



**July-2004**

**Northeast Secretariat on Human Rights (NESOHR)  
Launched in Kilinochchi**

The Northeast Secretariat on Human Rights was launched in Kilinochchi on 9th of July 2004. It will monitor the human rights violations in the NorthEast and implement actions to strengthen the human rights. The action committee of the secretariat headed by Father M.X. Karunaratnam consists of Proctor Sivapalan, Dr. Sivapalan (Medical Faculty, Jaffna University), Mr. Joseph Pararajasingam (Member of Parliament), Miss. Arulananthan (University of Jaffna), Mr. Puleedevan (Secretary General, Peace Secretariat), Mr. Gajendran (Member of Parliament), Prof. Srisikandaraja (Denmark), and Dr. Malathy (Human Rights Activist, New Zealand).



The secretariat, located on A9 Road, was opened at 10.30 AM with the lighting of the lamp. It was followed by a meeting presided by Fr.M.X. Karunaratnam. The meeting was attended by the committee and Mr. S. P. Tamilselvan, Head of LTTE Political Wing, Mr. S. Thankan, Deputy Head of LTTE Political Wing, Police officers, cadres, and many civilians.

Matters relation to human rights violation in the Northeast necessitated and organized unit and hence the establishment of NESOHR.

CFA between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE is 30 months old now. Suffice to say, it has well exceeded the various time limits envisaged in it to bring about normalcy in the lives of the people living in the military occupied NorthEast. Normalcy, the most important among the dividends of peace, has not dawned on the people who are now, pathetically though, called Internally Displaced Persons, still languishing in refugee camps, welfare centers and with relatives and friends.

Six rounds of peace Talks and the establishment of the various sub-committees notwithstanding, the immediate humanitarian needs relating to resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction still remain unfulfilled. The government coming out with proposals mostly in a unilateral manner and setting up mechanism to implement them has almost become a routine bureaucratic exercise, producing no tangible result. Lack of political will and sincerity of purpose on the part of the ruling elite still continue as the most obstinate impediment in meeting the needs of the people.

Conscious of the urgency of humanitarian needs and respecting the mandate given by the Tamil People in the NorthEast, exercising their franchise in the last general election, the LTTE formulated the proposals for an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) and expressed unambiguously their readiness to recommence negotiations on the basis of the proposal.

For the recommencement of peace talks therefore, the onus is on the government to fulfill its obligations relating to the CFA and then LTTE is in readiness to recommence negotiations firstly on the basis of the ISGA proposals, for they focus mainly on the delivery of peace dividends without which the Tamil people cannot become stakeholders in the peace process.

NESOHR shall in its endeavors to promote and protect human rights:

**Send** fact-finding missions that include visiting the camps where IDPs are housed, and detention centres/prisons in order to collect testimonies as well as to ascertain and document the information about human rights violations.

**Issue** urgent appeals, press releases, reports and publications on human rights violations in the NorthEast.

**Create** and foster human rights awareness among individuals and groups in the NorthEast through publications, conferences, seminars and study/educational/ familiarization tours both local and international.

**Establish** links with National and International government organizations and NGOs to develop mutually beneficial cooperation to obtain information and to initiate action to respect and enhance human rights culture in the NorthEast.

*NESOHR intends:*

To provide aid to Internally Displaced People in the NorthEast to return, resettle in their homes or habitual places of residence.

To provide legal aid to secure the release of the people of the NorthEast who were arrested by armed forces and are languishing in prisons and detention centres, under the PTA, without recourse to justice.



### Mr. Hans Brattskar visits NESOHR

Norway Ambassador Mr. Hans Brattskar during a visit to Kilinochchi on 13th July, took time off to see for himself newly established Human Rights Secretariat in Kilinochchi and had discussions with the Chair person Rev. Fr. M.X. Karunaratnam and Dr. Malathy, Human Rights Activist.



Fr. Karunaratnam briefed the Ambassador on the various activities undertaken by the secretariat and expressed confidence about the future vision in the context of a human rights commission's role in the Interim Administration of the NorthEast. The Ambassador congratulated the Chair person and encouraged him to take forward his mission with relentless pursuit for peace and justice to everybody.

### Thirtyfour youngsters transferred to the transit center

Thirty four youngsters who enrolled themselves submitting false particulars, especially of their age to join with the LTTE, had been identified as under aged following action taken by the special committee appointed to deal with the issue of the intake of under age children.

The youngsters had been handed over to the Transit Centre organised and managed by the TRO in co-operation with the UNICEF on 29th July 2004.

## Cease Fire violations and apparent preparation by SLA for war

Though the peace process is at a stalemate, there is relative peace prevailing due to the absence of war. But the SLA and its appendages, the Tamil armed groups, by their hostile activities against civilians and LTTE members, are apparently trying to disturb the peace environment and push the Tamil people into a war situation again.

LTTE Political activists who are engaged in political work in the military occupied areas are being targeted by the SLA indulging in provocative acts. Adding to it, the government is actively engaged in arms procurement and entering into military training agreements with foreign entities, all of which leading to grave concern in the minds of the Tamil people about an impending war.

Following are some of the violations in the month of July:

### SLA impeding LTTE Political activities

Mr.S. Elilan, Head of the Political Division in Trincomalee along with his colleagues on their way to Pulmoddai, north of Trincomalee were stopped from proceeding further by the SLA unit stationed at Yan Oya. The SLA insisted on their escorting that political team. Mr.Elilan however rejected this suggestion and expressed his protest in terms of the CFA. Later they returned from that point and informed the SLMM of the violation.

### One LTTE member killed and three injured in Batticaloa.

In two separate incidents in the military occupied Batticaloa area on 5th July 2004 one LTTE member was shot dead and three others injured.

Mr.Senathirajah, Head of the Batticaloa town Political Division was shot at Arasadi junction around 09.15 am when he and his colleague Nilan were riding in a motorcycle. Having been admitted to hospital Mr. Senathirajah succumbed to the injury and attained martyrdom on 13 July.

In another incident between Sithathandi and Shenkaledi two LTTE members, Messes. Murinchan and Roshan were shod at near the Vantharumulai Catholic Church. These two LTTE members were proceeding to Chenkaledi in a motorcycle at this time and Mr. Murinchan attained martyrdom while Mr. Roshan seriously injured. Two persons who followed them in a motorcycle are said to be the assailants. Both these incident took place in the military occupied areas.



### SLA prohibits the Tamil national flag.

During a meeting of the National Uprising movement in Nilaveli Tamil Mahavidyalaya in the Trincomalee district commencing at 10.00 am on 3 July 2004 SAL officials interrupted the meeting and insisted on de-hoisting the Tamil National flag. An argument ensued and Mr. Elilan, head of the Trincomalee political division explained that the flag hoisting has been already intimated to the SLMM due to the conflicting attitude of the SLA. The SLA however did not accept this and was adamantly insisting on the de-hoisting. The people in the congregation strongly protested to this arbitrary action of the SLA and it is only after that the SLA personnel left the scene.

In another incident in Vathiry, Vadamaradchi in the military occupied Jaffna district where a football match organized by the Inter Sports groups association was interrupted by the SLA who insisted on de-hoisting the Tamil National flag on 12th July

## Cease Fire violations and apparent preparation by SLA for war

2004. The organizers were threatened and the SLMM informed of the situation. The spectators along with the organizers strongly protested and thereafter the SLA left the location.

### Unnecessary detentions of LTTE political cadres in Muhamalai check point.

Political cadres on their way to the Jaffna peninsula were detained for nearly two hours without any reason on 20th July 2004 when they were proceeding to Jaffna in three vehicles through the Muhamalai check point. The SLA did not adduce any reason for this delay. The political cadres registered their objection but the military continued to maintain their adamant attitude without any valid reason. The Jaffna district political division issued a statement condemning this action.

### Restriction of Festival time in Maviddapuram Hindu temple

The military has arbitrarily fixed festival hours for the annual festival in Maviddapuram Kandasamy temple which commenced on 21st of July 2004. According to this restriction, devotees are allowed entry only at 08.00am and their stay in the temple restricted up to 02.00 pm only. The Temple management and devotees are highly disturbed over this time limit in the historically famous Hindu temple. The military has strictly enforced this order and threatened that anyone staying beyond 02.00 pm inside the temple premises would be taken into custody.

### Sri Lankan Navy attacks two fishermen at sea

On 21st of July 2004 at 3.00 am, Pirabhaharan and Kaman, of Vannankulam in Mullaitivu, started out on their fishing trip. A Sri Lankan Navy Dvora on surveillance approached the two at sea. Navy men in the Dvora beat Pirabhaharan and lifted Kaman by his shirt collar into their Dvora. They beat Kaman in the Dvora and then asked Pirabhaharan to follow them in his boat. When Pirabhaharan refused, they tied his boat to their Dvora and

dragged the boat for a long distance with Pirabhaharan in his boat and Kaman in the Dvora. They then picked up Kaman by his legs and arms and threw him into the fishermen's boat. Kaman fainted as a result of this. The fishermen reached the shore at 10.00 am and Kaman was admitted to Mullaitivu hospital.

The Fishermen's Association of Mullaitivu has condemned this attack and has said that attacks like this by the Sri Lankan Navy on the fishermen are uncontrolled and cowardly. The Sri Lankan Navy has carried out this attack even after knowing that the men are innocent fishermen. The association added that the fishermen are struggling to recover from a brutal war conducted by the Sri Lankan government and such attacks will only worsen the frustration of the fishermen towards the government. The President of the Federation of fishermen associations, A Mariarasa, said that the federation has sent a detailed complaint to the SLMM.

### Shooting exercises and fortification of bunkers

It is observed that the SLA stationed in Thalladi military complex in Mannar district are engaged in shooting practices daily. In view of the density of civilian population in this area, this practice tends to violate the CFA and disturb the peace in the environment. These units are also seen to be fortifying the bunkers on the road to Medawachchiya and erecting new fences with palmyrah leaves.

### Civilian LTTE activist killed

Mr. Seeniththambi Mahalingam, age 28, a civilian political activist of Vakara, Puliyanakandal, Kathiraveli in the Batticaloa district was shot dead by elements opposed to the Tamil national course on 23rd July 2004. While registering their protest to this matter, the Liberation Tigers have expressed their condolence to the family of Mr. Mahalingam.



## Diplomatic moves and important meetings

Guns are silent and relative peace is prevailing in the country but the stalled peace process is not moving forward. There are no signs visible in the political horizon indicating any government initiatives to recommence the peace process. The Norwegian facilitators are taking extra ordinary efforts to uphold the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA). The following is an overview of the various diplomatic moves taken in this respect.

### Head of SLMM meets with Mr. Tamilselvan

Major General Trond Furuhoide, Head of the SLMM visited Kilinochchi on 11th July 2004 and had a meeting with S.P. Tamilselvan, Head of the LTTE Political Wing in the Peace Secretariat.

In-depth discussions took place on matters relating to the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA), happenings in Batticaloa, Amparai and the general political situation. Associated with Mr. Tamilselvan was Mr. S. Puleedevan, Director of the LTTE Peace Secretariat.

### Norwegian Special envoy Erik Solheim met LTTE chief negotiator

Mr. Erik Solheim the Norwegian special peace envoy visited Mr. Anton Balasingam, the LTTE chief negotiator, in London on 6th July 2004. The purpose of this was to visit brief the chief negotiator on the stand president Chandrika Kumarathunga has taken in the current situation and discuss about the intention of the LTTE.

Mr. Anton Balasingam, after explaining the LTTE position, expressed serious concern about the SLA making use of Karuna and his armed gang to create confusion in Batticaloa and Amparai. He strongly protested against the soft pedaling attitude adopted by the president in the capacity of holding the Defense portfolio. This, Mr. Balasingam said, is a clear sigh of the president's incompetence in handling her own ministry and her inability to sincerely take forward the peace process.

### “GoSL and LTTE should continue to work hard in maintaining the CFA”

-Norwegian Ambassador in Kilinochchi-

In a meeting that lasted for about two hours in the LTTE Peace Secretariat Mr. Hans Brattskar told Mr. S. P. Tamilselvan, Head of the LTTE Political Wing that Norway as facilitator to the peace process, is seriously concerned about Cease Fire violations and continued that both parties should work hard to maintain the integrity of the Cease Fire Agreement.



The Ambassador arrived in Kilinochchi on 13th July 2004 and had discussions with the Head of the LTTE Political Wing on wide ranging matters related to the CFA violations, the law and order situations in Batticaloa-Amparai and about the work Norway is involved in the recommencement of negotiations.

Mr. Tamilselvan drew the attention of the Ambassador to clause 1.8 of the CFA vis-à-vis the proliferation of armed groups which Mr. Tamilselvan said poses a serious threat to uphold the integrity of the CFA both in letter and spirit.

The Head of the Political Wing impressed upon the Ambassador that GoSL should contribute more in dealing with the deteriorating situation in Batticaloa-Amparai and be helpful in creating a conducive atmosphere to uphold the CFA and move towards recommencement of negotiations.

Mr. Kausalyan, Head of the LTTE Batticaloa-Amparai Political Wing was also present and he briefed the Ambassador on the ground realities pertaining to the activities of armed groups. Also associated with Mr. Tamilselvan in the meeting were Mr. P. Nadesan, Head of the Tamil Eelam Police and Mr. S. Puleedevan, Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat.

#### **Batticaloa TNA legislators and CBOs – LTTE in Killinochchi**

Tamil National Alliance (TNA) members of parliament and representatives of Civilian Based Organizations (CBO) arrived in Killinochchi on 17th July for a meeting with the LTTE. Current political situation with special attention to Batticaloa, Amparai was discussed in this meeting. Legislators led by Mr. Joseph Pararajasingam and about 20 representatives of CBOs expressed their views and had detailed discussions with Head of the Political Wing.

Associated with Mr. Tamilselvan in this meeting were Batticaloa, Amparai special commander Col. Ramesh, Batticaloa Political Head Kausalyan, Director SIHRN Ireneus Selvin, LTTE Economic advisor Jay Maheswaran and Mr. S. Thangan, Deputy Head of the Political Wing.

#### **World Bank team in Kilinochchi**

Mr. Peter Harrold, World Bank's Country Director in Sri Lanka visited Kilinochchi on 19th July 2004 along the team of WB officials in connection with a

workshop relative to humanitarian delivery at the Planning and Development Secretariat (PDS) of the LTTE.

Mr. Peter Harrold and his team had a separate meeting with Mr. S.P. Tamilselvan, Head of the Political Wing in the Peace Secretariat. Discussions took place on how best to remove the impediments in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the absence of the right mechanism. Mr. Tamilselvan pointed out that the delay on the part of the government to recommence negotiation on the basis of the ISGA proposals is seriously viewed by the Tamil people who have been denied the dividends of peace for such a long time. Mr. Peter Harrold endorsed that view and said that the international donor community and the WB are conscious of the necessity for the institutionalizing of the ISGA in the context of the Tokyo declaration wherein the necessity for an interim mechanism has been emphasized as a part of the political resolution.

Dr. Jay Maheswaran, Economic Advisor to the LTTE was also associated with Mr. Tamilselvan in the discussion.

#### **“Activities of armed groups in Batticaloa-Amparai gives us serious concern”**

**-Head of SLMM in Kilinochchi-**

“The SLMM has strongly urged the government to take meaningful and effective action to curb the activities of paramilitary groups including that of Karuna faction and the EPDP”, said Major General



Trond Furuhoide, Head of Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission responding to Mr. S.P.Tamilselvan's concern over the issue.

The Head of the SLMM arrived in Kilinochchi on 21 July 2004 afternoon by an SLAF helicopter and had discussions with SLMM officials in Kilinochchi. In a meeting with Mr. S.P. Tamilselvan, Head of the LTTE Political Wing on the following day, 22 July 2004 he briefed the Political Chief the outcome of his discussions with the Defense Secretary and Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Director General of the Government Peace Secretariat.

Mr. Tamilselvan raised the issue of law and order in Batticaloa and the disturbing trend consequent to the activities of the various paramilitary groups. The Political Chief expressed great concern over the risk faced by unarmed LTTE members in the GoSL areas.

The Head of the SLMM said that he is aware of the situation and conscious of the violations in the context of article 1.8 of the CFA which clearly prohibits the presence of armed groups. Continuing further he said that he has already urged the Government to take effective measures to arrest the deteriorating situation and will continue to do so in future as well.

### Helgesen in Kilinochchi

#### Formulating modalities for the agenda to recommence negotiations

In a scheduled visit to Kilinochchi Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister had discussions with Mr. S.P. Tamilselvan, Head of the LTTE Political Wing today 26th July 2004 in the Political Head Quarters with a view to ascertain the views of the LTTE regarding the agenda for recommencement of negotiations with GoSL.

Mr. Tamilselvan briefing the Norwegian team that included Mr. Hans Brattskar, the Norwegian Ambassador said that there is no

change to the position of the LTTE than that of the conclusions conveyed by Mr. V. Prabakaran, Tamil National Leader in the meeting with Norwegian Foreign Minister Mr. Jan Petersen in May.

He continued further that the ISGA proposals should form the basis of the recommencement of negotiations and pointed out that serious lapses are taking place in Batticaloa, Amparai in the context of the CFA violation relating to the activities of armed groups.



The Deputy Minister was scheduled to meet the President tonight and would convey the position of the LTTE. Associated with Mr. Tamilselvan were Mr. P. Nadesan, Head of the Tamil Eelam Police and Mr. S. Puleedevan, Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat.

### Deputy FM Vidar – meets Bala in London.

Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister visited LTTE chief negotiator Anton Balasingam in London on 30th July 2004. Wide-ranging issues including the outcome of Mr. Helgesen's meeting with President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and others in Colombo were discussed.

Matters relating to the situation in Batticaloa Amparai, the current status of the peace process, the government's lethargic attitude in the peace process vis-à-vis the ISGA proposals and the fear relating to the risky position of the CFA, were subjects that gained the attention of the two.

## Retrospect- A review of attacks carried out by the SLA against LTTE cadres since signing of the CFA.

(2002 February – 2004 June)

Sri Lankan government and the LTTE with the facilitation of Norway signed the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) on the 22nd of June 2002 as the basis for taking forward the peace process that will bring an end to the war between the two parties which was by then more than two decades old. The CFA was signed by the then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe on behalf of the Sri Lankan government and by the Tamil National Leader V. Pirabhakaran on behalf of the LTTE.

The CFA incorporated many rules that both sides must adhere to in order to bring together the peace initiatives and follow them up with actions. It also included many rules to be obeyed by both parties which will create a peaceful environment and bring about normalcy to people's lives. Today, two and a half years after the signing of the CFA, the CFA has not facilitated normalcy in people's lives nor has it addressed the daily problems faced by the people. On the contrary, during this period of peace, the Sri Lankan government, with the view to weaken the LTTE, has acted in violation of the CFA, and has been involved in attacks and other activities against the LTTE. The world knows this.

The LTTE has placed much confidence in the CFA and has adhered to it strictly and with conviction with the view to achieve the aspirations of the Tamil people without loss and through peaceful means. During the peacetime that was created as a result of both sides halting the war, LTTE cadres, patriots, and people were killed. Even then, the LTTE has shown patience and has strictly adhered to the CFA. This has been brought to the notice of the international community.

Four months have passed since the new government headed by Chandrika Kumaratunge took office. Yet no progress has been made in taking forward the peace process. Instead, it has joined with Karuna, who has acted traitorously towards the Tamil nation, and is creating disturbances, committing murders, weakening the Tamil's position, preparing for war, and creating the conditions to start the war.

People and the international community have clearly understood this situation.

Let us look at the CFA violations and attacks on the LTTE by the Sri Lankan military which has joined forces with those acting against the Tamil national cause.

On June 19th 2002, in Jaffna District Deputy Political Wing Head Chemmanan and two LTTE cadres were attacked and injured in Delft by the Sri Lankan Navy and EPDP. The LTTE members were in areas controlled by the Sri Lankan military for political work as agreed on in the CFA.

On 9th October 2002, in the Kanchirankuda area in Amparai district, in the shooting by the Sri Lankan military seven Tamil patriots died.

On 7th February 2003, when a trawler belonging to the Sea Tigers, was stranded in the sea due to engine troubles, the Sri Lankan Navy boarded the trawler. Even after the LTTE cadres explained the reason for their stalling the Navy tried to tow the trawler. As a result the LTTE cadres set fire to the trawler and destroyed themselves. In this incident, Sea Tiger Major Attalon/Suthan, Sea Tiger Captain Pothikaithevan, Sea Tiger Captain Anpan/Urvannan attained martyrdom.

On 12th February 2003, 8 LTTE women cadres were involved in political activity in Manipay in the Jaffna district. The Sri Lankan military stopped them and demanded that the cadres remove their waist belts. When the cadres said that the belts were not part of a military uniform but just ordinary belts, the Sri Lankan military ignored this and attacked the women cadres. The eight women cadres doing political work in accordance with the MOU agreement were attacked and injured.

On 10th March 2003, a merchant ship belonging to the LTTE was in the international waters, 220 kilometers from Trincomalee. The Sri Lankan Navy attacked this merchant ship. The ship was not breaking any law and had the right to navigate in



international waters. Yet, the Sri Lankan Navy attacked the ship in violation of CFA and against international law. As a result of this cruel act, eleven Sea Tigers attained martyrdom including Ship Captain Silamparasan.

On 21st May 2004, Lt. Poovannan, who was involved in political work in the military controlled area in Batticaloa was abducted and killed.

On 14th June 2003, a merchant vessel belonging to the LTTE, M T Chochchin, carrying oil was moving in the international waters, 265 nautical miles from Mullaitivu. The Sri Lankan Navy intercepted the ship and attacked it. Sri Lankan Navy ships with the following numbers were involved in the attack. These are: P 330, P 332, P 340, P 341, and P 701. As a result of this attack, a patriot traveling in the ship, and eleven highly experienced cadres lost their lives. They were traveling in the international waters with complete trust in the MOU.

On 7th April 2004, as a result of the joint treacherous attack by traitor Karuna and the Sri Lankan intelligence unit, LTTE cadre Major Thamileelan was killed.

On 10th April 2004, as a result of the joint treacherous attack by traitor Karuna and the Sri Lankan intelligence unit, three cadres lost their lives. On the same day, LTTE cadre Lt. Ramanathan was killed by Karuna associates in Kathiraveli area in Batticaloa.

On 12th April 2004, traitor Karuna's group treacherously killed LTTE cadre, Lt Colonel Neelan in the Batticaloa district.

On 25th April 2004, Karuna associates who entered through the Vavunathivu Sri Lankan military camp in Batticaloa, killed four handicapped cadres who were staying in the LTTE's Mullamunai agricultural camp. At the same time in another attack against an LTTE security post in Mullamunai, three cadres attained martyrdom.

On 1st May 2004, in an attack on the LTTE women's battalion by an unidentified group in

the Kiran region in Batticaloa, which is under LTTE control, one LTTE cadre attained martyrdom.

On 6th May 2004, in an attack conducted by the Karuna group, near a military security post in Mullamunai area in Batticaloa, two LTTE cadres attained martyrdom.

On 20th May 2004, an unidentified group penetrated the LTTE controlled area in Batticaloa, and attacked the LTTE cadres passing through the Alankuli area. One cadre was murdered and two cadres injured.

On 31st May 2004, patriot and journalist Mr.G. Nadesan was shot dead by the Karuna group, which is functioning with the assistance of Sri Lankan military, in the Mamankam Border Street.

On 5th July 2004, political section head of Batticaloa town, Mr. Senathiraja, and Mr. Neelan, were traveling on a motorcycle near Arasady-Junction, which is in the Sri Lankan military controlled area. They were shot using pistol by unidentified gunmen and were taken to the Batticaloa hospital with serious injuries. Later, on 13th July, the political section head of Batticaloa town, Mr. Senathiraja succumbed to the injuries and attained martyrdom.

On 5th July 2004, the same day, at 10.00 A.M in the morning, LTTE cadres were shot at using handguns in front of the Vantharamoolai Catholic church.

When the non-compliance of the government of many of the clauses in the CFA over the two and a half year period, and the attacks on the LTTE like those listed above and several other matters are studied, people and the international community will understand very well who the enemy of peace is.

During this period of CFA, the LTTE had lost 44 of its cadres and 9 patriots. Also during this period many LTTE cadres, including female cadres, were arrested. Many have been injured as a result of attacks on them. In spite of these losses, the LTTE has shown patience, and has uphold the CFA with dedication, confidence, and trust.

## Looking back two decades in perspective – Black July 1983



Remembered with grief by the Tamil people living throughout the length and breadth of the Tamil homeland and scattered around the globe as refugees, is the Black July- 1983.

Naïve though confining communal pogroms against Tamils in this island to July 1983, yet this remains an indelible blot in the Tamils psyche. Why the sordid memory cannot be confined to July 1983 is because the Tamils faced a similar onslaught in the mid-fifties, to be precise, in 1958 when the Tamil people, adhering to the most democratic and Gandhian non-violent principle, protested against the discriminatory Sinhalese Only Official Language Act, were beaten-up and shipped to their home-land, the point in history when the Tamil people were told by the ruling elite that the NorthEast is their 'home land'.

Loss of Tamil lives and property, ignominy notwithstanding, was mind-boggling in the 1958 pogrom and a whole host of like communal vendetta against Tamils at organized level till 1983. But July 1983 has a special significance because of numbers involved and the resultant exodus of Tamils and other minorities like Burghers migrating

to safer locations in the globe. In fact July 1983, unlike any other communal holocaust hitherto, brought to international attention the injustice that the Tamil people were facing and the discriminatory governance pattern with which the Tamils had to 'live' with.

Kumar Rupesinghe and Berth Verstappen in their 'Ethnic Conflict and Human Rights in Sri Lanka' have this to say in their Introduction:

*'...The events of July 1983 were a shattering experience. All though there had been 'riots' and so called 'communal violence' earlier in the history of the country, the scale and intensity of violence in July 1983 and the damage to relations between two peoples have been almost irreparable. The Barbaric killing of 53 prisoners in Welikade Prison, Colombo, shocked all civilized people, violating all sense of decency and known norms of civilized society.'*

Flashing back our memory to the communal pogrom of 1958, it is appropriate to recall the lines of Tarzie Vittachi, who in his book

'Emergency '58 –The story of the Ceylon race riots', says in its preface:

*'... This book, most of which was written during those long, tense curfew nights of May, and June 1958, is a record of the events, passions and under-currents which led to the recent communal crisis, and of the more remarkable instances of man's inhumanity to man in those hate-filled days.*

*..... When a government, however popular, begins to pander to racial or religious emotionalism merely because it is the loudest of the raucous demands made on it, and then meddles in the administration and enforcement of law and order for the benefit of its favourites or to win the plaudits of crowd, however hysterical it may be, catastrophe is certain.*

*At the risk of losing the monumental support of the anti-Muslim Congress sympathizers, Mahatma Gandhi once said:*

*No cabinet worthy of being representative of a large mass of man-kind can afford to take any step merely because it is likely to win the hasty applause of an unthinking public. In the midst of insanity, should not our best representatives*

*retain sanity and bravely prevent a wreck of the ship of state under their care?*

*Can any one doubt that if this glorious principle of statesmanship had been applied in Ceylon the bloodbath of 1958 could have been avoided?*

*... Emergency '58 ends with the question: 'have we come to the parting of the ways?' ... Many thoughtful people believe that we have. Others, more hopeful, feel that the bloodbath we have emerged from has purified the national spirit and given people a costly lesson in humility.*

-Emergency' 58, Tarzie Vittachi – 1958.

In remembering July 1983 therefore, it is irresistible for the Tamil psyche to overlook the ones before and after. Even after the island being relegated to the status of a rogue or pariah state in 1983, unfortunately though the Tamils faced many a holocaust and a full scale war prosecuted by those in governance. If setting fire to the library in Jaffna and the massacre of Tamil youths during the Tamil Research Conference can be classified as part of the genocidal pogroms, the arrest of several hundreds of Tamil youths in 1996 who ended up in mass graves in Chemmani, Jaffna comes on top of all injustices that the Tamil people faced. Compensation and reconciliation,





subjects that are much talked about these days in the context of July 1983, should encompass all acts of violence perpetrated on the Tamils from 1958, else it is only political expediency.

Whether as Tarzi Vittachi said, we feel that the blood bath we have emerged from has purified the national spirit and given people a costly lesson in humility is a matter yet to be seen in the context of the repeated bloodbaths that this island had since then. Liberation Tigers as a responsible freedom fighting organization wishes to associate itself with the grief of the Tamil people all over the world for the loss and ignominy that they faced and in the same breath reaffirm their commitment with dedication to take forward the freedom struggle and achieve the national aspirations of the Tamil people.



### Black Tiger day commemorations

Black Tiger day and the commemoration relating to the completion of 17 years of the first Black Tiger attack, took place all over Tamil Eelam on 5th July 2004. The Tamil people began commemorating this memorable event from first July.

Sports competitions, Shramadana programs, and literary debates took place on a district level. The Tamil people remembered the 261 Black Tigers who have sacrificed their lives in very unique and heard-rending manner, by carrying in procession photographs of these martyrs. This day gains

significance in the life of the Tamil people and their armed struggle for freedom, the day on which the first Black Tiger captain Miller attacked the military complex located in central college premises in Nellyyadi in the Jaffna district.

In a special ceremony in Wannu, Tamil National Leader V. Pirabakaran paid his respects to the Black Tiger martyrs who opened a new page in the history of Tamil armed struggle. Also he participated in the ceremony releasing a video documentary and CDs containing songs in praise of the Black Tigers.



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