure

Even the new ambassador, Rajasingham complains is the same.

The discussion also focused on Sri Lanka's embassies in the West which Rajasingham said were concerned only with country to country diplomatic affairs. He said missions were sending weekly reports by interacting with a handful of the diaspora but there was no machinery available to interact politically and otherwise with these diasporas and churn them into diaspora organisations in favour of the government to promote the interests and welfare of Sri Lanka.

New diplomatic position

Suggesting a new position in the overseas mission Rajasingham said there should be officials from the Ministry with a crash course in foreign diplomacy who may be appointed as counselors with independent charge in all our missions abroad. These officials he said could function according to instructions of the Ministry of Overseas Sri Lankans.

Rajapakse had at the June meeting agreed with Rajasingham that such a portfolio was good to embrace the Tamils, Muslims and the Sinhalese in the West and in Australasian countries.

Funding for Asian Tribune

The June meeting also discussed funding and business expansion for...yes, you've guessed it, the Asian Tribune. Here's how it went.

Rajasingham proposed that he was willing to make use of the news feeds and other Sri Lanka material put out by Rupavahini and ITN in a new satellite TV transmission simultaneously so that viewers in Asia, Europe, Africa and America would be able to see the official position of the government.

Of course he explained this would cost a tremendous amount of money to make use of the Hot Bird satellite platform. Nearly 22,000 Euros per month per continent he told Rajapakse. He explained the footprints of this satellite was only seen clearly within a particular continent.

President Rajapakse agreed saying it was prudent to begin the transmission of the TV in the beginning to one continent and gradually expanding the transmission to other continents. Rajapakse promised Rajasingham he would extend all the assistance and support.

According to minutes of the meeting sent to Presidential Advisor Sunimal Fernando President Rajapakse had granted the necessary permission to Rajasingham to transmit the programmes from Rupavahini and ITN.

Rajapakse had also said that necessary instructions would be given to the officials of the two TV stations to assist Rajasingham in his new media programme.

No govt. advertising

Of course Rajasingham was quick to slip in that he had not obtained any sponsorship from any government organisations such as SriLankan Airlines, Tourist Board, Tea Board, Bank of Ceylon, People's Banks etc., etc. He pointed out that so far none of those government corporations had come forward to advertise in the Asian Tribune.

President Rajapakse helpfully promised to look into the matter forthwith.

Rajasingham also informed Rajapakse of Asia Tribune's grandiose plans to launch the EuroAsian satellite radio explaining it would be a satellite radio which would be a new media outlet of the World Institute of Asian Studies (WIAS) that publishes the Asian Tribune.

EuroAsian Radio will be accessible through satellite receivers and internet initially. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, Rajasingham said he was planning to have it broadcast through FM radio throughout the island and requested Rajapakse to grant FM radio licences to cover the entire island for the EuroAsian Radio and also transmitting tower facilities.

Behind the breakup

Be that as it may, in other communication in our possession Rajasingham claims he was instrumental in getting rid of Karuna on behalf of the government and was also behind his breakaway from the LTTE. Rajasingham claims he promoted Karuna and encouraged him to spike the LTTE but fell out with him when he got involved in a fratricidal war in May this year with his second in command Pillayan.

It is Rajasingham who had been doing the ground work for the registering of the new party and for making Pillayan the new leader of the Karuna Group. According to taped telephone conversations he was in touch with Pillayan and other eastern cadres in order to register a new political party and find a new logo for the party.

Rajasingham in fact was to speak to Pillayan before Karuna registered his political party the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pullikal (TMVP) and push for Pillayan to quickly get in on the act.

Rajasingham advises Pillayan to quickly draft a constitution and make a members list but Pillayan is apprehensive saying the other faction may register themselves sooner with the help of Krishnan, Karuna's deputy.

Sinister soul

It is then that Rajasingham's sinister soul is bared. "We must do something there to Krishnan before he comes," he says. And just for a minute the human face of Pillayan takes over. 'Paavam' he says in a moment's weakness. 'Sin.. I feel sorry.'

But Rajasingham, Editor of Asian Tribune is adamant. 'No .No,' he says. 'He is a dangerous man. If he comes he should be locked up.'

Be that as it may the Asian Tribune Editor, according to communications under his hand reveal, not only met President Rajapakse in June but has also been in close touch with Minister Jeyaraj Fernandopulle in order to get the Pillayan faction registered as a new political party.

As recently as November 1, 2007 Rajasingham in written communication states that Pillayan will not trust anyone in his outfit but that he is in the process of getting the names and addresses of 2000 people and drafting a constitution in Tamil as he has to outsmart Karuna by registering the political party very secretly and consolidate his hold.

For this purpose Raghu, a man purporting to be Pillayan's lawyer with the full backing of Rajasingham devises a scheme to cook up party minutes and even get approval of the political party from the elections commissioner by fax.

In touch with the top

Rajasingham has also been in touch with government lackeys, defence officials and top Foreign Ministry officials including persons close to President Rajapakse in order to implement the tangled plan hatched in the cool climes of Switzerland in June.

It is to top all this that the publishers of Asian Tribune WIAS has launched into another project that would stoke the ego of President Rajapakse on the one hand and give WIAS a firm platform in the south on the other. That is to write the biography of President Mahinda Rajapakse called 'Power of Southern Grassroots - Journey of Mahinda Rajapakse.'

The ego centric Mahinda Percival Rajapakse who gets his photograph plastered not only on every billboard but also on monuments to the 2008 Olympic Games in China is not likely to reject such an exciting prospect for the sake of posterity.

But for Rajasingham it was not all about Mother Lanka. He was determined to link this entire sordid mess together with funding for his business. To this end he sent a large funding proposal prepared by him and dated May 9, 2007 on November 1, 2007 to the government.

But of course as seen the matter of funding and advertising had already been discussed by Rajasingham at the highest levels in Geneva.

Funding

As part of its funding efforts with the government Rajasingham and the Asia Tribune liberally used in its document the names of several persons such as H.L.D. Mahindapala, head of its Australian Bureau, Daya Gamage, US Bureau head, and Sugeeswara Senadheera, head of the Sri Lankan Bureau,

As contributing columnists he cites Dayan Jayatilleke who is also Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative for the UN in Geneva and Tisaranee Gunasekera and Leel Pathirana, an ex jailed JVPer.

Rajasingham estimates according to his proposal that his budget for 2007 would be a conservative USD 518,000. Remember this is an on-line edition and therefore there are no recurrent costs.

It is as a culmination of this elaborate plot as enumerated above hatched in the Presidential Suite of the Intercontinental Hotel in Geneva that on September 17, Karuna was smuggled out of the country on a diplomatic passport in the name of Kokila Gunawardena.

Rajasinghan phones Pillayan

An English translation of a taped conversation in Tamil between Editor, Asian Tribune, K.T.Rajasingham and Pillayan that took place a few days before Karuna's arrest in London. Pillayan also talks of a Padmini. Krishnan who is spoken of is Karuna Amman's deputy who it is said will be coming down from London to Colombo shortly.

Rajasingham: Hello

Pillayan: Hello

R: Now the time is 10:15, today is Friday.he might go out (third person)

P: Yes

R: You'll have to draft a constitution and members list

P: OK

R: Meanwhile I will try to contact him before that

P: How long will it take you because I think they will draft one before us. How can we block that?

R: Who will give them support to register

P: I think Krishnan

R: Before Krishnan comes we can do it. But we must do something there to Krishnan before he comes

P: Sin.I feel sorry

R: No No he is a dangerous man. If he comes he should be locked up..Paper called Theepoli says that Padmini has run away, have you heard about it.

P: Yes, Yes I heard

Sunimal has a memory lapse

The Sunday Leader contacted Presidential Advisor Sunimal Fernando who said he could not recollect an email sent to him by Rajasingham but would check his mail box on Monday.

When it was pointed out the email contained a very important report on a meeting Rajasingham had with President Rajapakse he said his subject as an advisor was very limited and confined mainly to the teaching of English and he was unable to understand how a report of this nature would be forwarded to him. Fernando did not deny receiving the email nor knowing Rajasingham. Sources close to the Asia Tribune Editor however told The Sunday Leader K.T. Rajasingham claimed he was a close friend of Sunimal Fernando.

KT declines to comment

The Sunday Leader wrote to Asia Tribune Editor K.T.Rajasingham on the matter and asked to speak to him but he replied as follows; "Vanakam.

Regret, unable to speak on the subject you have mentioned in your e-mail. Thanks and regards. K.T.Rajasingham.