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The Race for Infamy in Sri Lanka's North-East

Contents:

Part I: Trends and Issues

I.1 Lost Opportunities, Schizophrenia and Dysfunction

I.2 ‘If they can't be dealt with through existing laws, we know how to deal with them’

I.3 Burning Questions

Part II: Cases and Reports

II.1 Killings Linked to the State

II.2 The Flip Side: LTTE’s Uses of State Opression

II.3 Batticaloa: Continuing Abuses by the Karuna Group

II.4 Abuses in the LTTE-controlled East: The Tragedy of Paduvankarai

II 4.1 The Disappearance of Children from Arivuchcholai

II 4.2 Conscription in Paduvankarai:

II 4.3 The LTTE and the Handicapped:

II 4.4 Training Ordeal in Kudumbimalai:

II 4.5 The LTTE *Kavalthurai (Police)* and Torture :

II 4.6 The Fissured Leadership:

II.5 TRO Abductions of January 2006 – A Second Follow-Up

II.6 Tragedy, Struggle and Opposition under the LTTE

II 6.1 The TRO and the struggle of children's homes in the East:

II 6.2 In the Vanni:

II 6.3 Hill Country Tamils in the Vanni:

II.7 Ramifications of Impunity: Rape, IDPs and INGOs

Part I: Trends and Issues

I.1 Lost Opportunities, Schizophrenia and Dysfunction

The banning of the LTTE by many countries early last year was brought on by its abuse of the peace process and its persistent warlike provocations of the Sri Lankan security forces. Isolated but determined democratic voices among the Tamil community played a crucial role in educating the international community about the true nature of the LTTE as a violently undemocratic force, explaining how it achieved its sole representative status and why its politics should not be legitimised.

There is nothing new about LTTE's practice of squeezing every ounce of dignity from the people, to oil its military machine. But this report will have a good deal to say about new tactics it has employed to do so. More importantly, the Government's current direction, which is characterised by contemptuous violence and degradation of the civilian population, has given the LTTE ample license to inflict its depredations and the ability to nullify the considerable spontaneous resistance they now encounter. The reality of this resistance is another important thread running through this report.

Tiger politics, Tiger intolerance and Tiger excesses have frustrated the ability of Tamils to assert their rights as a civilised people. But the failure of the Sinhalese polity is even more profound. Not only has it failed for decades to develop any workable policy that guarantees the rights of minorities and promotes peaceful coexistence of communities, its persistent reliance on violent, indiscriminate repression has undercut the people's ability to resist the LTTE. On the other hand all political leaders have shown readiness to make deals with the LTTE, both secret and open, if it helps their power ambitions, but with absolute contempt for the well-being of Tamil civilians.

Even under the most adverse conditions – as we describe in this report -- people do struggle against the Tigers. But in the face of the state's regular resort to bombing, shelling, abductions and murder, it is a wonder that any will to resist endures. Several of those who contributed to this report belong to that same category of persons who in recent times have been killed by state killer groups as suspected Tiger supporters.

The banning of the LTTE was an opportunity for the Government to put its house in order and potentially to corner the LTTE by putting forward an equitable political settlement. Instead

the Government took the more repressive path advocated by radical Sinhalese chauvinists who are opposed to any proposal that puts power in the hands of the island's minorities. It made perfidious use of persons under threat by the LTTE and co-opted shady elements to establish hybrid killer groups that murdered ordinary civilians with impunity. Also it used the LTTE's provocations as pretext for missile attacks on civilians. The result was a human rights and humanitarian nightmare that exacerbated decades of suffering. Closely allied to this is the Government's intimate alliance with forces renowned for hatred and bigotry in the vicious campaign against INGOs and NGOs. Any responsible Government should have been guarded in its allegations, while raising legitimate concerns at the proper fora. It induced the security forces to threatening and unlawful behavior based on sheer prejudice.

Relations between the EU and the Government that presented an outlook of opportunity a year ago have now plummeted. One senses growing impatience and exasperation on the part of the EU matching the Government's schizophrenic dysfunction. Mahinda Rajapakse's administration has shown neither an ability to see reason, moderate its positions nor tolerate differing points of view. It has resorted to shrill and implausible explanations of events, wild allegations, threats and violence against the media, civil society activists and even international NGOs that have been providing urgent relief to civilians in LTTE-controlled areas. This is the context to the killing of ACF staff in Mutur and the Government has done itself immeasurable harm by using pivotal institutions of justice in trying to cover it up.

Consequently Sri Lanka presents a picture of anarchy, in which the judiciary, police, the AG's department, Parliament and all that make for civilized order are grossly impaired, and power exercised capriciously by a handful of bullies. The Press – capitalising on the government's populist paranoia, futilely denounces every other foreigner as an LTTE-sympathiser. What they do not seem to grasp is that by promoting violence against Tamils and xenophobia, and preventing access to thoughtful, informed analysis about the realities of the LTTE and possible alternatives, the State does nothing but encourage such sympathies. As in the 1980s, the Sinhalese themselves would feel the tragic effects sooner rather than later.

I.2 ‘If they can't be dealt with through existing laws, we know how to deal with them’

This is from Minister for Environment and Natural Resources Champika Ranawaka's *Ravaya* interview of 18th January. The Free Media Movement and other media organisations observed in a press release on 19th February, “*The minister went on to express his support for a recent poster campaign by the extremist National Movement Against Terrorism (NMAT) - known as a close political ally of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), to which the minister belongs - calling for the elimination of those whom the JHU and NMAT perceive to be aiding and abetting the cause of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), including all pro-peace civil society activists and media activists.*” Ranawaka’s advice, which follows similar sentiments by JHU Treasurer and Defence Advisor HMGB Kotakadeniya, is a good reflection of events on the ground.

What began with the killing of Joseph Pararajasingham MP and the five students in Trincomalee at the dawn of 2006 has degenerated into a general licence to kill Tamils on the flimsiest surmise that they were LTTE supporters. Prominent among the victims were Sivamaharajah of the Tellipalai Coop and N. Raviraj, who were killed, and Raveendranath, the Eastern University VC, whose fate is not known, except that the State is involved. While

no one who occupies public office in the North-East could openly defy the LTTE, the struggles of individuals to keep their integrity in these trying circumstances are lost on those bent on using unrestrained violence in dealing with the LTTE. Among the latest prominent victims is Gananathan. The killing of this man of dedication and integrity is an instance of state killer groups acting on planted information.

The Government is totally on the wrong track in dealing with a political problem by murder. That too becomes indiscriminate when guided by surmise and sectarian agendas. The Government is forced to take notice and cover up for its minions only when it becomes a major issue, as with the abduction of the Eastern University VC.

This report also deals with the killing of two students of Jaffna University that raises old questions about terror, which both the State and the Tamil community have evaded. They are not relevant to just one community. In keeping with our founding spirit we strongly condemn these killings of students.

Led by Dr. Rajani Thiranagama in the late 1980s, the University of Jaffna deliberately challenged the LTTE and at the same time fought the powers that be for the freedom of students to hold and articulate political views, even LTTE views. This she saw as the only honourable way to defend the University and society, particularly against the LTTE and its agents within. The LTTE killed Rajani Thiranagama and broke the spirit of the University by causing also the disappearance of several students when it was given control of Jaffna by the government of the day. The University was silenced.

The LTTE's intentions in the University are no different today. It will and does use it, not to advance freedom and dignity for the people, but purely for its military and ideological goals. When the LTTE sends signals for selective commemorations and agitations, everyone takes the path of least resistance. Consequently, all those inside as well as outside are privately cynical about what goes on within the University. The garlands and tributes to Sivarajan (a student recently killed) do not reflect the real tragedy of this youth or of youth in general.

Rising state oppression and alienation, superimposed on the LTTE's brutal silencing of all alternatives, drives more and more angry young persons into the LTTE's web of deceit. They will be pressed to betray everything that makes for humanity and may even believe that they are doing the right thing. This is what the University tried to challenge in the late 1980s. In the absence of such an internal challenge, the vacuum will be filled by intelligence agencies that would deal with the problem according to their own lights. This is the grim fate that awaits the youth of the North-East in the coming months.

State terror and the alienation created by it has its flip side which gives the LTTE ample opportunity to manipulate the people and prolong the conflict. This report deals also with conscription, torture and other abuses by the LTTE that are obscured by the brutality of the State and its nexus with the Karuna group. This report gives a further follow up of the TRO abductions.

The extremity of the climate of terror is such that the security forces in the East have become so blind to basic humanitarian norms that terror is used even as a short cut to move IDPs so as to make the problem disappear on paper and to intimidate and chase out INGOs who provide essential humanitarian services.

I.3 Burning Questions

Grave as is the LTTE's chronic inability to engage in a political settlement, that cannot eclipse the glaring fact that the Sinhalese polity for 50 years has failed abysmally to implement measures that would give the minorities a stake in living equitably as Sri Lankans. It has not even been able to present a stable and workable policy towards the minorities, particularly in the North-East, whom it is dealing with militarily. In this vacuum policies inevitably waver between violent and outright contempt, panic and appeasement. The people in the North-East continue to suffer dismally.

How long could any people bear with state forces shelling their way into their homes every few years, killing elders and children in the name of state security, destroying what they built and saved, and then withdrawing as shifting priorities demand, without ever knowing whether they are coming or going?

Take Kokkadichcholai. The Government lost it in 1985 and its retaking it in 1987, inflicting the huge prawn farm massacre of innocent civilians, was made possible by the LTTE's decimation of other Tamil groups. The Government helped the LTTE to retake it as the IPKF left in 1989, and once they fell out, retook it in 1991. The Government quit Kokkadichcholai again in 1995 to move additional troops to the North, and is currently retaking it behind a massive barrage of shelling. Jaffna, Mutur East and Vaharai have similar stories. When the Government is 'in control' of an area, it only means that troops are relatively safe in camps and mark their presence by killings and disappearances.

Successive Sri Lankan Governments have lacked the vision and will to press through with that necessary step to make a political breakthrough that would make the people masters of their own destiny. That the presence of the Sri Lankan forces in the North-East protects the people against Tiger excesses must in the face of experience be dismissed as an illusion. They offer no such protection.

The record makes it amply clear that governments do not care an iota about people in the North-East or about their often heroic struggles in the face of adversity. For power aspirants in the South the North-East has become a mere platform to flex their patriotic muscles and a dump for their bile. Their imagination for dealing with the region does not run beyond multiplying lethal weaponry. Leave alone the anachronism, President Rajapakse being portrayed in billboards as a second *Dutugemunu* is in ironical mismatch with the crucial challenge facing a leader in unifying the country.

How out of proportion this approach is for our poor country is seen from the fact that MBRL shells being poured liberally over the region cost US \$900 a piece. On the very first day of reprisals on 25th April 2006, residents counted eight rounds of MBRLs costing US \$ 300 000 fired into Mutur East. The cost of bombs (the air force buys MK 82, MK 83 and MK 84 bombs costing minimally \$ 270 to \$ 3100 a piece) is separate. 12 civilians were killed on that occasion alone. Compared with the generous commissions people in Colombo make on the purchase of missiles, what the displaced and bereaved may eventually receive is a contemptible pittance, not exceeding \$ 500 for a breadwinner killed. They can never regain a fraction of the stability they had and deserve.

This destruction would also render the region with its delicate ecology a wasteland fit only for a string of coal power stations such as the one fancied for Sampoore. The people who are

cheated of everything are total losers all the way, as much as the Sri Lankan housemaids in the Middle East who remit the foreign exchange for the fireworks party, but for whose sufferings the Government does not give a damn.

The question needs to be placed provocatively: For whose sake does the Sinhalese polity want the North-East to be part of Sri Lanka? The past 50 years add up to a gigantic waste. It has been a drain on all the different communities, a gross misdirection of priorities and resources and has debased the humanity of us all. While neighbouring Tamil Nadu takes giant economic strides into the modern age, we remain an abscess.

We were very critical of the Norway-brokered CFA not only because of its implicit endorsement of the LTTE's abuses and totalitarian order, but because we believed, and still do believe, that there is potential in this country for a democratic, equitable settlement where Muslims, Tamils and Sinhalese could live with dignity as equals.

The CFA was based on a very pessimistic reading of the Sinhalese polity, shared widely after the rout of President Kumaratunge's federal proposals in 2000. The JVP and JHU who are at the fore in attacking Norway and the CFA conveniently forget that it is their bigotry with the UNP's opportunism that precipitated it.

The LTTE is a disease and all that could be said about it has been said at length. It cannot be defeated purely militarily and soon all the fanfare about victory in the East would end in tears. We document the LTTE's violations because it is part of our history demanding justice as with the crimes of the State, and because we do not want confusion about the LTTE to prolong our tragedy.

The way forward is, as we have repeatedly argued, not war and violence that has become a way of destroying the Tamils in the name of fighting the LTTE, but state and constitutional reform to delegitimise the LTTE's negative appeal. The initiative lies with the Sinhalese polity and it is the quality of settlement the APRC could deliver that stands between order and chaos in Sri Lanka. The success of the APRC exercise now depends on whether or not the President is intent on coming out of the alliance traps he set himself to win the presidency.

Part II: Cases and Reports

II.1 Killings Linked to the State

Where Corruption, Politics and State-Killer Groups Mix in the Control of Jaffna: S.T. Gananathan (64), retired engineer and president of the Jaffna Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society was shot dead at his home in Ariyalai early morning on 1st February. Two gunmen were seen escaping on a motorcycle. He was a dedicated social worker, who like Sivamaharajah did yeoman service to the displaced. Such was his dedication that rather than use privileges of office, even his wife stood in food queues. He had no political leanings, was scrupulously honest and did his utmost to serve the people of Jaffna at a time of dire shortages.

During the CFA the LTTE placed its appointees in the society, and once the state-killer groups became active in late 2005, the more prominent among them, including earlier

president Solomon Cyril fled to the Vanni. This was when Gananathan became president. His enemies twisted this fact to label him an LTTE supporter, whereas he was straight and frank with everyone. After Prabhakaran's last birthday 26th November 2006, a concocted story was broadcast on EPDP's radio programme *Ithayaveenai* (Song of the Heart) on SLBC's Tamil Service that Gananathan participated in the birthday celebration by cutting a cake. These radio attacks on him continued. Gananathan went to the Stanley Rd. EPDP office and offered to resign if they did not want him in that position.

Ithayaveenai re-commenced verbal attacks against Gananathan in the days preceding his murder. Perhaps also significant as concerns his killing is the interview he gave the BBC Tamil Service a little earlier describing the adverse situation in Jaffna regarding food and essentials. Gananathan had been very firm and upright in the distribution of essentials, and had even been frank with the highest officials. For example, because soap was in short supply he had arranged to distribute soap to schools so that the students would get a cake each and the teachers three. He on occasion went to schools and pulled up the authorities when the students didn't get their due. It was only with the passage of time that the true story behind his killing emerged.

The central coop distributed essentials to its branches. Continuing the kind of arrangement that became the norm under LTTE control, some officers of the coop sent supplies to branches above the amount for which they were billed. Under the present regime, the excess went largely to the EPDP. A short time before he was killed, he ordered stocktaking, which turned up large discrepancies. We understand that he pulled up some officials and asked them to make good a huge sum of missing money and threatened disciplinary action.

Gananathan's exceptional integrity threatened to open a can of worms and expose the beneficiaries of the scam, going to the top of the political and administrative elite. This forms the backdrop to *Ithayaveenai*'s latter round of attacks on him culminating in his murder. Confronted with a lethal can of worms that fell on his lap to deal with after Gananathan's murder, his deputy got himself transferred.

Well informed circles in Jaffna told us that the killing was carried out by a state-killer group acting on information fed by a senior EPDP figure in Jaffna, who built up Gananathan as an LTTE supporter, which he certainly was not. The cooperative sector has a long and honourable history in Jaffna, which has over the decades attracted idealists intent on public service. It is a matter of very grave concern that rather than finding a political solution, the Government should set its killer groups killing off, along with the LTTE, some of Jaffna's best citizens like Sivamaharajah and Gananathan.

The LTTE tried to lay claim on the deceased through awarding him the title of Tamil National Patriot, to the chagrin of those close to him. Gananathan's daughter Thayanthy, a school-friend of Krishanthy Kumarasamy's, was killed in an accident with an army truck a month before Krishanthy's terrible tragedy in September 1996.

Killings of two University Students: Among those recently killed in Jaffna were two students of Jaffna University. **Krishnan Kamalathas** (24) from Varany was shot dead near his home in the evening of 18th February 2007. **S. Sivarajan** (23) another student was killed in Chavakacheri on 28th February at 11.00 PM.

The going wisdom in Jaffna is that Kamalathas was killed by the LTTE, reflected by the fact that the immediate reaction at the University died down quickly, in contrast to Sivarajan's killing, which was marked by prolonged ceremony in the University. Sivarajan, according to our information was used by *Kuthirai Gajendran* (now MP) in pro-LTTE agitation and was one of the students who went into hiding after the Army raided the University on 18th August 2006 and took custody of student Bageerathan.

Trapped in Jaffna, Sivarajan stayed with his uncle, a watcher at the new building site in Chavakacheri Hospital. Though a good student, he was in a severe dilemma about whether or not to go to the University after it reopened a week earlier. On the fatal night two men in uniform walked past where he stayed, followed by men in plain clothes who went in and killed. It was a planned operation.

The belief that Kamalathas was killed by the LTTE was also encouraged by the fact that another 22-year-old university student Karthikesu Senthorchelvan killed by the LTTE on 3rd October 2005 (Bulletin No.39) and another of its victims were close relatives of his. On the other hand, we also received a conflicting version. Kamalathas' late elder brother had been a sea tiger. The Army has lately been strengthening its positions in nearby Manthuvil and LTTE artillery had been taking some close shots at these positions. According to this version, Kamalathas had allegedly been going to these areas and providing information to the LTTE – a matter the Army learnt through a double agent who was friendly with Kamalathas and found out in addition more about the LTTE's network within the University.

If this latter version pointing to the Army killing Kamalathas is correct, the quick abandonment of any protest for him at the University and the LTTE media glossing over his killing, after ritually blaming the Army, remain to be explained. At the ceremony at Jaffna University where academics garlanded Sivarajan's picture, Kamalathas who was killed 10 days earlier was hardly even mentioned.

Madukkarai Killings: **Rajasankar (23)** who worked in Vavuniya was returning home with his younger brother **Theivendran (21)** for the Thai Pongal festival to Madukkarai, south of Nanattan, in the Mannar District about 11th January. Madukkarai is one of those marginal areas avoided by the security forces, where the LTTE goes and has been demanding a recruit from each family. The LTTE sent notices to certain boys to come for a meeting on 24th December last year. The boys fearing conscription did not go. In a second message the LTTE asked them to come the following Sunday, just for a chat. When they went, 21 boys were taken, three of them schoolboys, two of them 17. The security forces do not see the local resistance, but simply treat the people as Tigers.

Rajasankar and Theivendran arrived in Nanattan by bus, and walked along a short cut to Madukkarai at 5.30 PM as there were no vehicles going there. They were arrested by the STF. Local sources told us that the STF went with their identity cards to Nanattan and asked around about them, but none of those asked knew them. Our sources believe that the STF kept the boys at least for a day and tortured them. On 13th January midday the brothers were found in a field in Sampalai hands tied and shot dead. They were from a lonely area with poor communications and neither was it known in Vavuniya nor at home that they were going home, and the STF using its licence to kill was not taking chances.

Carpenter of Kattankadu: Rasan was a carpenter in Kattankadu, south of Murungan, in the same area as the previous incident, and his tragedy took place about the same time. Originally

from Karainagar, Jaffna, he was displaced in 1995 with his mother and two sisters. He started a carpentry workshop, prospered, married and had two children. His two sisters and mother went back to Jaffna after the 2002 ceasefire, but he continued to support them. Rasan was well regarded an honest and hardworking man and had no LTTE involvement.

Once the LTTE forcibly removed his motorcycle and used it for a mine attack on the security forces. This they came to know. During the fatal day in January, the Army from the neighbouring camp came home and ordered his wife and children to go inside. They then threw a grenade and opened fire at Rasan, killing him. Subsequently, they claimed that Rasan had thrown a grenade at them and they killed him in self-defence.

Anbuvelipuram: Sathis and Sathya were men in the 20s from Anbuvelipuram, a suburb of Trincomalee. Sathis was a mason and Sathya was appreciated locally as a helpful person. Local sources affirm that they had no connection with the LTTE. During The morning of 5th January a navy truck was attacked with a landmine at Alles Garden, injuring two sailors. The same night the security forces abducted Sathis and Sathya and the following morning (6th) their dead bodies from gunshots were found near the scene of the mine attack.

Valvettithurai: Vijayaraja, a coconut trader from Valvettithurai went by his van to Thenmaratchy with his 13-year-old son to buy coconuts on 28th December 2006. At 2.00 PM, a bomb blast near the Chavakacheri courts killed two soldiers. Vijayaraja and his son were among those taken by the Army and are missing since.

On 1st January the Sri Lankan air force bombed the village of Paduhuthuarai in Mannar District claiming that it was a Sea Tiger base killing 16 civilians including several children. A number of incidents such as these, and the security forces' extra-judicial killings, created an atmosphere that the Tigers exploit to their advantage.

II.2 The Flip Side: LTTE's Uses of State Oppression

Nachchikkuda: December 2006: In the same Padahuthurai area, a father carrying his son on his bicycle was on a visit from Nachchikkuda to Mulankavil. Like in Padahuthurai they too were displaced people from Navanthurai in Jaffna. En route, an LTTE vehicle stopped them and abducted the son. The father protested and placed himself flat across the vehicle. The Tigers drove over him squeezing out his intestines. They took him to Killinochchi Hospital and brought him back a month later. His son was released.

Munram Piddy: The LTTE abducted **Kapilan**, a boy of about 18, from Mundram Piddy in the same area. The Kapilan escaped and returned home. On 19th February, the LTTE found him. His mother **Annarathinam** resisted their taking him and threatened to set herself on fire. The LTTE ignored her and took the boy. She poured kerosene and set herself ablaze and was in a critical condition. The LTTE released the boy and took her to Killinochchi Hospital and later brought her body home. Kapilan unable to contain his grief said harsh things about the LTTE. He was taken to the *Kavalthurai* (Police) and severely warned. His elder brother too was summoned and questioned.

During January, LTTE men raided homes in Munram Piddy and Alankulam during the night and took several girls, one of whom was an O. Level student.

Mullaitivu: In Mullaitivu, the LTTE came home to take a man's son. The man protested that they would have to shoot him first. The LTTE shot him in the legs and removed his son. These incidents are just the tip of the iceberg representing the contest for infamy by the Government and the LTTE.

II.3 Batticaloa: Continuing Abuses by the Karuna Group

The Karuna group that works closely with the Army in the Batticaloa District has earned notoriety in recent months for its abuses against civilians and for conscription, including children. Its collusion with the Army in conscription has been exposed by HRW and the UN Special Rapporteur Alan Rock to widespread recrimination by the Government and commentators in the South. Its denial is a facet of a divided country, where people go about with blinkers and are generous with abuse when challenged.

In Batticaloa, people encounter armed and uniformed, underage Kauna cadres in public places like Arasady that are frequented by the Army, and in town itself Karuna cadres in house to house searches for an escaped 15-year-old conscript. The following were abducted by the Karuna group in early December 2006:

1. **Ramanathan Ravichandran** - 16 years, Annai Velankanni Veethy, Thiruchenthoor, Batticaloa. Current status – escaped and in hiding.
2. **Meharajah Keeran** - 17 years, Annai Velakanni Veethy. Current status – operational.
3. **Meharajah Nithakaran** - 14 years (born 18 Oct.1992). Current status – released.
4. **Alaharatnam Yuvaraj** - 15 years (born 16 Sept.1991), Grade 10 student at Thambiluvil Central School, Amparai District, was abducted in November 2006 and held at Karapola, Welikanda under Bharathy and Senthil. This would have required transporting the boy through all the checkpoints from Akkaraipattu through Valaichchenai and Welikanda. Current status – not released.

The Karuna group's conscription of both children, and refugees from Mutur, has continued into very recent times. **Kanapathipillai Thivakaran (14 years)** of Kannan Village, Chenkalady and **Rasamanickam Sasiharan (22)** of MC Rd., Veeranagar and a refugee in the Kaluwankerny camp for Mutur folk were both abducted by the Karuna group at Thalawai on 23rd January 2007. It abducted O. Level student **P. Krishanthan (17)** at Mamangam on 4th February 2007.

The activities of the Karuna-Security Forces combine provided the cover for the LTTE to go to unprecedeted levels in Paduvankarai in a bid to boost its military capacity. What went on there has largely gone undocumented because both sides have discouraged international NGOs from going into the LTTE-controlled area.

II.4 Abuses in the LTTE-controlled East: The Tragedy of Paduvankarai

II 4.1 The Disappearance of Children from Arivuchcholai

On 14th August the Sri Lankan Air Force bombed a camp for schoolgirls in Vallipunam in the Vanni where the girls were under compulsion attending training that could at worst be termed pre-military. The LTTE placed the dead at 55 (the SLMM counted 19 but believed there were more) and claimed that 400 girls were attending a leadership session at the Chencholai (Red Blossomed Garden) children's homes. Our sources confirmed that the premises were previously used by Chencholai and there were no military installations in the area.

The bombing of the girls rightly evoked worldwide indignation. Behind the cover it provided, the LTTE carried out a disappearing act for children in its parallel Arivuchcholai (Garden of Wisdom) home in Paduvankarai, Batticaloa. The LTTE started a home in Palugamam, which was run by the TRO. It had around 40 children below the age of 15, down to about 6. Many of them were orphans or children lost during the tsunami and who fell into LTTE hands. Many had parents who survived the tsunami and were looking for them and ultimately traced them to the Arivuchcholai home. The LTTE tried various ruses to put them off such as promising to educate them and hand them over later. This did not stop the parents' importunity.

A few days after the Vallipunam bombing the children were missing. Those who went looking for the children were told that they had been taken on a tour. Many theories did the rounds on what happened to them. One was that they were taken to the Vanni to be installed in the bombed Vallipunam camp to prove that it actually housed orphan children. But within a few days the LTTE had dropped its original claim of the place being actively part of Chencholai. It is more likely that wherever the children are now, they were removed to cut off their families and relatives. The TRO staff who actually cared for the children are very upset by what happened.

The 10-year-old boy **Vijitharan**, a native of Ambalanthurai, was an orphan in the *Arivuchcholai* home in Palugamam, missing after being taken on the 'tour'. Among those who sought him within a few days of the Vallipunam incident was his 16-year-old sister, who was in the *Sakthi Illam* orphanage in Arasaditivu. She was told by the Mavadimunmari political commissar and Uthayaraj of LTTE intelligence that her brother had been moved to a home in Ambalanthurai. Being a native of Ambalanthurai, she went and looked there. Neighbours reiterated the belief that Vijitharan was in the Vanni.

II 4.2 Conscription in Paduvankarai:

Aside from the case of *Arivuchcholai*, the LTTE used severe methods for acquiring children. Each civilian home was required to provide the LTTE with a minimum of one fighting cadre. While some care is exercised over the age in the Vanni, there were far fewer scruples in Paduvankarai. This led to a continuous flight of people.

Incident at the Manmunai Ferry: A father and mother were recently trying to get their son across to the government-controlled area by the Manmunai ferry from Kokkadichcholai. The boy was a dark, well-built strapper of 13 years. They had boarded a vessel and were about to cross when the LTTE rushed in and tried to remove the boy. The boy jumped into the water

and refused to come back. The LTTE pushed the vessel into the water, whacked the boy on the head with an oar, then shoved him into a vehicle and took him away. The following are some instances of conscription of minors:

27th November 2006: Arasaditivu: Paramasivam Kirisanthan (just 16) was abducted by Swami Anna. **Murugamoorthy Sri (16)** from Kokkadichcholai was abducted about the same time. Kirisanthan was apparently released when he returned home after training. But on 10th March people fleeing the shelling saw him with the LTTE at Manmunai.

9th December 2006: Arasaditivu: Lohithasan (17) was abducted by Paskaran of the LTTE

17th January 2007: Mudalaikkudah West: Nesan Komathan (14 or 15) was abducted by Karuna, a driver for the TRO while he was with people on the road. Komathan was dumb, had lost his father and his mother had married again. The Ashram at Kokkadichcholai Sivan Thanthonreeswaran Temple took Komathan and sent him for surgery to cure his disability, but he did not heal. Komathan lived with his maternal grandmother, worked as a mason and also followed classes locally.

Karuna had served the LTTE as a soldier for 8 years and his first wife was from a fairly well to do family in Jaffna, through whom he had a son. The wife is said to have left him because of his loose habits with women and joined her family in London with her son. The LTTE had sent Karuna abroad as a worker for some time where his task was to organise collections from Tamil workers under the pretext of caring for orphans. On his return Karuna was posted as a TRO driver and now reportedly has two wives, one in Mudalaikkudah and one in Kokkadichcholai. As a sideline persons like Karuna are paid Rs. 10 000 a head for catching children.

1st February 2007: Ambalanthurai: Seenithamby Sathiyaseelan (15) was abducted by Roshan of the LTTE while playing in a sports field.

5th February 2007: Mudalaikkudah: Vellaiyan Kanthan (15), an orphan who used to do work in the temple was abducted from the temple by Uthayaraj. Uthayaraj is supervised by Vili from the Vanni.

23rd February 2007: Education in Paduvankarai was at a standstill with parents not sending children above Grade 6 (11 years) to school. Instead they tried desperately to get their children across to friends and relatives in Batticaloa or to put them into children's homes in the government-controlled area. On 23rd February some parents from Munaikkadu thought of a novel way of getting their children across to Batticaloa.

Two sons each of **Masilamani** and **Vanniasingham teacher** and one son of **Ketharan** were brought to the Mahiladithivu hospital. The boys were all O. Level and below (16 and below). The idea was to transport them by ambulance as sick persons needing treatment at Batticaloa Hospital. Vanniasingham's sister was a senior member of the Mahiladitivu hospital staff. Ketharan followed the ambulance on his motorcycle.

The *Kavalthurai* (Police) got wind of it and apprehended the boys in the ambulance and also Ketharan between the hospital and the ferry point. The five boys were taken away and Ketharan was placed under arrest. His motorcycle and house were 'sealed'.

The situation changed by 27th February (see below). Even before the incident involving foreign diplomats at the Batticaloa, the LTTE appears to have received orders from the Vanni to prepare for a pull out. The LTTE slowed down conscription and released up to 150 recent conscripts, the five above reportedly among them. **Pushparaj Jeyaprasath (14 years, born 20 Nov.1992)** and abducted by the LTTE from the tsunami refugee camp at Thiraimadu on 6th Nov.2006, was reportedly released in late February. Those released were among the very young who had not undergone training or the physically weak. There were also instances where conscripts who had escaped and were in hiding and recently tried to join the general exodus to Batticaloa of people fleeing government shelling, were caught by the LTTE.

Vellaithamby Sivendran (16) of Kallimadu, Kannankuda, was caught by LTTE lookouts at Manatpiddy on 9th March. Two children in the 14 to 15 age group released by the LTTE and now in Batticaloa said that they were firmly told that they must come back when called.

II 4.3 The LTTE and the Handicapped:

Under the LTTE's insistence that every family must provide at least one combatant, whether blind or maimed, it picked up several handicapped recruits. On 9th December, Anbumaran of the LTTE abducted **Nesathurai Kirisan (18)** who was mentally unbalanced. According to local sources, Kirisan was taken to Vaharai to dig bunkers and died in a Kfir bomber attack later that month. **Nesan Komathan (14 or 15)**, a dumb boy conscripted by the LTTE has been noted above.

Sritharan (15 to 17) is a mentally depressed boy from Mudalaikkuda who was much of the time at the temple and used to do such things as chasing cows that came by. He was usually dishevelled and a figure of fun. Anbumaran of the LTTE conscripted him and put him to work in an LTTE farm under Dayamohan Master.

A 16-year-old mentally handicapped boy whom we call Raveendran was conscripted by the LTTE at Koppaveli. Raveendran is from Neelavanai, and because of his handicap his father kept Raveendran with him while herding cattle. People used to call Raveendran by such names as *Singi* and some hit him as they passed by. The only knowledge one could reputedly elicit from him is the number of head of cattle herded by his father. The LTTE we learn took him to their interior Kudumbimalai base for training.

II 4.4 Training Ordeal in Kudumbimalai:

The conscripts are shaved and taken deep into the interior to Kudumbimalai. They are kept 30 in a hut, 100 yards apart from one another. Escape is hazardous; the perils of nature are severe to begin with. One either comes out a very durable fighter or perishes. The casualty rate during training is high. Death by snakebite, drowning and training accidents are common.

Conscripts are first trained in the very hard environment for a month, then sent on active duty for about 45 days and brought back for further training. During the first month the conscripts have to be up at the whistle around 5.00 AM. From 6.00 AM to 12.00 PM they undergo training during which only a cup of tea is given. They are then given a meal and have to reassemble when the whistle is blown at 2.30 PM for more training. The training includes use of weapons, running, making their way through barbed or bladed wire, jumping down from trees, sliding down from a tree, hill or an artificial elevation using a rope. They are taken to the river to bathe once in two days. Accidents, fractures, broken bones and cracked heads are

common. Persons also suffer grievous injuries when beaten by a trainer for slacking or under-performing.

The trainees are also put through mock battles with live firing. On occasions one side dresses up as the Sri Lankan Army and the battle is videoed for propaganda. Fatalities are not uncommon.

The conscripts are scared of talking to one another in any manner that carries a hint of dissidence. Those who are educated and articulate are also given propaganda duties. Their *nom de guerres* reflect their skills. Although there are 30 in a hut, intimate friendships where persons speak freely crystallize around smaller groups. A plan of escape materialised around such a group.

Escape: One group of 15 decided on making a break when they were placed on sentry duty. Their experience stands testimony to the hazardous environment. They picked an unguarded route, and hence one that was least safe. They crossed three stretches of water and Santhanamadu River (a branch of the Mahaveli River) with crocodiles was especially dangerous. This river is crossed downstream by Mannampitiya road and rail bridge.

Four died while crossing the river and another two died of snakebite. One who could not swim crossed the river by holding a piece of wood. They were in the jungle for about 5 days without food, eating tamarind leaves. Once elephants chased them at midnight. On another occasion they heard a growl and before they knew what it was a bear was near them. The bear caught one. The others escaped and do not know what happened to the victim. Fleeing hazards also caused them to be separated.

Five of them went to villages where they had help and eventually made it across the lagoon to Batticaloa. They believe that three fell into the hands of the LTTE, which then intensified the search for the escapees. The torture of those handed over to the *Kavalthurai* (Police) competes with the worst at the hands of the Government.

II 4.5 The LTTE *Kavalthurai* (Police) and Torture:

Varathan commands the Police in Kokkadichcholai. Like most of those who exercise real power, he had been sent from the Vanni. He overrules military wing persons from Batticaloa who are nominally powerful. Locals feel that he is very vindictive towards those from Batticaloa. It is a costly mistake to complain against any LTTE institution, as a young mother found out on New Year's Day.

Sornalingam Komathy from near Kokkadichcholai is a young mother bearing an infant of three months. There was jewellery in her home as her husband worked abroad. A group of 8 persons from the LTTE's auxilliary force, including a local thug and womanizer, Moorthy, attempted to break into her home in the night. Although they broke into the compound, Komathy's dog thwarted their attempt.

Manickappodi used to sleep at the house as a watcher. The next day Moorthy came home with the gun issued to him and threatened Manickappodi that he would cut his neck if they complained. Komathy went to the police station and complained to Varathan. Varathan who got angry remanded her. Those who tried to appeal on her behalf were chased away. Komathy was in the police lockup with her infant and was released 5 days later only after she began

screaming and refused to eat. Anyone going beyond Varathan and complaining to Nadesan, the LTTE Police Chief in the Vanni, could expect his full wrath against which there is no appeal.

The punishment for conscripts caught escaping is to be hung upside down by the toes with a thorny stick from an orange tree placed under folded and tied knees and pressing against the thighs. The victim is then assaulted all over and buffeted about in the hanging position while he bleeds. Among the key torturers are Varathan himself, Nizam and Sri.

Among Varathan's tasks was to watch over marriages, which many arranged early for their children as a means to evade conscription. One of the regulations people were enjoined to observe was to obtain clearance from the *Kavalthurai* before any wedding.

In September 2006, **Nallathamby Sitha** (40), a senior nurse at Mahiladitivu Hospital married a man of 39 from Kannankuda who had worked in the Middle East. The marriage ceremony was at 12.00 PM and acting on a tip off the *Kavalthurai* was there at 12.15 PM to arrest the couple. The bride was released immediately as a person of local importance. The bridegroom was released 3 days later. An elder brother who protested was also taken and released.

Karuna's daughter (early 30s), a teacher in a UNICEF scheme, is the eldest among three daughters of tractor driver Karuna (50s) from the housing scheme in Munaikkadu West. The daughter arranged to marry the man she loved on 25th January 2007. But they had not told the *Kavalthurai*. Close friends and relatives were invited home at 9.00 PM. On a tip-off, the Police who pounced on them at 4.00 PM on the wedding day and tied the hands of the daughter, her parents and two sisters and with a motorcycle escort marched them through Munaikkadu, Mahiladitivu, Mudalaikkuda and Kokkadichcholai. Finally, they were taken to Pattipalai. They were sentenced to punishment in the *Pannais* or farms. The second girl, who had finished her education in Batticaloa, had come home only to celebrate a happy occasion. They had so far not been released. The bridegroom reportedly denied his intention of marriage and has since escaped to Batticaloa.

Narayanan of Mahiladitivu was murdered by Sri Lanka's notorious STF in the infamous January 1987 prawn farm massacre. His son **Kirupaharan** married the eldest of a family of 5 girls, the second of whom was in the LTTE. The latter escaped and Kirupaharan hid his sister-in-law in a house in Munaikkadu. The *Kavalthurai* suspected him and arrested him while he was eating at home. His mother and *periyamma* (mother's elder sister) went to the Police Station and told Varathan that they wished to meet Kirupaharan. Varathan pushed them onto the road and screamed that the next time they would be deemed *thesaththrohis* (traitors to the nation). He told them that they would release Kirupaharan only if they brought in his sister-in-law. The fugitive was surrendered to the *Kavalthurai*, but neither she nor Kirupaharan was released. Kirupaharan was among those given the orange stick, upside down treatment described.

Vaithhiyakkaddu Manickappody is a man of 83 years from Kokkadichcholai. Recently some *Kavalthuari* men went to his house and wanted young drinking coconuts. When Manickappody told them to help themselves, the policemen ordered him to pluck them. Manickappody protested that he was stricken in years and they should not expect this of him. The policemen threw him down into a drain and beat him and later took him to the Police station where he was again mistreated. Kannankuda *Podiyar* (squire), a good friend of

Manickappody, had also contacts with the LTTE hierarchy. By cell phone he complained to Vanni police chief Nadesan about the treatment of his elderly friend. Varathan in turn detained him for 10 days for complaining.

The *Kavalthurai* also has some other mundane tasks. One who purchases a milch cow must pay an LTTE tax of Rs. 2000. One need not guess what punishment awaited transgressors. An old lady living alone fell sick and had to be taken to Batticaloa Hospital. The *Kavalthurai* lost no time in rushing to her home and placing their seal. Among others tortured by the *Kavalthurai* are Markandan from Thumpankerni. He died later at home and to stop local talk the *Kavalthurai* ordered the funeral to be held within an hour. Another from Munaikkadu died at home after being tortured by the Police.

The LTTE police also had a prison in Arasaditivu at Columban's (Colombo Man's) house. As demand for prison space increased, ad hoc extensions were made to Columban's house by adding tiny rooms. Prisoners were thus kept in airless rooms and facilities for ablutions were atrocious. With the Army moving into Paduvankarai, Kokkadichcholai police station was closed and Varathan and co. have withdrawn to the interior. Relatives are very anxious about the fate of the prisoners. Our sources said that Kirupaharan above has either been released or one must fear something grim.

II 4.6 The Fissured Leadership:

The recent state of Paduvankarai, the indiscipline among LTTE cadres, disillusionment, the need for Vanni to place Northerners like Jeyam and Pirabha over Ramesh from Batticaloa, and a keenly felt anti-Batticaloa streak may in sum suggest the disintegration of the LTTE in the East. However, with the wisdom of hindsight, that is wishful thinking.

We saw it in October 1987, when with the Indian Army marching into Jaffna, well-known and detested LTTEers were deserting in droves. After the forced Jaffna Exodus of 1995, despite the Government's callousness such as the bombing of the Naval Church, almost everyone was cursing the LTTE as never before. In the North too many resented the Valvettithurai domination of the LTTE and the anti-Saiva Vellala streak in many LTTE leaders and supporters. Those from the rural North felt discriminated within it.

During military advances by the Government, many said in the past and say it today; "We suffered terribly, but at least good riddance to these fellows. Now the trains will resume between Colombo and Jaffna and life won't be so barbarous." But the LTTE always bounced back and inflicted sensational defeats on the Government.

The reality is that soon the very people who cursed the LTTE start resenting the arrogant, patronising and belittling approach of governments that have failed dismally. Every unthinking action of the Government hurts. Insensitive articles in the daily papers sarcastically asking to be educated on Tamil grievances and calling *ex parte* for the continuation of the unitary state and the de-merger of the North-East, which are based on a refusal to face the failure of the nation building in Sri Lanka and its tragic consequences, creates frustration and anger among the Tamils who have suffered the effects too long. Such blindness to the Tamil experience of the State's arrogance and manipulation led to such alienation and mistrust as to make anyone despair of ever reforming the Sri Lankan state.

Many are naturally angry about the LTTE's murder on 7th February of Parameshwara Kurukkal (Priest) at Santhiveli, a helpless and frightened father of three, whom the Army took to Vaharai four days earlier to give President Rajapakse the victor's photo opportunity. The LTTE assassins came across the lagoon by boat after nightfall. However, the people would be angrier about the mindless arrogance of the Government that gave no thought for the poor man's safety, and took to a victory exhibition in Colombo 150 displaced school children from Vaharai, who only recently faced the brunt of government shelling. Against such attitudes, the LTTE's purely negative and destructive approach is a sure winner.

Whatever the long-term significance, among LTTEers of standing from Batticaloa, Yohes of Kannankuda, a senior intelligence man, ran away. Ramanan was killed. Gadaffi, a senior intelligence man from Mudalaikkuda has gone abroad. A number of LTTE cadres from Batticaloa have fled and are trying to go abroad. Yohes had questioned Winson, who is in charge of finance: he held all monies received by way of tax and extortion. Winson's bodyguard had run away with 30 lakhs of rupees in his keeping. Yohes asked why Winson kept a large sum with his bodyguard. Yohes was asked to report to Karadian Aru. Fearing punitive action, Yohes bunked.

Forestry is under Rambo, Records under Aingaran; women fighters under Banumathy, Pavatana, Valipirai and Virichiya; the medical wing under Selvakumar, Education under Manivannan, Nimalraj and Thayakan; and the policewomen under Kuveni (who also is known by other names such as Thenilavu). Among those most powerful are those high up in intelligence such as Kannappan, Keerthi and Kamson. Kannappan has a reputation for abusing women who go to him for favours.

Another man reputed for misconduct is Sivaneethan of Mannampiddy, the explosives expert, who was under Ramanan and Yogan. He is credited with executing the attack on naval personnel at Habarana. Reputed a robber, his modus operandi with women who take his fancy is to make an offer of marriage and misuse them. Locals say that a woman who consents receives material favours, and could even have enemies killed by him. Those who refuse his advances could expect to have bombs planted and then discovered in their homes and taken into custody as spies. There are similarities between abuses in LTTE-controlled areas and government-controlled areas by dominant military groups.

II.5 TRO Abductions of January 2006 – A Second Follow-Up

We take this opportunity to present additional testimony on what has been for us an elusive episode. A TRO vehicle, which left Batticaloa on the evening of 29th January, was taken over by the Karuna group. The three female employees were questioned and released. Kasinathar Ganeshalingam and Kathirkamar Thavarasa, the driver, are missing. Unaware of this, a second TRO vehicle left about 24 hours later on 30th January. Five in this vehicle were abducted and the rest were released.

We could now say that our first information, which appeared in Special Report No.20 that the abductions were staged by the LTTE for advantage before the Geneva talks, is wrong. We are still puzzled as to how this story arose within sources close to the LTTE and why little was done to refute it. We followed up in the Supplement to Special Report No.23 with further information, which is mostly correct except for some discrepancies regarding the first vehicle.

We talked to persons who worked very closely with the TRO in Paduvankarai, and know those abducted in the second vehicle on 30th January. The inference from the testimonies of the three girls from the first vehicle (29th) given to the Human Rights Commission and Amnesty International was that Thavarasa being new to the job lost his way into danger. Our new inside sources tell us that Thavarasa was an old hand who had done this trip for three years, several times a month. They don't know Ganeshalingam and are convinced that the first vehicle didn't get lost, but the Karuna group planned the abductions.

As for the second vehicle, our sources say that nearly all those travelling were new recruits being taken to Killinochchi for training in office work and had no LTTE connections. Many of them were closely related to persons from groups such as EPRLF and TELO whose members were massacred by the LTTE and were in the TRO for a job. Many people they add are not very conscious of TRO's links to the LTTE.

The target of these abductions was **Miss. Thanusody Premini**, described as TRO's Chief Accountant for Batticaloa. Sources we cited in the previous follow up said that she was a key person in the intelligence wing and a direct link between the Vanni leadership and leaders in the East. Our new sources confirmed that persons working closely with Vanni intelligence man the higher levels of the TRO and as people rise in the organisation they couldn't escape its intelligence functions.

As for Premini, they said that she was very important and everyone in the TRO was conscious of it. Though described as chief accountant, she was the real boss. She was a northerner following an external degree course along management lines in the Eastern University. She was sent wherever good coaching was to be obtained. Wherever she stayed, she was given special quarters and special facilities. She also knew that she was in danger. When she joined TRO vehicles going out of Batticaloa, she did so at different locations. She also told others in the TRO not to talk about her movements.

The new sources tend to place Premini's intelligence profile lower than that given in earlier testimony. They described her role as institutional intelligence, keeping track of what other organisations were doing and to bring them under TRO control. Among those watched were the more than 40 children's homes in the District. This involves in part auditing, tracking their sources of funds and centralising the funding. Were her intelligence profile very high, the security lapse on the part of the LTTE is inexplicable. Had the TRO known that the first van was missing when the second was to set off a day later, Premini would have escaped her fate. While the abduction of persons in the second van was publicised a few hours later on 30th January, it was a day later that the TRO announced the van that set off on 29th January was also missing.

Our new sources who know passengers in the second van said that Premini had boarded after Santhiveli. The passengers were surprised and asked her if she too was going to Killinochchi. Premini answered evasively that she was going to Colombo. Karuna's men (or Karuna's men with military persons) stopped the van after Welikanda and made them get out. They asked pointedly for Premini. Without answering them directly, Premini asked, "*Why are you asking for Premini?*" The men tied her hands and mouth. The others screamed. Most of them were let off, especially those connected to groups massacred by the LTTE. Premini remained dignified and defiant.

Others from the second vehicle not released according to the TRO are: Mr. **Shanmuganathan Sujendram** TRO Accountant, Manikkavasahar Children's Home, Santhivelli; Mr. **Thambiraja VasanthaRajan** Accountant, TRO Batticaloa; Mr. **Kailayapillai Ravindran** Accountant, Vipulananda Children's Home, Palugamam and Mr. **Arunesarasa Satheesharan** Accounts Trainee, Vellavalai.

Our new sources knew the foregoing individually, confirmed their credentials and the fact that they were abducted. They also affirmed that these persons were new recruits of Batticaloa origin and none except Ravindran had LTTE connections of any sort. Ravindran was a nephew of Keerthi of LTTE intelligence, which does not link him personally. Their families were earlier hopeful, but now fear the worst.

In our previous follow up we raised the question why the TRO did not arrange for any released from the second vehicle to testify as they did for the first. Our sources said that they declined to testify as the TRO wanted, since there were now competing killer groups and they needed to be careful.

A good source told us that in the wake of international concern about the abductions, the Army sent an official to Karuna's area interior of Welikanda to inquire. He, we learn, returned and filed a report that all those abducted had been killed. The Government kept mum. As to the role of government intelligence in this episode, we will not know for sometime. Without it the level of impunity enjoyed by the Karuna group is hard to understand and the Government could have saved those abducted by giving Karuna an informal warning as soon as the news was out.

As for the subsequent fate of those abducted, we have just one report by D.B.S. Jeyaraj (*Sunday Leader* and *TamilWeek*, 3 Feb.07). Jeyaraj quotes former members of the Karuna group. All, according to the report, were tortured and interrogated by Sittha who resides in Batticaloa town and handed over to Sinthjan. The men, the report says, were made to dig a pit, shot as they wept and then buried; while Premini was taken to another camp, gang-raped by Karuna cadres, beginning with Sinthjan and then killed.

Any speculation about Premini's intelligence connection must now end. If Jeyaraj is right, what was done to her is a crime against humanity. Sinthjan has a nasty public reputation as a leading child abductor for Karuna. A few months ago he ran his operations from an office next to and protected by the Akkaraipattu STF. The Government tries to evade responsibility for the Karuna group's actions by pretending they have nothing to do with them, but for the people who have to live with both, the nexus is a fact of life.

II.6 Tragedy, Struggle and Opposition under the LTTE

People living in the LTTE-controlled areas are conscious of oppression from several sources. They are constantly challenged to make intelligent choices to protect life. After many years of iron fisted internal repression, opposition cannot be expected to take clearly articulated political forms. But when it comes to issues of the heart or life, natural collectives exist to articulate spontaneous opposition to the LTTE.

II 6.1 The TRO and the struggle of children's homes in the East:

After many decades of destruction resulting in thousands of widows and orphans, many children's homes came up through village level dedication, often focussed on the temple. Christian homes tend to be larger and more urban unlike those in the LTTE area. Having started these homes, they began receiving funds from temples patronised by overseas Tamil communities. The religious and supporter affiliations of the homes could be found in their names such as *Kathiroli Siruvar Illam* and *London Sivayoham Illam*. The TRO has tried hard to take over these children's homes, given the LTTE's predilection for catching them young.

The TRO (LTTE) has no registered home in the Batticaloa District. *Arivuchcholai* started by them with children picked up from the tsunami affected has not been registered. The TRO was thus tasked to bring the 42 or so children's homes under their control. A strong hint of the methods where LTTE intelligence bats for the TRO, could be found in Bulletin No.37, where we describe LTTE intelligence's attempts to secure a TRO monopoly on relief funds pouring in after the 2004 tsunami, threatening independent fund raisers. There are similarities in the LTTE's attempt to takeover children's homes.

One of the means used was to call those running these homes for meetings with the TRO, asking them to bring their accounts and tracking donors and sources of funds. They are also taken to the Vanni on tours of children's homes run by them and lectured to adopt these models. A form of subtle pressure is to tell the homes to fly the 'national (Tiger) flag'. The LTTE's overseas networks approach temples and churches supporting independent institutions and put it to them, often through accomplices within, that the TRO is looking after children, claiming besides that all other institutions are working under it. The donors are pressed to send contributions to a central TRO fund.

Nearly all the homes and their supporters did not want to lose their independence. They did not want to fly the Tiger flag and have themselves branded. Many of the homes were affiliated to temples and served only vegetarian food, and wanted to keep things that way. When their funding was taken over by the TRO, they received 60 or 70 % of what they used to and with time it was often irregular. In the present confusion it almost dried up. The institutions continued by canvassing local contributions, such as food items.

Their problems did not end there. LTTE recruiters came to a children's home in the Kokkadichcholai area having children under 16 and demanded half a dozen or so to be handed over. The man running the home, who also had other scrapes with the LTTE, argued with them and refused. Later the Police were ordered to arrest him and send him for military training. His standing led to a protest by the girls at *Sakthi Mahalir Illam* in Arasaditivu who went to the LTTE political office and demanded his release. Those at *Sakthi Illam* later moved Rohini, a 17-year-old A. Level student who played a leading role in the protest, to a home in the government-controlled area.

Recently the LTTE abducted an A. Level student from *Vipulananda Siruvar Illam* in Palugamam managed by Piraba. The parents of the 76 children protested jointly. The LTTE released the boy. A sense of spontaneous solidarity within and between children's homes in the LTTE-controlled Paduvankarai enabled them to struggle on.

II 6.2 In the Vanni:

Resistance has differed from place to place and community to community. When earlier this year the LTTE canvassed villages in the south of the Vanni for military service, some flatly

refused. The LTTE forcibly took all the men in Kattankulam and Parappankandal into a jungle area about mid-2006, kept them behind barbed wire for three days and tried to talk them into military service. Three days later they broke the fences and went home. Former members of the LTTE in the southern Vanni were summoned for a meeting and Tamil Chelvan spoke, asking them to return.

The former members became very angry and started questioning Tamil Chelvan. They pointed out that after faithfully serving the LTTE for many years they were humiliated and punished when they wished to leave and begin normal life. The LTTE did nothing to rehabilitate them or help them in any way. What right did Tamil Chelvan have to demand their services now? The scene tended to a riot and LTTE troops had to be called in. We know for a fact that some skilled former LTTEers who refused to return were abducted and chained for months, with manacles, welded and sealed.

But then the Government's depredations of bombing their areas and setting its killers on former LTTEers who had gone back to civilian life began shifting things in the LTTE's favour. Today many have under pressure begun to accept the LTTE's rule of one recruit per family, while many parents continued to show grim resistance as in cases given earlier. By allowing the despairing parents to decide which child to hand over, it makes it appear to them that they had some choice. Elite responses have also been important.

During the CFA the church leadership came out against child conscription. But atrocities such as the government forces' attacks on the churches at Allaipiddy and Pesalai and the disappearance of Fr. Jim Brown and the wanton killing of Pastor Gnanaseelan without any apology or credible attempt at bringing the culprits to book are driving some church leaders back into the comfortable refuge of nationalism.

In the Mannar District itself the resistance shown by several individual church leaders attains to the noblest heights of their calling. In Adampan parents anxious to protect their children from conscription begged **Sister Ruparani, of the Franciscan Order**, to take them into the children's home she was in charge of. She had also scolded LTTE men who came in their white van. She was hard pressed for resources to keep up with the demands on her. She went to an NGO meeting in Mannar town attended by leading government and non-government officials and pleaded for something to be done. She went back a disappointed woman.

Fr. Emil, OMI, the parish priest of Our Lady of Madhu, has on his own initiative thrown the premises open for those who want to use the shrine as a refuge to protect their children. Against mounting pressure he has stood firm. 8000 families there are keeping their fingers crossed, not expecting the LTTE to keep out for long. We reliably learn that the LTTE has made known its displeasure of the UNHCR helping them. The growing nationalist mood among the church hierarchy too may eventually undermine him. There is the elite argument that the LTTE alone now stands between the Tamils and the Sinhalese government's ill will. Therefore, it is argued, unless we turn a blind eye to what the LTTE is doing, all the gains of the struggle would be lost. Such arguments turn also a blind eye to the agony at the more helpless levels of society and the undeniable self-destruction that is a painful reality.

II 6.3 Hill Country Tamils in the Vanni

The Tamil elite very foolishly aided their disenfranchisement in 1949 and also now are largely blind to the repression of these same Tamils who came to the Vanni to escape

communal violence and starvation in the South during the 1970s. In the early 1990s there was talk of expelling them from the Vanni as were the Muslims, caricaturing them as spies and informers. Later the LTTE discovered that they were the cheapest cannon fodder available with minimum liabilities.

The liberties the LTTE took with this community have hardly gone on record. Persons from the Hill Country who visited relatives in the Vanni have in the past discovered to their horror that the LTTE refused exit passes for those it eyed for recruitment. In such instances, parents had to leave their children with relatives and go back.

Rajes a girl visitor of about 18 was by her parents left with an aunt in the Vanni because she was refused an exit pass. She was bathing in a tank with her cousin and another girl, when LTTE women came by and conscripted them. Not long afterwards, she died in the 2000 battle for Elephant Pass. Her elder brother who had married and settled in the Vanni was during the same period forced into the auxilliary force, taken to Jaffna during the abortive attempt to take it and was also killed.

The father was presented with his daughter's tomb, but no like memorial for his son. He refused money from the LTTE. Another man visiting the Vanni observed that many people of Hill Country origin are living in houses provided by the LTTE to martyrs' families, crying over the pictures of ones stolen from them.

Cases of abuse of women of Hill Country origin by LTTE cadres are known, but not the extent. One woman with close connections in the Mallavi area said that cadres working in the farm have raped women in the nearby Hill Country settlement. In one instance, the mother helped the daughter to kill the baby to protect the daughter's name. She said that she knew of at least two other like cases.

A man who is sharp despite his humble exterior, described a visit to an LTTE women's camp. He saw girls standing in a queue answering questions from a sophisticated, educated, fairer looking girl who was filling up forms. The man observed that the girls in the queue, destined to fight and die, were of decidedly rural appearance and darker in complexion. The ones doing the desk jobs were of a different class.

II.7 Ramifications of Impunity: Rape, IDPs and INGOs

Rape: Where there is a licence to kill there is also a licence to rape. The people are in either event too helpless. Rape also becomes a symbol of power and power relations between communities. This was the underlying fact in the Krishanthy Kumarasamy case (Special Report No.12), which the State was quick to suppress after symbolic death sentences to a few at the lowest rung of a gory operation. Corporal Rajapakse, later revealed to a disappearance commission that a skull excavated at Chemmany was that of a man they killed when his wife was raped. The victim since left for Germany and refuses to pursue the matter. Today, the practice repeats itself with a difference. When the Jaffna disappearances of 1996 came to light, the Government was at least sensitive enough to curtail the practice. Today we have a Government, which does not seem to care even after appointing a commission of inquiry.

Under the present Government, there was a surge in rape from the time of the security forces-backed Trincomalee riots of 12th April 2006. Among the women reportedly raped were four who went to transact business at a shop that came under attack. They were taken away in a

van and according to locals both robbed and raped. Among established cases, a medical practitioner told us that Anbuvelipuram, a suburb of Trincomalee, is a place that has seen a high incidence of rape by the Navy and home guards. Among those who came to consult him were an 18-year-old girl and two older women from there.

Three girls from Jaffna working for a government department and staying in a house at 3rd Mile Post came to him a few months later. Security forces men came to their home at 11.00 PM and left at 2.00 AM. The girls, one of whom was soon to marry, did not want to continue in Trincomalee and obtained transfers to the North. He is also aware of a woman raped before her husband in Kanniya.

A political party source in Vavuniya said that at least three or four very poor Tamil women have been raped in Maharambaikkulam. He blamed military intelligence types with the involvement of a Tamil civilian working for them.

Short Cuts to Shifting the Displaced: We earlier gave a case in the Mannar District where the Army threw a grenade, shot a man dead and claimed that he was trying to throw the grenade at them. This kind of routine lying under the prevailing impunity has also other more mundane uses. The Displacement of Tamils and Muslims in and around Mutur in August 2006 was mainly caused by government shelling and terror by the security forces. The Government was however intent on forcibly returning the IDPs without assurance of security and claiming on paper that most of them had returned.

It was a military operation with the new Trincomalee GA Maj. Gen. T.T.R. de Silva (Rtd.) in charge. To get the displaced Muslims back from Kantalai, Kinniya, Thampalakamam, the DSs under the GA issued deadlines by which their rations, water and electricity would be cut. Then buses were brought, and in several instances force was used to get the IDPs inside. On 25th September 2006, Muslims who were returned to Mutur and fled again to Kinniya were thrown out of Al Aksha and Al Hirah schools by the Police acting on the GA's orders and spent the first day of Ramadan on the street. Later they broke the gates and reentered the schools.

When it came to Tamil refugees in Trincomalee Town, who stayed on into November and December, military personnel were sent in to harass them with searches at odd hours. They were told that the Karuna group would deal with them if they refused to move back to their villages, that young men and women would be harmed, or if they remained arms and explosives would be planted in their quarters and they would all be arrested.

Attacks on Aid Agencies: We learnt from alarmed aid staff the two following incidents involving prominent INGOs, both well-connected internationally and one of them has worked here for many years before the tsunami. On the morning of 9th February 2007, the STF walked into an INGO office in Akkaraipattu and demanded that they submit a list with details of all local staff or else they would all be shot in their office. They got worried and phoned the local STF Chief. The STF group came back at 11.00 AM and told the staff that they were aware of their phoning the Chief, but whatever the commanders say they would do as they please.

In the second, the STF went to another INGO office in Akkaraipattu and in threatening an individual told him that they would not hesitate to shoot all the staff of his organisation as they had S. Rubesh of TdH; and further not in the dark as Rubesh was, but in broad daylight. On 23rd November 2006, Sabaratnam Rubesh (31) of Terre des hommes, who was at home in

Periyaneelavanai with his wife and 6-year-old daughter, was called outside and shot dead. He was an active member of the local community, who joined the Tdh and worked in the Kalmunai base of its water and sanitation team. These incidents must be seen in the light of official hostility to INGOs that provide essential services to IDPs, which become crucial in the wake of swelling displacement.