

Why Tamils face international 'shock and awe'

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Tigers urge end to world support for war

THE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) this week urged the international community to abandon its support for the Sri Lankan government's new war and to play a constructive role towards peace.

In an interview Sunday, the head of the LTTE's Political Wing, Mr. S. P. Thamichelvan, said the decision to ban the Tigers in various countries and actions which restricted the political work of the Tigers, were being interpreted by Colombo as endorsing its militarist approach.

Mr. Thamichelvan warned it was a fallacy to think that by weakening the LTTE, the movement could be coerced into compromising on Tamil political goals.

The Sinhala polity was today working on unacceptable solutions that were rejected by the Tamils 30 years ago, he said, implying that the Sinhala leadership had to want a just peace also.

"The Sinhala leadership ought to develop a profound understanding of the aspirations and the demands of the Tamil people," Mr. Thamichelvan said and questioned whether a conducive environment for a such change is promoted when international players were supporting Colombo's war.

"The international community through the involvement in the peace process during the last five years clearly knows that the Sri Lankan Government has never been ready to provide a reasonable solution to the Tamil people."

Full interview, p3
Editorial, p6

(left) Sri Lankan troops patrol in Jaffna. Over 40,000 Sinhala soldiers dominate the northern region, home to half a million Tamils. Photo Lakruwan Wanniarachchi/ AFP/Getty Images

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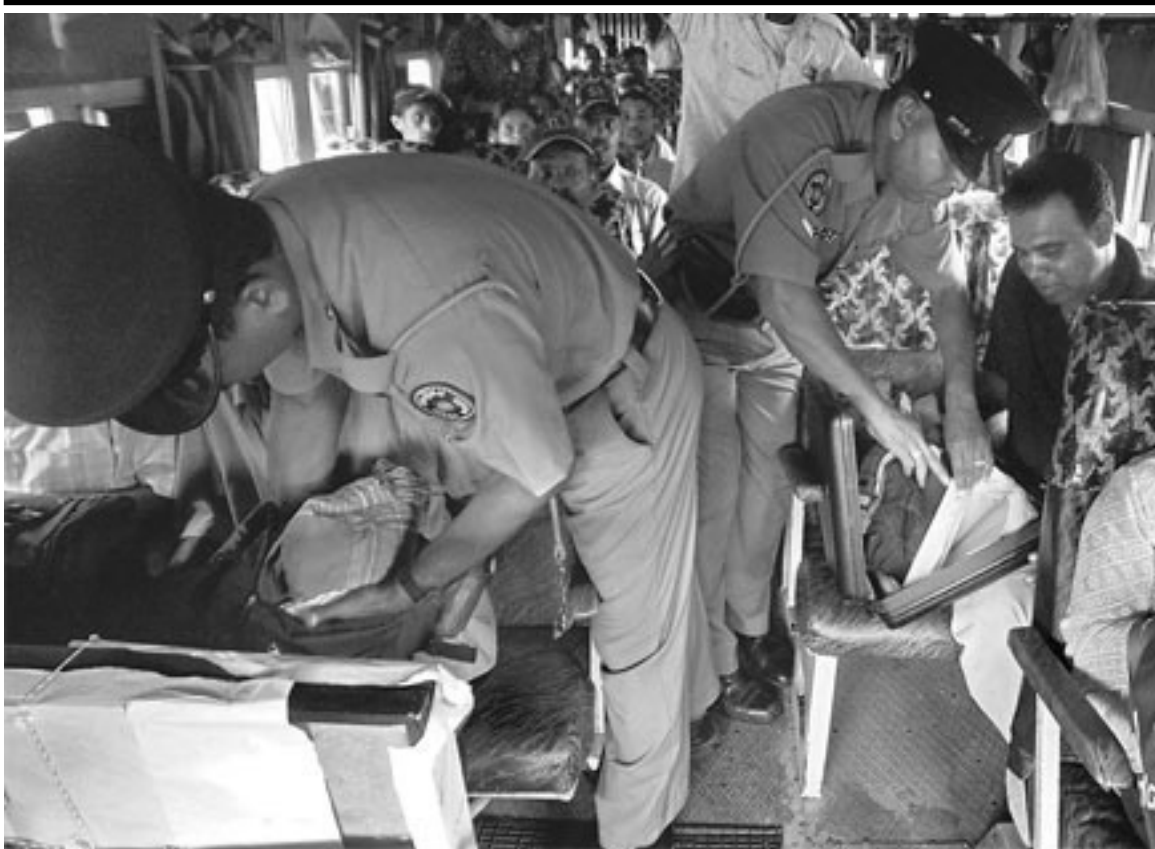
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NEWS



Police search passengers on a bus. Abductions and killings are escalating.

Photo Daily Mirror

Sri Lanka sinks into lawlessness

Barry Parker

AFP

CASES of murder, abduction, disappearance and intimidation surface almost daily in Sri Lanka as the South Asian nation appears to be sliding into lawlessness and war.

With a truce between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in tatters and peace talks long since abandoned, rights workers and the media fear the situation is spiralling out of control.

The government is pressing for a military victory over the Tigers, and a series of tit-for-tat clashes have left heavy casualties on both sides -- as well as discrepancies over the true body count.

But away from the front lines, bloodshed is just as frequent and usually involves civilians, although it is seldom clear who is behind the day-to-day violence.

"The situation is out of control," said Sunander Deshapriya of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, a private think tank.

"What we are seeing today is uncertainty. We do not know who is doing what. It is very difficult to find out who is responsible, violence is so widespread," Deshapriya said.

"It is also very difficult to see the situation improving."

Almost 5,000 people have been killed since December 2005, according to the defence ministry.

And more than 700 people are reported to have "disappeared" in the past year in Sri Lanka, where at least 60,000 people have been killed in the Tamil separatist conflict since 1972.

Such a climate of fear has not been seen on the island since 1987-1990, when the army crushed a Marxist Sinhalese uprising at the official cost of 16,750 dead

and thousands more missing.

Britain halted debt relief this month in anger at the government's human rights records, and major donor Japan is reviewing its position. Germany stopped aid last December.

The United States has also dropped the usual diplomatic niceties, publicly accusing Sri Lanka of reneging on promises to protect human rights.

"People are more fearful and face more difficulties. Overall, there has been a deterioration in Sri Lanka's human rights record," said US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher on a visit to Sri Lanka this month.

He travelled to the northern Jaffna peninsula, where 350,000 civilians and 40,000 government troops have lived under virtual siege conditions since the army closed the only land access in August after Tiger attacks.

Laxman Gunasekera, president of the South Asian Free Media Alliance (SAFMA) in Sri Lanka, said abductions were rampant - "but not a single government authority is prepared to acknowledge abductions and give us a figure."

"We have an impression of a lack of control by the state itself," he said.

Sri Lanka's Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe told AFP the lack of official figures was a "lacuna" and said the government was battling to ensure a human rights commission functioned independently.

This involved setting up a witness protection scheme and safe houses, and arranging for political asylum in the West when necessary. "It's a serious situation we have to grapple with," he said. "I know it's hard for people to understand that we are making progress."

The minister pointed to the ongoing return of thousands of refugees to eastern areas where

troops have captured territory from the LTTE.

But journalist groups accuse authorities of trying to silence anyone who dissents from the official line.

"Journalists face public abuse, violent physical assault, threats, deaths, abduction and murder ... in all parts of the country," including LTTE-held areas, said SAFMA's Gunasekera.

"The picture is not one of improvement, but worsening conditions," he said. "The reality is bleak."

The independent Sri Lanka Press Institute is creating a safety fund to help journalists facing death threats. It is looking at providing mobile phones to local reporters and running a safe house in the capital.

Tamil journalists have borne the brunt of the onslaught.

Several told AFP they live in fear for their lives and can no longer work normally or risk using their names on air or in print.

In eastern Batticaloa district, only one Tamil journalist remains at work today, several months after the army ousted the LTTE from the Tamil-majority area. Others have fled, among them the president of a Tamil journalists union.

Nadesapillai Vithyatharan, chief editor of the Tamil-language Uthayan newspaper - the only paper to publish in Jaffna for the last 20 years without interruption - refuses to back down.

He says he will not close despite a squeeze from the authorities which has resulted in the daily cutting its pages from 20 to four, and printing on any paper it can find. Circulation has dropped from 24,000 to 4,000.

"We have lost five staff in the last 18 months," he said. "I have had grenades tossed into my room, but I am ready for anything."

Violence reports p10-15

NEWS

‘Only when Tamils are strong is there a chance that the Sinhala leadership will come forward for a negotiated solution.’

This is text of an interview with Mr. S. P. Thamilchelvan, head of the LTTE's Political Wing held May 20, 2007

TamilNet

TamilNet: Talks in the past were held in an environment of military balance of power between the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka. However, the South's current military aggression appears to be exploiting the West's assumption that only a weakened-LTTE will be prepared to compromise on its political stand. Can you comment?

Thamilchelvan: This is total fallacy. Since the time of independence in 1948, Tamil people took part in many negotiations to reach at agreements with the Sri Lankan Government. The armed struggle was born as a result of successive Sri Lankan Governments abrogating several such agreements, and continued ethnically motivated killing. Armed struggle born as self defense shattered the confidence of the Sinhala leaders that Tamils cannot be beaten militarily, and brought them to the talks. Therefore, only when Tamils are strong, there is a chance that the Sinhala leadership will come forward for a negotiated solution. The latest peace talks too occurred under such circumstances.

This latest tactic by the Government of Sri Lanka is also to persuade the international community to help subdue the Tamil people and commit ethnic genocide against them. LTTE and the Tamil people under no circumstances will come to the table in a position of political and military weakness.

TamilNet: South has rejected one key principle of Thimpu talks, the concept of Tamil homeland. The world powers also seem to experiment if the Government of Sri Lanka is capable of creating conditions for peace talks under such environment. What is your view of this approach?

Thamilchelvan: Sinhala leadership ought to develop a profound understanding of the aspirations and the demands of the Tamil people. Tamil people have put forward their rights for the last several decades. They took up the armed struggle for a separate state only when their demands were consistently rejected. This is the reality. Therefore, it is only when the Sinhala leadership respects the Tamil people's rights and proposes a just solution, there is a chance for moving towards an agreement. But, the ruling Sinhala elite continues to put for-

ward unacceptable solutions that aim to exercise power over the Tamil people and maintain subservience. These acts are frustrating the Tamil people and are destroying their confidence in a negotiated solution. The latest proposal, which is the same as the one rejected and defeated by the Tamil people thirty years ago, makes it abundantly clear that the Sinhala leadership still balking at proposing a just solution. Through these actions Sinhala leadership is destroying any remnants of hopes the Tamil people have in a peaceful solution.

TamilNet: Colombo is attempting to impress upon the international community that its war is a "war on terrorism" to justify its military "needs". International community "appears" to be supporting this. This approach can also be viewed as an attempt to apply pressure on the LTTE. What do you like to tell those who think this approach will succeed in bringing about a solution?

Thamilchelvan: While the International community relies on the Sinhala leadership to take forward the peace process, Sinhala leaders have repeatedly failed to make use of the many opportunities to resolve the ethnic conflict, and has instead adopted tactics to carry out genocide against the Tamils. Sri Lankan Government is attempting to exploit the changed environment in the international scene and tarnish the Tamil people's struggle as a phenomenon of international terrorism to undermine the struggle's moral validity. It is distressing to the Tamil people that the international community is indirectly giving support to the Sri Lankan Government that is committing ethnic genocide. International community through the involvement in the peace process during the last five years clearly knows that the Sri Lankan Government has never been ready to provide a reasonable solution to the Tamil people. Sri Lankan Government has through many attempts destroyed the foundations of the peace talks and eliminated all efforts towards peace. This good foundation for peace was laid after a long time with the facilitation of the Norwegian Government. It resulted in the signing of a ceasefire agreement. The Sri Lankan Government has destroyed this ceasefire agreement and poisoned the climate of



peace. While this remains the reality, it is futile for the international community to apply pressure on the Tamils. This has encouraged the Sinhala Government to intensify its ethnic genocide. The recent banning of the LTTE in Canada and the European Union has only encouraged the Sri Lankan Government to pursue a military solution. The expectations of the Tamil people are that the international community will pressure the Sri Lankan Government to pursue peace, and will act to bring justice to the Tamil people.

TamilNet: What should the Sri Lankan Government do to convince you of its bona fides in pursuing peace?

Thamilchelvan: If there is to be a solution to the ethnic conflict then the genocidal war on the Tamil people by the Sri Lankan Government must first end. Extrajudicial killing and disappearances of the Tamil people by the Sri Lankan Government forces must come to an end. The restrictions on travel by Tamils and economic blockade must be removed. The human misery caused by the militarization must end.

The war must be halted and a peaceful environment must be created. In my view, the full and comprehensive implementation of the ceasefire agreement (CFA) reached by both sides with the assistance of the international community is the most suitable path to achieve this.

TamilNet: Do you think the International powers, by not applying pressure to abandon Sri Lanka Government's war

efforts, are indirectly supporting the war?

Thamilchelvan: Definitely. Some of the decisions taken by the international community, trusting that the Sri Lankan Government will act in a certain way have indeed encouraged the Sri Lankan Government to act in exact opposition to what was expected. These decisions have resulted in Colombo intensifying the war. The decisions to ban in various countries, and some of the actions to restrict the political work of the LTTE, are interpreted by the Sri Lankan Government as endorsing its military approach. The international community has created the view that it is supporting Colombo's war. I think the international community, by realizing this and by recognizing the Tamil people's struggle for their rights and by coming forward to support that struggle, can create a situation conducive for negotiations.

TamilNet: Will gentle pressures and democratic methods useful, when past successive governments have only tried to search for a solution within its constitution?

Thamilchelvan: The truth is that successive Sri Lankan Governments have conducted in various ways a genocidal war on the Tamil people. It implemented many oppressive laws and laws to deny their basic rights. It is these actions that lead the Tamil people to lose confidence and forced them to conclude that they can no longer live with the Sinhala nation. As long as the members of the majority Sinhala community hold views that are ethnically biased they will continue to vote

against Tamil demands. They are continuing to adopt a stance that is also oppressive to the Muslim people. Therefore, only a solution that respects all the nations and ethnicities will make peace possible. Further, no acceptable solution can be found under the parameters of the current constitution. In recent times, in many countries, many ethnicities have been respected for their uniqueness and their rights; solutions have been put forward resulting in peaceful solutions to ethnic conflicts. The genocidal war of the Sri Lankan Government that has failed to recognize these developments cannot be the path to find a solution. In my view a solution can be found with the efforts of the international community only if it accepts the balance of power of the two sides.

TamilNet: When will the violence end?

Thamilchelvan: When the ideals of peace, self-respect, rights, and freedom respected in the civilized world as essentials for the betterment of the human race are accepted. When, on this basis a just and honorable solution is reached for the Tamil people who have been subjected to oppression and Tamils gain the confidence that they too can live in freedom and with self respect. That day will mark the emergence of two peaceful, individually strong and economically powerful nations in this island.

International community must understand this reality and take constructive steps to bring the Sri Lankan Government back to the path of peace.

US stance, p4

NEWS

US: 'no change' in Sri Lanka policy

TamilNet

CONCLUDING his visit to Sri Lanka, top US envoy Richard A. Boucher Thursday expressed concern about human rights abuses in the country but backed President Rajapakse's military campaign against the Liberation Tigers.

Promising international assistance would help Sri Lanka "to face the threat of terrorism," he called on Sinhala parties to forge a consensus and "show the Tamils they have a role in [Sri Lankan] society."

Saying "in all this we continue to view the situation with hope," Mr. Boucher made clear: "I don't see any immediate changes [in US policy toward Sri Lanka]."

In his opening address to a final press conference Thursday, Mr. Boucher, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, said Washington has been "closely following" events in Sri Lanka.

In wide-ranging comments, Mr Boucher backed the Sri Lankan government's efforts to defeat the Tigers whom he denounced as terrorists.

He urged southern political parties to come up with a consensus on the role Tamils would be accorded in Sri Lankan society.

Acknowledging the human rights situation in Sri Lanka had "deteriorated" recently, Mr. Boucher was non-committal on international human rights monitoring, saying instead that this was the responsibility of the government and local institutions.

The transcript of the press conference was released to media by the US embassy in Colombo.

"I am concerned about the way things have been heading [here]," Mr. Boucher said at the outset.

But the prevailing situation "is a consequence of people making difficult decisions because of the security situation, the breakdown of the ceasefire, and the human rights situation on the island," he said.

"We recognize that the people of Sri Lanka continue to face the threat of terrorism," he said.

"They face the threat from the Tamil Tigers, an organization that continues to be a terrorist group, continues to be a group that recruits child soldiers, extorts money, kills people, blows up buses, and attacks government facilities."

"We also know the international community can help in this regard. We are helping, and we will help. We do have defense cooperation with the Sri Lankan military. The international community has been taking action to try to slow the ability of the Tamil Tigers to get supplies, to get money, and to get weapons."

"There has been a lot of action by the international community to try to constrict the flow of money and arms to the Tamil Tigers because we are opposed to terrorism and stand with the people of Sri Lanka against terrorism."

Later, when asked about comments from White House that his mission to Colombo was meant to explore new initiatives for peace, Mr. Boucher replied: "You are ahead of me on the White House briefing. I didn't see exactly what they said or how it is worded."

However, he said, "we come here knowing that people here are basically committed to the same goals and the same values as we have. and our goal is to work with them to find a way forward, to find the avenues for peace and the basis for negotiations and peace."



Mr. Boucher (r) and the US Ambassador Robert Blake (l) visited the Palali army base in Jaffna. They were met by the Jaffna army commander G. A. Chandrasiri. Photo Daily Mirror

In his opening address, Mr. Boucher said: "we need action to try to move the situation forward -- forward toward peace, forward toward respect for justice for all the people of Sri Lanka."

He said he'd been speaking with southern leaders about "the prospects of having a set of proposals from this side of the island that can give a perspective to the Tamil community to show them that they have a place of respect, that they have a place on the island, that they have a role in society where they can control much of their own affairs."

Mr. Boucher welcomed the ruling Sri Lankan Freedom Party's (SLFP) putting forward a proposal to this end and said "all the parties need to cooperate [to achieve a consensus]."

Going further, he said "it's important that people put all the parties to work toward a consensus through the All Parties Representative Committee."

"The other thing that we have talked about quite a bit has been the human rights situation," Mr. Boucher said, referring to interactions with President Mahinda Rajapakse's administration.

"And there are two aspects that concern us most. One is abductions and killings, and the second is freedom of the press. We remain very concerned about some of the killings, the killings of aid workers, killings of people at various places on the island that have occurred in the last year or so."

He hailed the government's reiteration of the guidelines for arrest and transparency of arrest by the police or the military, saying "It is important that they have asked all people in government employment to respect those guidelines."

Commenting on US concerns about press freedom, Mr. Boucher said: "We've seen a lot of different

reports. We've seen reports of intimidation, reports of government power being used on newspapers and journalists; and then, of course, we've seen killings and violent acts committed against newspapers and journalists."

Mr. Boucher did not refer to abductions and killings of civilians by Sri Lankan security forces, but urged the restraining of Army-backed paramilitaries.

"It is also important that the government ensures security for everybody. And in the current circumstance that means stopping and controlling the paramilitary groups that have operated in various parts of the island and who are suspected, believed, known to be involved in many of the abductions and killings that have occurred in recent months."

However asked if the US would outlaw the Karuna Group, a leading paramilitary group blamed for widespread human rights abuses and conscription of child soldiers, as a terrorist group, Mr. Boucher said no decision had been taken. "As far as whether Karuna could get itself listed for engaging in terrorism, at this point I don't know what to predict. Certainly we will look at any group that consistently engages in terrorist activities and we will develop information and determine whether or not they meet our specific legal standards."

Mr. Boucher said there had been "some reduction of abductions in the Colombo area" but noted two people had been abducted the night before.

"But I don't think that is true at all in Jaffna," he said.

"I found a lot of people who are very afraid, a lot of people who are afraid because of the killings and abductions in Jaffna."

"You have seen journalists killed, we have seen people killed up there, and these are really seri-

ous threats to the people in that area, and they feel them very deeply," he said.

Mr. Boucher was asked by a Thinakkural reporter if "rather than issuing statements, are there any active measures to prevent these abuses, especially abductions, extra judicial killings, and threats to media personalities?"

Mr. Boucher replied: "I'm not quite sure what you are asking for. The United States, I think, has been active. We have been active in looking at these things, looking for solutions. We have appointed and sent experts and representatives for the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons. We have raised these issues in very precise and specific terms with a variety of people on this island who can do something about them. And that is where things have to be done."

When the Thinakkural reporter pressed the human rights issue, Mr. Boucher cut him off.

Mr. Boucher also avoided endorsing growing calls for international human rights monitoring in Sri Lanka, saying it was the responsibility of the government.

"As far as calls for international human rights monitoring, we will see where that goes and how the discussion develops. I think the first responsibility for human rights monitoring falls with the government, falls with the country, falls with the people."

"Free press is a vital part of that, but also organizations like the Human Rights Commission and other organizations on the island need to be active in monitoring the human rights situation. The police and the other groups need to actively investigate, and it should be the government that takes responsibility for monitoring and improving the human

US military sales up from \$1.4m to \$60.8m

THE Center for Defense Information (CDI), an independent Washington-based think-tank which provides expert analysis on various components of US national security, international security and defense policy, said in a report that arms sales to Sri Lanka from US had increased 40 fold, from \$1.4m in 2006 to \$60.8m in 2007.

The report points out that Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to Sri Lanka had jumped despite "new reports of children serving in government armed forces or government-linked paramilitary groups."

The report says in 13 of the 25 countries, children under age 18 have been forcibly recruited into both government and non-state armed groups, have taken a direct part in hostilities as members of armed groups, or have been

forced into support roles for armed groups. Since 2001, the U.S. has supplied 11 of these 13 countries with military assistance.

In nine of these 13 countries, children were recruited or used as soldiers by government security forces or government-sponsored armed groups.³ Unlike last year, the State Department reported no evidence that children were recruited into government armed forces in Paraguay or Rwanda, and included new reports of children serving in government armed forces or government-linked paramilitary groups in Sri Lanka.

Of the nine countries in which children were recruited or used as soldiers by government security forces or government sponsored armed groups, the U.S. has supplied eight with military assistance since 2001.

Continued on page 5

NEWS

Archbishop of Canterbury accepts Sri Lanka's 'surgical military action against terrorism'

AMID continuing controversy following comments by the head of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, which appeared to justify Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse's military action against the Tamil Tigers, two Sinhala Bishops Wednesday defended Archbishop Rowan Williams, saying his comments had been taken out of context.

Archbishop Williams concluded a 3-day visit to Sri Lanka earlier this month at the end of which he made his controversial statements.

"It is undoubtedly inevitable that what you might call surgical military action against terrorism should take place", Archbishop Williams said in reports filed by TamilNet and the BBC Sinhala service on May 11, 2007.

The Archbishop said that he hoped and prayed that military action would lead to an opening of communication between the government and the Tamil Tigers.

"But we all hope and pray that that will lead not to ...victory for one, defeat for another, but to an opening of communication, a re-establishment of the possibilities for civil society to develop", he said.

The Archbishop told journalists in Colombo, the government's military solution to the problems of the country "increasingly appears to be no solution".

But this week, in a letter to TamilNet, Rt Revd Kumara Illangasinghe, Bishop of Kurunagala, and Rt Revd Duleep de Chickera, Bishop of Colombo, said Archbishop Williams had meant that

'No change'...

Continued from page 4
rights situation."

In his opening comments, Mr. Boucher said: "There are a number of committees and proposals operating now, inquiries to try to ensure accountability for things that have occurred in the past. ... These committees and groups have an important role to play, and now that they are formed, now that they are working, they need to come up with answers."

Mr. Boucher refused to be drawn into commenting on Sri Lankan government claims that the LTTE's newly unveiled aircraft posed a threat to India's nuclear plants.

Later when he was pressed on US views on the LTTE air strikes which had compelled the closure at night of Sri Lanka's sole international airport at Katunayake, Mr. Boucher said:

"We think they are very bad. They should not happen. They ought to stop. And the government has every right to stop those airplanes from hurting people and killing people and damaging the interests of the island."

'International role' p3



Archbishop Rowan Williams (r) met with (l-r) President Mahinda Rajapakse, Minister Rohitha Bogollagama and Douglas Devananda, head of the paramilitary EPDP, which is blamed for widespread abductions and killings in military-controlled parts of the Northeast.

military action was not justified "unless it had the clear aim of enhancing the possibility of dialogue."

On Tuesday, Bishops Illangasinghe and de Chickera wrote to TamilNet saying Archbishop Williams had been misquoted and that he had, in fact, said the following:

"The military solution to the problems of the country increasingly appear to be no solution. It is undoubtedly inevitable that what you might call 'surgical' military action against terrorism should take place but we all hope and pray that it will lead not to desolation, victory for one and defeat for another, but to an opening of communication, a reestablishment of the possibility for civil societies to develop."

By saying this, according to Bishops Illangasinghe and de Chickera, "whilst acknowledging that government forces will react to attacks, the Archbishop is questioning whether such a military response was justified unless it had the clear aim of enhancing the possibility of dialogue amongst both sides."

"The Archbishop's comments about military action were certain not an endorsement of but rather an observation on the present reality in Sri Lanka," they asserted.

"The Archbishop's position at the media conference, taken as a whole, made it clear that he was opposed to any military solution to the island's ethnic conflict and that he was very concerned about human rights violations, child conscription and the problems faced by internally displaced per-

sons," they also said.

The bishops insisted that "the Archbishop consistently maintained this position at meetings he had with a cross-section of political, religious and civil society leaders and groups that he met while in Sri Lanka, including the meetings with the President and the Leader of the Opposition."

TamilNet's editorial board Tuesday said they stood by the original story which had, in its lead paragraph, clearly pointed

out the Archbishop's linkage between "surgical military strikes against terrorism" and "an opening of communication between the government and the Liberation Tigers."

Ironically, a senior Buddhist priest who met with Archbishop Williams during the latter's visit told him that religious leaders should keep away from interfering into state affairs in war situations. The Mahanayaka of the Asgiriya Chapter of Sri Lanka's

Buddhist clergy, the Most Ven. Udagama Sri Buddhakkhita Thero told the Archbishop it is a section of the people in north and east that had launched a rebellion against the government demanding a part of the country.

"The Sri Lankan government is engaged in a war to control this situation. We are neutral in that respect and our hopes are for peace", the Mahanayaka Thero said in comments reported on BBC Sinhala service.

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WEDNESDAY MAY 23, 2007 No. 349

Flawed Logic

The 'war on terror' will not bring peace to Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's conflict is arguably one of the most internationalized today. The major powers, especially the Western states, are intimately involved and familiar with the dynamics at play in the island. The Sri Lankan state is integrated into the international system. Yet the Colombo government is today seemingly able to defy international humanitarian and human rights norms with impunity. Growing disquiet amongst some foreign governments is now manifest (after the killings, abductions and 'disappearances' of shocking number of innocent Tamils). But the continuing staunch support of a number of states, especially the United States, means Colombo is not unduly worried. The contempt with which the Sinhala government dismisses international concerns about the humanitarian and human rights situation in the island is underpinned by self-confidence that sufficient international support will be forthcoming for a war against the Tamil Tigers, no matter how bloody it is.

Despite claiming commitment to peace, human rights and democracy, with the emergence of a Sinhala-hardline regime under President Mahinda Rajapakse, the overarching international approach is rationalized under the (demonstrably discredited elsewhere) slogan, 'war on terror.' The inclusions of the LTTE in international terrorism lists were political decision. But now these listings are taken as 'facts' and used to justify the foreclosure of contact with the Tigers, engagement with the Tamil demand for self-rule and, ultimately, to back Sri Lanka's military campaign.

From the outset of the Norwegian-led peace process, the international approach to resolving Sri Lanka's conflict has been flawed: one of carrot for the state and stick for the Tiger. Driven by a misguided belief that the events of 9/11/01 had persuaded the LTTE to seek peace (although the LTTE had offered a ceasefire and called for talks as early as November 2000), the international community has readily resorted to punitive and coercive method to discipline the Tiger. And this is despite the LTTE's history of resisting any move sought at the point of a gun.

Even today, the international community, led by the US, is relying on 'pressure' to force the LTTE to the table (even though no serious analyst thinks negotiations with the Rajapakse regime is a meaningful exercise). If the arrests of

Tamil activists in various countries and other forms of pressure are intended to compel the Tigers to talk to Rajapakse on his terms, they will fail. There is a misguided belief that international action can cut the supply of funds and weapons to the LTTE. We believe that as long as the fundamental problem - i.e. the oppression of the Tamils by the Sinhala-dominated Sri Lankan state - remains, the LTTE will last and thrive. The Rajapakse regime has done much to compact Tamil opinion behind hardline stances.

The international community's hostility to the LTTE has been amply demonstrated in the past five years. Every act of 'engagement' was effectively a moralizing sermon on political violence and human rights. At the same time, the unrepentant Sri Lankan state has been gently chided and cajoled. These dynamics accelerated last year. Even though international ceasefire monitors warned of a 'cycle of violence', of a 'shadow war' between both sides, the European Union and Canada, following the US approach, singled out the LTTE for blame and banned it. The move emboldened the Sinhala hardliners. It did not tame the Tiger.

The most important consequence of the 'war on terror' is that it offers people who have taken up arms against a repressive state Hobson's choice: fight or perish. From the outset of their struggle, there was a desperate effort by the Tamils to internationalize the conflict (and a reverse determination by the Sinhala state, using the rhetoric of 'internal affairs', to foreclose any international involvement, save that which contributed to crushing the Tamils). This dynamic has continued despite international hostility to the LTTE. This is because the Tamil appeal for self-determination is based on the logic of escaping state oppression.

Yet, despite rhetorical commitment to freedom, human rights and democracy, the international continues to ignore the Tamils' core problem. The logics of 'conflict resolution,' 'peace-building' and, especially, the 'war on terror' all ignore the fundamental problem in Sri Lanka: the Sinhala-dominated state, fashioned on an ethos of racial and religious pre-eminence, oppresses and marginalizes the Tamils. But as long there is Sinhala oppression, there will be Tamil resistance. The current US-led approach, which ignores this basic truth, will not bring peace to Sri Lanka.

Why Tamils

Like the Sri Lankan state, the international community has changed emphasis; the Diaspora is now mainly a problem.

Kanthavanam

Tamil Guardian

CLASSIC counter-insurgency urges states adopt a twin-track strategy: violence against the guerillas and incentives for civilians not to support them. When serious political dissatisfaction is fueling support for the militants, the incentives must necessarily include a 'political solution.'

This is the strategy the international community has encouraged successive Sri Lankan governments fighting the Tamil Tigers to take.

Former President Chandrika Kumaratunga attempted it in her disastrous 'war for peace', offering a devolution package whilst fighting a high intensity war against the LTTE.

The strategy failed because, firstly, the package was not credible, having been emasculated by Sinhala nationalists, and secondly, the unbridled brutality of her military campaign sent support for the LTTE soaring.

But President Mahinda Rajapakse is following a different track these days.

As his recently unveiled 'power-sharing' proposals show, Rajapakse is not interested in wooing the Tamils. Rather he intends (in the style of President J. R. Jayawardene)- to teach the Tamils a punishing lesson for defying the state.

In short, he is not going to persuade the Tamils to abandon the Tigers, he's going to cow them into submission.

This is why, despite publicly toying with the notion, he has not put serious effort into forging a southern consensus on what to put before the LTTE at the table.

It is also why he is unabashedly following a single-minded and ruthless war strategy, marked by mass displacements of Tamils and widespread human rights abuses against them.

The international community has in recent times come to the realization Rajapakse is simply not interested in their advised approach.

So, whilst they are still committed to backing Sri Lanka against the LTTE, there is considerable nervousness that Rajapakse is unnecessarily stoking Tamil resentment with his tactics.

Which is why you sometimes get murmurs of disapproval, along with token measures, from the US, UK and others.

But in principle the international community is committed to supporting the Sri Lankan

state against the LTTE.

And they know full well that the Tamil Diaspora, located primarily in North America, Europe and Australia, is a crucial well of support for the Tigers.

The array of bans on the LTTE in US, (first UK, then) EU and Canada, as well as the finance restrictions in Australia are intended to block the financial and material support that Diaspora Tamils are providing the Tigers with.

Just as Rajapakse has given up trying to win over the Tamils, so has the international community.

And just as Rajapakse is using a campaign of terror to browbeat the Tamils in Sri Lanka, several Western governments have launched an aggressive campaign against the Diaspora Tamils.

In the past two months Tamils have been arrested in France, US, and Australia on charges of providing support to the Tigers, of extorting money for the LTTE, and so on. The

The international campaign against Diaspora Tamils is an extension of the Sri Lankan state's campaign of terror against the Tamils there.

media is taken along for all the arrests, with massive coverage following.

A Tamil television station, TTN, which has viewers across Europe, was shut down last month by French authorities. The charge was of not registering the channel properly (though employees allege the authorities simply ignore their applications).

In Britain, the state-owned BBC and establishment newspapers are conducting a smear campaign alleging that Tamils funding the Tigers are the prime suspects credit card fraud.

Many of those arrested are openly sympathetic to the LTTE.

But most are not simply canvassing for the LTTE. They were exposing the atrocities being inflicted on the Tamils by the Sri Lankan state. This violence and deprivation is not

EDITORIAL & OPINION

face international 'shock and awe'



US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Richard Boucher (l) pictured earlier this month with Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse, whose government has been condemned by international rights groups for widespread abuses.

reported by the main media organizations, which are barred from parts of the Northeast or are not equipped and staffed to report continuously from the other areas.

The ongoing international campaign of 'shock and awe' against the Diaspora has two objectives; firstly to pressure the LTTE and, secondly, to demoralize and frighten the Tamil expatriate public.

The international community appears to have calculated that through such arrests and other harassments of Tamils in foreign countries, it will be able to exert sufficient pressure on the LTTE to give up its armed struggle and go to the negotiation table.

Thus the international campaign against the Diaspora Tamils is an extension of the Sri Lankan state's campaign of terror against the Tamils there.

For many states waging the self-styled 'war on terror,' Diaspora communities appear threatening and problematic. The logic of 'legitimate state versus illegitimate terrorists' is applied without nuance to all states which are prepared to sign up to the 'global' war.

Of course, international politics remains state-centric and states will generally support each other (indeed, with the state as the most powerful political organization around today, that is why the Tamils are seeking their own state).

The international norms that gained such force at the end of the Cold War, such as those around human rights and protection of civilians, have proved remarkably fragile this

century.

The missed opportunities for positive international action in Sri Lanka have been numerous. In the past couple of year, these include the failure to force the Sri Lankan government to implement PTOMS (the mechanism to share tsunami aid with the LTTE), to re-open the A9 and other humanitarian corridors, to observe international humanitarian law (laws of war), to desist from using food embargoes against Tamil population centers, and so on.

Even the recent campaign for human rights protection by Amnesty International has not led to reduction in international military and economic support for the Rajapakse government.

This unwavering support stems from a belief that whatever its flaws, the Sri Lankan state will ultimately reform, drop its Sinhala chauvinism and become a 'liberal democracy' in the model of the Western donors backing it.

This belief underpinned the attachment of conditionality to aid disbursed by donors during the Norwegian peace process. The conditions were meant to ensure aid flowed to reward 'good' behaviour and was blocked by 'bad' behaviour.

Indeed, more often than not, the state was given the benefit of the doubt and conditionality was often dropped.

Most of the \$4.5bn pledged in Tokyo in June 2003 was made conditional on 'progress in the peace process.' Despite the country sliding steadily into the present all out war, most of that aid had been disbursed by 2006.

Thirdly, to force expatriate Tamils to pressure the Tigers into giving up the armed struggle and negotiating instead with the Sri Lankan government.

And lastly, perhaps most desirably, for the Tamil Diaspora to pursue their political aspirations, not by backing the LTTE, but other actors. These could be other Tamil actors - so called 'moderates' - such as the paramilitary groups that are allied with Colombo against the LTTE.

But, ideally, the international community would like expatriate Tamils to go running after the host states themselves. Rather than the LTTE being the representatives of the Tamils, the host states, citing its 'own citizens,' could instead take up this mantle instead.

International calculations figure expatriates' money and expertise could be channeled through 'official channels' to the Tamils of the Northeast. Then not only would the LTTE be denied the Diaspora's support, the oppressive Sri Lankan state could perversely harness the expatriates' efforts to better their brethren's plight towards defeating the Tamil struggle.

This is why Western states are knowingly assisting Sri Lanka's efforts to terrify and intimidate the Tamils by targeting Tamil media, community organizations and political activists in their own territories.

Whilst the international community makes much of the lack of press freedom in Sri Lanka, France shuts down the TTN television on a registration technicality.

While media promoting the LTTE or Tamil perspective are thus blocked, Sri Lankan

government's claims against the Tigers - such as the credit card allegations - are propagated through mainstream Western

media.

While the Sri Lankan government is chided for not allowing NGOs to operate, Tamil expatriate organizations seeking to highlight Colombo's human rights abuses are harassed and investigated on charges of 'supporting LTTE terrorism.'

Whilst Sri Lanka is gently urged to allow humanitarian access and provision of shelter for hundreds of thousands of displaced Tamils, Tamil expatriates are aggressively prevented from supporting Diaspora charities and trusts that are known to be working effectively in the Northeast.

The Tamil Diaspora must not be shocked and awed by the ongoing international hostility. Rather than retreat from participating in politics, we should do exactly the reverse and participate more actively.

The international community's actions are based on perceptions of self-interest. We should engage with key states and INGOs as part of our efforts to promote the Tamil cause.

Ultimately, what is crucial is that the Diaspora continues to support the Tamils' sixty year struggle for political rights.

This month sees the 31st anniversary of the passing of the Vaddokoddai Resolution, unanimously adopted by the first convention of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), the year before the party won a sweeping mandate in the 1977 elections.

The Resolution, concludes with a plea to us, the Tamil people.

It calls "upon the Tamil Nation in general and the Tamil youth in particular to come forward to throw themselves fully in the sacred fight for freedom and to flinch not till the goal of a sovereign state of Tamil Eelam is reached."

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Aid workers fear for Batticaloa refugees

Food supplies are running out in refugee camps and aid workers are protesting the Sri Lankan government's forcible resettlement.

THE United Nations' food agency is worried by the deteriorating situation of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Tamil people in Sri Lanka's volatile east.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has urgently appealing for more funds from donors and better access from the Sri Lankan government to provide for over 10-0,000 refugees languishing in makeshift camps in the Eastern Batticaloa district.

Meanwhile the Sri Lankan government has begun forcibly resettling the frightened refugees, forcing people on to buses taking them back to their homes in the war zones.

On May 18, the WFP said 40-0,000 people displaced by fighting are in need of food aid and 18,677 tons of food costing US\$ 10.7 million is required during the next six months to ensure basic food supplies reach these people.

According to WFP Asia Regional Director Anthony Banbury, current food stocks will only last up to mid-June. This is the second time in the past two months the agency has called for additional donor funds. In March the agency made a similar urgent call as it only had en-ough provisions to last up to end of April.

"I am very concerned by the deterioration of the humanitarian situation as a result of the resurgence in the conflict. I am especially concerned about the impact of the conflict on civilians, many of whom have now been displaced multiple times by the fighting," said Banbury.

According to WFP donors are also concerned that the intended beneficiaries are not receiving the aid and suspect some of the food supplies are being diverted to the Sri Lankan military.

"Donors we were just meeting with were asking questions: How do you know your food aid is going to the intended beneficiaries? How do you know it's not being stolen by some of the parties, diverted to the military. These are very legitimate concerns for donors," Banbury said.

According to Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) a UN news agency, in e-arly May the WFP provided food rations to approximately 70% of 14-0,000 IDPs (internally displaced people) are living in recognised welfare camps and other sites in Batticaloa district.

The remaining 30% of the IDPs are supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the Sri Lankan state providing no or minimal assistance. The WFP rations consist of rice, flour, dahl, sugar, spices and cooking oil.

As IDPs are spread across the district living in nearly 100 refugee camps ensuring food supplies gets to all those in need has become a logistical and bureaucratic nightmare.

For example, WFP reported on 9 May that a 12 percent gap in food assistance in the district, with some 13,000 IDPs not receiving food rations.

In addition to fresh funds the WFP urged for better access to the needy and security for aid workers.

"We have big problems in Sri Lanka. We have an access problem to the most vulnerable people in the north and in the east of the country," said WFP Spokeswoman, Christiane Bertiaume.

"We have got security problems for our local and international staff. Some of them have even been threatened."

Offensives in the first three months of 2007 by the Sri Lankan army aimed at capturing LTTE administered areas in the eastern districts triggered a massive exodus of people creating a humanitarian crisis.

Over 230,000 people who fled their homes in LTTE administered areas to escape the incessant shelling and bombing by the Sri Lankan forces sought refuge in hundreds of refugee camps dotted around Batticaloa town.

Aid agencies say they have struggled to support the large number of refugees and the displaced have continued to suffer due to lack of living space, unhygienic sanitary facilities and scarcity of clean water and food.

‘Donors ask: how do you know relief is not being stolen, diverted to the military’

In addition the refugees were also subjected to paramilitary intimidations and abductions and some were forced to return to their homes in Vaharai against their will.

Meanwhile the Sri Lankan government last week announced that it will begin resettling about 90,000 of these people to the homes they fled in West Batticaloa.

According to the Assistant Government Agent (a senior civil servant) in Batticaloa, K Mahesan, the government wants all the displaced to have returned to their homes by a deadline of July 31.

This is irrespective of concerns amongst refugees and aid workers that the conflict zones, now dominated by troops and Army-backed paramilitaries, are not

safe.

And aid workers fear some of these people may be returning home against their will.

A month ago the Sri Lankan government came under severe criticism from international human rights organisations for forcibly resettling thousands of people in Vaharai which was considered to be unsafe and lacking of basic infrastructure.

The Tamil Relief Organisation (TRO) has appealed to the international community to remind the Sri Lankan state that forcing displaced people to return home is against international humanitarian law.

"The WFP is in principle prepared to provide that assistance as requested by the government. However, our provision of assistance will be conditional on the voluntary nature of the returns," Banbury said.

"We will not provide assistance to anyone who is forced to return against their will, nor will we provide assistance to people who are not part of a formal UNHCR approved return process."

Following forcible resettlement of refugees in March the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) pulled out of all refugee resettlement operations in Sri Lanka's East.

At the time Amin Awad, head of UN refugee agency UNHCR in Sri Lanka announcing their decision to pull out of resettlement work in the East said "we are saying that we are not involved with this situation, we don't want to give the IDPs the impression that we are assisting or facilitating or promoting return."

"The conditions in Vakarai are not right for resettlement and there is work to be done on services and minimum conditions for return," Awad said.

It is not just the refugees who are not safe. Aid workers, both local and internal, have been harassed, threatened and even killed by security forces and paramilitary groups operating along with them.

In August 2006 17 local aid workers from Action Against Hunger, a French aid organisation, were found shot dead at close range. The ceasefire monitors from the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission, after investigating the incident held government forces responsible for the killing.

Last month, Army-backed paramilitary Karuna Group demanded all local and international NGOs to register with them and made a veiled threat that if the NGOs did not comply the paramilitaries "would not be responsible for their safety."



Displaced Tamils collect hand outs from the WFP at a camp in eastern Sri Lanka. They are amongst those lucky enough to be reached. Photo UN

Schools in east reopen, but fear persists

IRIN

L. Arupagasam is a happy man. The head teacher has finally returned to his school which is located in Kalavanchchikudi division, Batticaloa district, eastern Sri Lanka. Last December, Arupagasam, along with 2-30 of his students had to abandon the school so it could be used as a shelter for about 2,000 displaced people.

Now, some six-months later, Arupagasam is back at work and the school is back in action. The principal is not simply pleased to be back in his office, but happy, too, that he has an additional 45 students.

"My school is my home and teaching these children again is more than a wish come true," Arupagasam said.

"My school now also provides education to 120 internally displaced children in the evenings, and more parents are now enrolling their children, realizing the importance of education," the principal adds.

"The war cannot stop the children from getting a decent education."

At the height of the violence between government forces and Tamil Tigers in the east over the past year, the education of at least 135,000 students in Batticaloa district alone

was disrupted, according to the Batticaloa Divisional Secretary, S. Amalanathan.

"We had to close 324 schools in Batticaloa district to house people who were fleeing the fighting during the worst days," Amalanathan told IRIN. He said 86 schools still remain closed as they continue to shelter IDPs or because the security situation is poor.

Today, some 130,000 IDPs still remain in Batticaloa district, despite a reduction in violence, and according to Amalanathan, at least 30,000 of these are students.

In an urgent bid to get these children back to school again, UN agencies such as UNICEF have devised a two-shift school day at temporary buildings where local children attend school in the morning and IDPs in the afternoon.

"There has been a fantastic attempt in Batticaloa district to accommodate all children, although with shortage of space and materials, they were incorporated into host schools or displaced schools at different times," UNICEF Spokesperson, Gordon Weiss says.

Due to a shortage of teachers, UNICEF has also begun training 1,150 teachers in a consolidated syllabus and psychosocial support.

The consolidated syllabus will help children who have missed classes

to reach expected levels of academic achievement by the end of 2007, UNICEF says.

"The greatest problem we face is identifying schools that have adequate space or could accommodate additional afternoon shifts. The children from parts of Batticaloa West who were displaced in March were accommodated with their families in both Batticaloa and Paddiruppu education zones. These children have been identified in recent surveys and will be targeted in the 'back to school' campaigns," Weiss said.

UNICEF has identified immediate needs which include material support such as temporary learning structures, additional training for teachers, the strengthening of the capacities of local education authorities to plan and respond to emergency needs, and the strengthening of support for children who are missing classes.

The Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC), in its latest report, says the schools that have been vacated by IDPs were in need of cleaning and repairs.

"A total number of 86 schools in Batticaloa district are still temporarily closed and the local education authorities have requested a quick assessment on this. A lot needs to be done to clean up the mess in the vacated school buildings," the IASC

said.

The principal of the Ramakrishna School, Arupagasam, told IRIN that when he returned to his school it was in need of immediate repairs and of desks and other furnishings.

"We have to locate tables, chairs and other material. The people had used some of them as firewood, and we had to clean a lot."

Agencies such as UNICEF have also begun providing supplementary feeding to children in Early Childhood Development Centers (ECDC) for IDPs in three zones in the Batticaloa district. They are also monitoring to check the quality and standard of Emergency Early Childhood Education (EECE) project work and to assess changes in the lives of children who are in such programmes.

The majority of the schools in Batticaloa district may have reopened and students are back in class, but many parents still fear for the safety of their children and wait outside the school gates till classes end, says Arupagasam.

"There is still a lot of fear," he says.

"The situation was very bad last year, with bombs flying over schools and hundred of people running. Many parents still feel the situation can get out of control any day again."

Desperate, fearful and helpless

While Batticaloa has been overwhelmed by Tamils who fled Sri Lankan offensives over the past few months, the government that displaced them is taking control of their aid supplies.

Glenda Cooper

Blog / AlertNet

EVERYONE calls it the Cemetery, because that's what this field on Sinna Urein in Batticaloa was originally. When the dry earth gets very hot or is disturbed, skulls and bones make it to the surface.

"NGOs usually bury people when they are dead," says Jathran, 32, one of the thousands who've fled an escalation of fighting in Sri Lanka's civil war. "The difference is this time, they've brought us here before we've started dying."

Home for Jathran (not his real name; he's scared that the aid agencies will punish him for speaking to me) is currently a white canvas tent courtesy of the United Nations, as for the 160 other families in this field.

There are three standpipes and eight toilets for the 1,700 people in the Cemetery. Once it gets to around five o'clock in the afternoon there's a distinct smell of sewage and flies buzz round everything.

Jathran originally came from Muttur in Trincomalee district. There he lost his home and fishing boat in the 2004 tsunami. Trying to rebuild his life after that, he found himself caught in the middle of government shelling and Tamil Tiger artillery fire in April 2006 after the ceasefire broke down and heavy fighting erupted in Trincomalee.

First, Jathran and his neighbors dug bunkers to hide in. Then, starving and desperate, they began to make the perilous journey down south. It took them over six months to reach where they are now. On the way, Jathran lost half the fingers on his right hand after being caught up in the shelling.

Now he's been stuck in the camp for six months, unable to work and dependent on handouts of rice. But where will he end up

next? Batticaloa has been overwhelmed by people like Jathran. Half-finished tsunami projects have been put on the permanent back-burner as agencies deal with this new crisis.

When I was there a couple of weeks ago, as part of my research project, there were officially 139,000 displaced people in the district.

Some were sheltering in tents; many were in schools, including those that had been rebuilt after the tsunami. The pressure was so great that many of Batticaloa's children were not in school at all and those who were could only attend for half a day.

Every night there was shelling from the government forces and retaliation from the rebels. On May 10, it was reported that eight people had been injured after a bomb was thrown into a camp in Kathankudy, eastern Batticaloa.

But the concerns the aid agencies have about how to cope with the situation now may soon be superseded by how the government plans to deal with those who've fled from the fighting.

The assistant government agent in Batticaloa, K Mahesan, made this clear. He said the government expected all the displaced to have returned to their homes by a deadline of July 31.

When I asked him whether this was possible - or advisable - he insisted it would happen. The Sri Lankan government has formally announced the establishment of a resettlement authority for "the protective and respectable resettlement" of the displaced population.

Yet there have been concerns about whether returns will be voluntary, as expressed in a March 2007 report from the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) country team, which includes the United Nations and Red Cross / Red Crescent agencies.

The Tamil Relief Organisation has already appealed to the international community to remind the

Sri Lankan government that forcing displaced people to return home is against international humanitarian law.

Aid agencies should also be aware that Mahesan said Colombo would put in place a mechanism through which it will approve which relief groups would work in which area.

On one level, this is the government taking responsibility for co-ordination of agencies. But it's hard not to believe there is another motive: to control who gets aid and when.

In the usual invective against international aid agencies in the media, there was a carefully placed story in the government-frie-

“... women and children at one site were forced to board buses despite pleas that they couldn't leave while their husbands were still at work and children at school.” - UNHCR spokesperson Rod Remond said in Geneva on March 15

ndly Sunday Times towards the end of April saying that the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Colombo was to be sent a letter that would see it "booted out" after "outstaying its mandate" post-tsunami.

Sources at the time said no such letter had been received, but aid agencies in Batt Town saw it as a warning shot across the bows of international relief organisations.

Meanwhile back in the Cemetery, Jathran says he's scared to go home. "I've suffered too much. I can't go back. I want to stay here and try to live." It's unlikely he'll be given the chance.

Australian aid for IDPs

THE Australian government this week said it will contribute A\$5.25 million to provide essential humanitarian services for the internally displaced people in the northeast Sri Lanka.

Responding to the urgent call for aid by the UN food agency, World Food Programme (WFP),

Australia said it would donate A\$3 million through the WFP to provide emergency food aid to up to 400,000 people recently displaced and affected by the conflict, and for community-based food-for work programs for up to 390,000 people in the north east.

Last week WFP called for more resources from donors to feed more than 400,000 IDPs in northeast Sri Lanka saying that it needs a total of 18,677 tons of food costing \$10.7 million for programs helping the displaced and other vulnerable groups for the next six months.

Australia said it will provide A\$1 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross to help protect civilians from violations of international humanitarian law, and to allow the ICRC to visit detainees and act for families of missing persons.

Another A\$1.25 million will be provided to UNICEF for provision of child protection services for displaced people and separated families and to support UNICEF's water and sanitation program servicing up to 30,000 displaced families.

Issuing a statement the Australian government said it is concerned by the trend towards increasing violence and the human rights violations in Sri Lanka and urged all parties to resume peace talks without delay to seek a solution which addresses the legitimate aspirations of all Sri Lankans.

NEWS

Violence - week ending 20 May

Summary of incidents - apart from major clashes - since 14 May

20 May

- Two youths abducted by the STF Friday were taken in a vehicle to Kirankulam and released. Kanthasamy Sivananthan, 22, from Kadukamunai and Sinathurai Muhunthan, 17, of Ampilanthurai, were on their way to Eruvil when STF soldiers stopped them and arrested them after questioning, said eyewitnesses. STF members on a road patrol in Kaluvanchikudi, Batticaloa, arrest the two IDP youths but the STF denied the arrest when the Batticaloa district TNA parliamentarian P. Ariyaneththiran contacted the Kaluvanchikudi STF camp.
- Five civilians from Kalmadu, Vavuniya disappeared after they went fishing on shores close to Velankulam in Mannar. Relatives reported the disappearance to the Vavuniya Police. Ranjan Indrapalan, 24, Palaninathan Ketheeswaran, 22, and school students Ramachandran Senthuran, 17, Sakthivel Suthaharan, 17, and Ravichandran Selvakumar, 17, had gone out together from the shores of Velankulam.
- Eleven Tamil civilians were arrested by the Police in cordon and search operations in Galle, Matugama and Maharagama. The Terrorist Intelligence Division of the Police subjected them to special investigation while being detained in police stations.
- Two Tamil civilians were arrested at Kaluthawalai, Matale, in a cordon and search operation.

19 May

- The LTTE and SLA exchanged intense artillery fire across their Thenmaradchy FDLs, with the fire fight focussing on Kovilakandy, Maravanpulo, and Thanankilappu in Jaffna. The SLA was firing from artillery bases in these areas towards LTTE controlled Pooneryn, across Jaffna lagoon, and LTTE gunners responded from the bases spread across Pooneryn. The LTTE Muhamalai FDL was also under attack.
- Two SLAF Kfir jets dropped four bombs on Kanchikudichanaru, Amparai. As residents had already been displaced by SLA offensives, no one was hurt.
- The STF had vacated a camp at Thangavelayuthapuram, Amparai on May 8. The camp had been set up in homes people had abandoned during an SLA offensive into LTTE territory in January. The STF troopers had removed tiles and other valuables from the hou-

ses and converted them into SLA sentry posts, those who had been back to the area said. The troopers also converted a local temple into a liquor bar and took property from the office of an NGO.

- The SLN took into custody two siblings who arrived in Pesalai in a fibre glass boat from Ilu-paikadavai, in LTTE held territory in Mannar. Guruparan Kirushanthi, 18, and her brother Guruparan Sajeewan, 16, of Mullaitheevu said they went to Pesalai to see relatives. The boatman transporting them was also taken into custody.
- Pakkianathan Vijeyasanthan, 32, a married man from Trincomalee who was abducted in Borella, Colombo on Friday, reported to Badulla police station. He was allegedly abducted by unidentified men in a white van and later released in Badulla.
- A Tamil youth from Jaffna, studying in Colombo, was arrested in Grandpass, Colombo, for allegedly carrying a map of Colombo harbour in his bag. Police on routine patrol duty had stopped the youth when he was walking along Balarama Junction.

18 May

- Two fishermen from Thampadi in Kayts were shot dead by the SLN. The SLN claimed to have shot two LTTE cadres during a fire fight on the Kayts shores. But relatives identified the bodies as belonging to Gnanaruban Rutson, 18, and Robert Thevathas, 32, who had gone fishing the previous morning and failed to return.
- Gunmen sprayed gunfire towards Udupiddi SLA camp in Jaffna after creating road blocks to prevent the movement of pedestrians and vehicular traffic near the camp. Soldiers returned fire, but the gunmen escaped.
- Residents along the Vadamardchy north coast in Jaffna reported sporadic skirmishes between SLN boats and the Sea Tigers. Residents of Munai, and civilians west of Kankesanthurai reported hearing sounds of artillery fire.
- A former employee of the Centre for Policy Alternatives and the deputy editor of the Tamil version of the 'Peace Monitor,' magazine, Pakyanadan Wijai Shanthan, 32, disappeared near his wife's office in Borella, Colombo. Shanthan had fled to India last November after the killing of Ketheeswaran Loganathan, but had returned to Colombo in April.

Continued on page 15

Omanthai closure endangers sick

THE Sri Lanka Army's refusal to open the Omanthai checkpoint, on the main A9 route between LTTE controlled territory and Vavuniya, is endangering the lives of the sick and elderly, LTTE officials charged.

"The SLA is adamantly against opening of the A9 land route but we continue to make efforts to have the A9 opened so that people are given the freedom to travel," LTTE Vavuniya political head, Gnanam told TamilNet after discussions with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Friday.

A large number of patients in need of urgent medical treatment are being prevented from getting help due to the SLA closure of the A9, he explained. Several lorries loaded with commodities are also stuck at the checkpoint, he said.

"We are ready to re-open the checkpoint, but we can't do it until ICRC agrees," military Spokesman Prasad Samarasinghe told the Daily Mirror Friday.

"Therefore we asked ICRC to take up the matter with the Tigers as thousands of people are suffering," he said.

The ICRC urged both the military and the LTTE to guarantee security at the Omanthai checkpoint to facilitate free civilian movement.

"Discussions are underway with both parties on finding ways to resolve the issue which is creating a major problem," ICRC spokesman Davide Vignati said. On Thursday morning, the ICRC temporarily withdrew from the Omanthai entry and exit point following heavy shelling in the vicinity.



A critically ill infant awaits transport to Vavuniya. Photo TamilNet

Kilinochchi hospital faced a crisis when the SLA closed the entry-exit check point at Omanthai, as patients scheduled to be taken to Vavuniya for urgent treatment could not be transferred.

Three infants, including a one day old, are under artificial breathing, and need immediate medical attendance, hospital officials said.

Twelve children below 12 and six pregnant mothers have to be taken to Vavuniya for treatment not available in Kilinochchi, but cannot travel, they added.

Swaminathan Selvasothy, 35, of Navvi, Vavuniya, injured in SLA shelling Thursday and waiting for treatment, is an example of those waiting to travel for medical treatment.

Humanitarian crisis: UN concern

Daily Mirror

A top UN official expressed serious concern Friday about the "shrinking humanitarian space" and "lack of respect for humanitarian principles" and asked the warring parties to provide greater humanitarian access and security for aid workers amid the upsurge in armed hostilities.

"I am deeply concerned by the deterioration of the humanitarian situation resulting from the resurgence of violence," UN World Food Programme Director Tony Banbury said.

"I am especially concerned about its impact on civilians, many of whom have been displaced," he said.

"We ask the parties to respect basic humanitarian principles and allow food and other humanitarian assistance to be delivered unhindered to those affected by the conflict, especially in Batticaloa and the Jaffna peninsula," Mr. Banbury said.

Concluding a four-day mission in Sri Lanka, Mr. Banbury also criticised media reports accusing UN agencies of supporting

terrorism.

He said such reports were not only unjustifiable, but factually inaccurate and stressed that the UN's work in Sri Lanka was motivated purely by humanitarian concerns. "To suggest otherwise will be simply untrue and unfair."

The visiting UN official also made a strong plea to the donor community to help meet the mounting aid requirements and cautioned that the WFP would be forced to make difficult choices if funds were not raised soon.

During the next six months the Programme needs 18,677 tons of food costing US\$ 10.7 million to help the displaced and vulnerable groups. "Without resources we will not be able to meet urgent humanitarian requirements."

The WFP has agreed, in principle, to provide interim assistance to the returnees on condition they return voluntarily with the beneficiaries clearly identified.

Mr. Banbury also noted that initial resettlement in Batticaloa appear to have gone relatively well. "WFP is committed to assisting those in need, including people living in IDP camps and people now returning to their

communities, as long as those returnees are safe and voluntary."

"But we need more resources from donors right now; otherwise we will have to cut back assistance to victims of the conflict," he asserted.

Responding to the question on why strings were being attached to aid with the insistence on the voluntary nature of returns, Mr. Banbury said explained that he believed in upholding humanitarian principles not just in Sri Lanka, but in every country where the UN operated. He said the issue of forced repatriation had been raised with the government.

During his visit the UN official met government ministers and donor representatives in Colombo and visited WFP operations providing food aid to internally displaced persons from the Batticaloa district.

At meetings with the Human Rights Minister and the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Banbury raised concerns about the current operational constraints including humanitarian access to vulnerable areas, security for aid workers and the slow delivery of food stocks, particularly in Jaffna.

Student abductions soar in Jaffna

FEAR and turmoil continue to grip the Jaffna peninsula due the disappearance of and increasing number students disappear, and the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) allegedly responds by threatening to censor reports on the abductions.

At least 10 students have been reported missing, another two confirmed as having being killed and at least 2 students released after being tortured by Sri Lanka's Military Intelligence division in the past two months alone.

Another small number of students also continue to be officially detained by the Sri Lankan forces and other students have sought the protective custody of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC).

Combined with students not attending school from fear over what could happen while they are out of the house, these incidents have severely reduced the number of students attending educational institutions in the Jaffna peninsula and worsened the already poor educational state of the region.

Four high school boys disappeared on May 4. Three boys from Jaffna Hindu College, and another from St John's College were all taken from their homes by armed men arriving in white vans - generally believed to be either Sri Lankan military personnel not wearing uniform or paramilitary cadres working alongside Sri Lankan military intelligence - who broke into houses and abducted some of the boys in the presence of their parents.

"I strongly condemn the SLA personnel intimidating the Jaffna media not to publish any news of the student agitation calling for the immediate release of the four students," S. Gajenthiran, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Jaffna parliamentarian said.

"This is a gross violation of the freedom of the press. The SLA again intimidating media persons after the recent killing of journalist Selvarajah Rajitharan is highly deplorable," the MP noted.

A consortium of private educational institutions in Jaffna had urged the abductors to release the students and accused the SLA of complicity in the abductions.

A number of student organizations also appealed to the students for a peninsula wide boycott of schools, and the students responded by staying away in droves.

However, anticipating student agitation in reaction to the abductions, the SLA in Jaffna had deployed troopers in large numbers in front of schools and were conducting checks and blocking outsiders entering the schools.

On April 23, a student from

Jaffna Technical College disappeared while on his way to college.

Also in April, two students had sought protection from the Jaffna office of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC), saying they feared for their lives. An 18-year-old claimed that armed men in white vans came to his house several times during the night, with the intention of abducting him. A 16-year-old said his father had been summoned to the SLA civil administration office and ordered to hand him over to the SLA.

Another 16-year-old student and his family sought protection with the SLHRC on April 19, after the boy's brother had been arrested the previous week. The family had been harassed by the SLA after the arrest, and they feared for their safety.

On April 16, a Jaffna University undergraduate student was released after being detained and severely tortured by Sri Lankan Military Intelligence. He was pushed out of a white van alongside a road three days after he disappeared.

And another University student was released on April 10, again after being tortured. The Arts faculty student had been waylaid outside his home and abducted by Sri Lankan Military Intelligence personnel the previous day. He was interrogated and tortured in a military camp before being dumped out of a white van alongside a road.

And on March 31, a 19-year-old student disappeared after leaving his house at Colombuthurai in Jaffna to take care of some personal errands.

Meanwhile, on Saturday May 5, armed men in civil clothes forcibly entered the Jaffna University campus, injuring the security guard.

The gang had remained inside and the vicinity of Jaffna campus for several hours and allegedly destroyed memorial photographs of students killed in the conflict.

The men also allegedly stole funds raised by the students to support refugees in the east.

The following Monday Jaffna University students boycotted lectures protesting against the invasion.

The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that students from outside the Jaffna peninsula are allegedly considering leaving the region.

Jaffna University administrative officers have expressed concern that another exodus would only further worsen the academic situation, and could even bring into question the viability of the institution.

Normalcy impossible till students' release - Jaffna Bishop

NORMALCY is impossible until abducted students have been released, a delegation of dignitaries told the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) Commander in Jaffna.

"The immediate release of the abducted students is the only way to bring Jaffna peninsula educational activities back to normalcy," Jaffna Bishop Rt. Rev. Thomas Savundaranayagam told had said in a special meeting last Wednesday, TamilNet reported.

However, when TamilNet reported the story, the bishop wrote to the Army Commander, denying he had spoken to TamilNet.

TamilNet, while standing by the story, amended the headline to remove any suggestion that the details of the meeting were conveyed to the agency by the Bishop himself.

"At the press meet, attended by several reporters, Bishop remained silent, and only the other participants to the meeting with the Commander talked to the reporters," TamilNet corrected.

"TamilNet story was pieced together from two of these attendees and sources close to the Bishop," the agency said.

The meeting between the Peoples Committee for Peace and Goodwill (PCPG) and SLA Jaffna Commander Maj. Gen. G. A. Chandrasiri inside the Palaali High Security Zone (HSZ) had lasted for more than two hours.

Former Jaffna University Vice-chancellor Prof. P. Balasundarampillai and Mr. S. Paramathan, representative of the Federation of Public Organizations participated in the meeting with the SLA Jaffna Commander.

The discussions focussed on the aggravating situation in Jaffna peninsula caused by the abduction of four high school students and the death notices issued to Jaffna University staff, students and some principals of schools allegedly by SLA troopers.

"The educational activities of Jaffna University, resumed after

much effort, face the risk of stalling completely due to the death threats made to the University community and unless immediate action is taken matters will worsen," the Rev. Bishop allegedly told the SLA Commander.

The attendees also explored ways to remedy the situation.

TamilNet also noted that it understood why the Bishop felt compelled to write his letter.

"TamilNet wishes to point out that residents in Jaffna district are living in an open prison where abductions, torture and killing have become rampant, and the counter insurgency campaign by the SLA has reached a stage where no private citizen's life is safe," the agency wrote.

"In this climate of fear, TamilNet understands the reasons for the letter from Bishop who would be under tremendous pressure not to criticize the military."

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Students get death notices

TWO 'death notice' has been issued to students and educational staff across Jaffna, including those at many of the leading schools and Jaffna University.

The second notice listed details of Jaffna University staff and students on a "death list", and gave "Final Warning" to those involved in "terrorist activities."

It accused those listed of aiding and abetting the Liberation Tigers and was signed by a group calling itself the 'Tamil Alliance to Save Sri Lanka'.

It was distributed by a group of armed men who had stormed the premises late in the night on May 13. They had put up posters and left pamphlets in Tamil with the title 'last warning' issued to some 323 students and staff including the Vice Chancellor and professors of the University.

It was also allegedly being passed around by SLA troopers. However, the SLA denied involvement in the distribution of the notices.

The University campus notice followed an earlier one on May 9, listing mainly school students and principals. The Jaffna Hindu College's principal was one of four principals on the list.

The notice branded those listed as being members of the Liberation Tigers and warned that they would be killed if they failed to give up "terrorist activities."

"This amnesty is offered because you are students but if you continue to participate in ha-



grenade attacks, claymore attacks and other such activities, the death sentence passed on you will be carried out without any delay," said the notice, which was also signed by the 'Tamil Alliance to Save Sri Lanka'.

Meanwhile, Jaffna Campus safety officers complained to the Vice Chancellor that members of SLA and Sri Lanka's Military Intelligence division have been entering the Campus and assaulting the security officers during work hours.

Schools were already being

boycotted by students demanding the release of four high school students abducted on May 4.

That protest had paralyzed all the schools and educational institutions in the peninsula. But even the few students who attended some of the schools went home when news of the notices spread across the Jaffna district.

The Jaffna University campus was already closed as a result of a previous dispute and is expected to remain closed until the latest threat is addressed by the security forces hierarchy in Jaffna.

NEWS

Violence - w/e 13 May

Summary of incidents - apart from major clashes - since 7 May

13 May

● A Buddhist monk who worked for peaceful coexistence among ethnic communities, was shot and killed in Trincomalee. Venerable Nandaratena Thera, the Chief Priest of the Mahadiulwewa Buddhist Rajamaha Vihare in Morawewa, Trincomalee, had participated in many events in the eastern port town. The assassins went to the Vihare by motor cycle, called the priest out and fired at him, fleeing the scene immediately after the shooting.

● The SLA imposed restrictions on fuel sales in Mannar. Stations in Mannar town were ordered to sell a maximum of five litres of diesel to each vehicle and three litres of petrol to each motor cycle per day. Residents are allowed buy five litres of kerosene per day for domestic purposes. The fuel stations were also instructed not to sell fuel in plastic containers.

● More than 600 SLA soldiers cordoned off a part of Kaithady, Jaffna, and conducted a house-to-house search. Residents were told to remain inside until the operation was finished. Locals were body searched and national identity cards were examined, but no one was arrested.

● SLA troopers on night patrol shot dead a security guard at Chandilipai, Jaffna. The SLA claimed they shot Nagarasa Wijayakumar, 32, a family man from Manipai employed as a night security guard at the Divisional Secretariat, when he failed to stop at their command and tried to flee. They also said they recovered a hand grenade from his body.

● Armed men shot dead a youth at his house in Kanakipuram in Akkaraipattu, Amparai. Murugesupillai Ananthan, 22, a labourer and the father of two, was called out of his house and shot.

● SLA troopers opened fire on civilians fishing in a lake at Thampanam Veli, along the Chengkaladi-Badulla road in Batticaloa, seriously wounding a youth from the refugee camp at Aiyangeani in Eravur. His father narrowly escaped injuries. Saravanapavan Pirabu, 18, is an IDP, displaced from Pankudaveli, in LTTE held territory, when the SLA launched offensives on his village. He and his father Nesathurai Sarvanapavan, 37, had been fishing in the lake when they were fired at. Civilians from villages like Koduvamaduru and Thampanam had to flee their villages as the SLA established camps in these areas.

12 May

● The body of a youth, about 25 years of age, was found in Irupaalai East, Jaffna, with several gunshot wounds to the head and upper body, and dressed in black trousers and a brown shirt. Residents speculated that the youth was killed in another location and the body dumped at Irupaalai. They added that sounds of vehicular activity were heard late the previous night from that location.

● Armed men in a white van forcibly abducted Rasalingam Nagarajah, 22, originally from Thoppukadu, Karainagar, from his temporary residence in Vaddukoddai, Jaffna.

● A postman working at the Kaithadi post office disappeared on his way to work by bus. SLA troopers had taken Subramaniam Sivatharsan, 28, for investigation the previous day and he was released after being severely tortured. The troopers confiscated his motor cycle and his National Identity card before releasing him, forcing him to take the bus to work the next day, during which he disappeared.

● Regular prayers and religious functions in Hindu Temples in Velanai, Kayts, and other Jaffna islets came to a standstill following the killing of the main priest in one temple and the arrests of the chief priest and custodian of another temple in Velanai by the SLN in late April, early May. Hindu priests who attend to the temple poojas are increasingly fearful of the harassment directed against them by the SLN, and are refusing to attend temple activities. Many priests have relocated to other areas, fearing for their lives.

11 May

● Sivaraj Paheerathan, a Jaffna University student in remand since his arrest on August 18, was released in Colombo after the Attorney General said there was no evidence against him. Paheerathan was taken into custody from Jaffna University during a search operation. The SLA claimed he was in possession of leaflets issued by an organization called the Peoples Liberation Army. Later he was moved to Colombo.

● Armed men in a white van forcibly abducted a disabled family man from Kalaivani Road in Pandatharippu, Jaffna. Theiventhiran Ragunathan, 36, of Vadaliyadai-ppu, had been living with relatives after being displaced from his home due to SLA offensives.

● Gnanaseelan Asokan, 24, of Nallur, Jaffna went missing after going to Nallur temple to pray.

● Thurai Tharmalingam, 38, from Kalviyangkaadu, Jaffna, an auto driver who disappeared on May 4 after going to Kokkuvil SLA camp for interrogation, was released by the SLA after being severely tortured in detention. Kokkuvil SLA officials had earlier denied they had arrested him.

● SLA troopers distributed noti-



Activists in Colombo protested last week against soaring human rights violations in Sri Lanka. Photo courtesy Daily Mirror

Mirror story on Jaffna youths false

HUMAN rights officials dismissed reports in Sri Lankan papers that 200 children had been handed over by Jaffna parents to protect them from being abducted by the Liberation Tigers.

Officials at the Jaffna office of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC) called the story in the Daily Mirror newspaper a blatant lie.

The Daily Mirror had reported that parents in Jaffna "handed over some 200 children" to the SLHRC and they "are now accommodated in a special building in Jaffna following a court order".

Jaffna SLHRC officials also criticised the paper for false reporting, saying the member cited in the article is a Sinhalese who used to be part of the organisation but is no longer in Jaffna.

The news story was written in a language giving an impression that the said official is still attached to the SLHRC Jaffna office, they said.

The paper quoted former Supreme Court judge Dharmasiri Jayawickrama, as telling the media

"these children, whose parents had feared that they would be abducted by the LTTE, are being cared for by Prisons officials."

The building where the children are now accommodated is fast becoming inadequate and the HRC is looking for a new building, the paper reported him as saying.

Nothing of this nature has ever happened, SLHRC officials in Jaffna said.

They admit that more than 72 youths and young family men have sought safety with them and been placed in protective custody in Jaffna prison.

But the Jaffna officials say these men have sought their protection fearing that they could be abducted or killed by the Sri Lanka Armed Forces and the paramilitary cadres collaborating with them.

The SLHRC officials also said that three youths under 18 from Kodikaamam, Jaffna, have been recently placed by them in protective custody in Jaffna prison for the same reason.

Tamilleelam rights group acts to release LTTE under-age recruits

THE Tamilleelam Child Protection Board has urgently requested parents of children under 17 who had joined the LTTE and are yet to be released, to contact it, with the intention of identifying and releasing underage cadres.

In an announcement published on May 8 in Eezhanaatham, the Tamil daily circulated in LTTE controlled areas, the Board said it had been "expeditiously reuniting children born in 1990 and after with their parents."

"The Board is acting on the basis of information received from parents and other organizations, and from the data collected by the Board," it said.

The advertisement called for "all parents who have children

born in 1990 and after, and yet to be released from the organization [LTTE], to provide the details of their children" to a contact in Paravippaaganchan, Kilinochchi, so that they could be identified and released.

"The Tamilleelam Child Protection Board has been responsible for the execution of the provisions of the Tamilleelam Child Protection Act 2006 which came into force in January 2006," the announcement states.

"As one of the main functions, the Board identifies under-age recruits, obtains their release, and reunites them with their families," it added.

The Tamilleelam Child Protection Act No. 03 of 2006 outlaws

the enlisting of children under 17 years in Armed forces and makes participation of under 18-year olds in armed combat illegal.

The legislation enacted by the Tamilleelam Legislature Secretariat, and which became effective on October 15 2006, brings into law measures to protect the rights and well-being of children from inception through to adolescence.

The Act, containing 83 sections, makes education compulsory up to grade 11, mandates registration of all births, outlaws enlisting of children under 17 years in armed forces, makes participation of under 18-year olds in armed combat illegal, and proscribes all forms of child labour.

NEWS

ces listing the names of principals of leading schools in Jaffna town and some students, branding them members of the LTTE, and warning those listed that they would be killed if they failed to give up "terrorist activities."

● A Jaffna Tamil woman charged with failing to register her name at Wellawatte Police was remanded. Ms Balasubramaniam Wimala Indra of Jaffna had travelled to Colombo and stayed with relatives in Wellawatte while waiting for documents to travel to Germany. She was taken into custody when she failed to produce documents registering her presence with Wellawatte Police. When she was produced in court after 21 days in remand, the Terrorist Intelligence Department argued that she should be remanded until the investigation against her is completed. The Magistrate said she did not have the authority to discharge the woman or release her on bail.

● Gunmen killed a Samurthi officer at Nattipiddimunai in Kalmunai, Amparai. Yogarasa Thivaharan, 38, a father of one, was rushed to hospital in a critical condition but succumbed to his injuries. Originally from Karaithivu, Thivaharan had married at Nattipiddimunai. The gunmen called him out of his house and shot him.

● A fuel station in Valaichennai, Batticaloa, owned by a Tamil business man, was attacked by a mob of more than 200 Muslims. The station is near the local railway station and in an area regularly patrolled by Sri Lankan armed forces. The mob attacked soon after Friday prayers and caused damage estimated to be more than Rs.500,000. SLA soldiers and traffic policemen were on duty at the time and Valaichennai police station is 150 metres from the petrol station. The owner, G. Somakanthan, said that even after he reported the impending attack, the police did not go to his aid. Only after he informed Batticaloa police chief did the police intervene, he said.

● Three SLAF MiG-27 aircrafts dropped 12 bombs in 2 sorties on Puthukkudiyiruppu, Mullaithivu, damaging five houses.

10 May

● Two SLAF MIG fighter jets bombed Puthukkudiyiruppu in Mullaiththeevu. The MIG bombers flew at a very low altitude, causing panic among the villagers at Karnan Kudiyiruppu.

● Forty-five youths in protective custody in Jaffna prison were produced in court and are to be released due to deteriorating hygiene conditions in the prison. 34 were released, while nine did not want

to leave the prison. Another two were not released as there are police cases against them.

● Armed men shot dead Illayathamby Thayan, 37, a building contractor and a father of two from Puthukkudiyiruppu, at his house in Valaichennai, Batticaloa.

● The EPDP led by Siva, operating from a SLA camp at Valaichennai fishing harbour in Batticaloa, is demanding that building contractors in Valaichennai provide bricks, sand and cement to build SLA sentry posts. Some contractors have been called to the EPDP office and had money demanded, while others have been threatened in their homes for not complying.

● An attacker threw a hand grenade at a refugee camp in Saratha Vidyalayam, Manthaththoduvay, Kathankudi, Batticaloa, injuring ten civilians, including four women. The incident occurred as civilians in the refugee camp were watching television outside their tents. The victims were identified as Kanapathypillai Arasaratnam, Velayutham Segar, Sivarasa Nir-mala, Sivarasa Suthagar, Packiyarajah Kalaimathy, Thiagarajah Sivarasa, Mailvaganam Malini, Sabapathy Rajanikanth, Sinrasa Sinnathamby, and Sasikaran Vijayakumar. Nearly 200 families displaced from Muthur and Sampur live in temporary tents in the camp.

9 May

● The bodies of five youths, suspected to be paramilitaries belonging to a breakaway faction of the Karuna Group, were recovered buried in Kiran, Eravur, Batticaloa. One body was identified as that of Sinthujan alias Johnson Jayakanthan, 31, a key Karuna Group operative. On the same day, gunmen shot and killed Johnson, 56, Sinthujan's father, at his house in Kalvanchikudi, Batticaloa. P. Sumanathas, another suspected Karuna Group operative, was also abducted from his house in Kolaavillai, Amparai, and killed.

● A Sub Inspector attached to the Vellaaveli STF camp was killed during an attack aimed at SFT troopers in a security patrol in Vellaaveli, Batticaloa. M. P. De Silva, 41, succumbed to his injuries.

● Armed men in unnumbered vehicles abducted a Tamil youth in a Muthur-to-Batticaloa bus.

● Five workers were killed and another four injured when a boiler exploded in a rice mill in Sainthamaruthu, Kalmunai, Amparai. A transformer near the mill was also badly damaged.

● Armed men shot dead Kalikutty Ramanan at Raja-Ela in Kanthalai, Trincomalee.



Handungamuwe Nandarata, a Buddhist monk working for racial reconciliation, was shot dead by gunmen in the restive eastern province. Photo AFP / Getty Images / Mangalanath

8 May

● Three men armed with T56 rifles forced their way into the house of Thavarasa Sujitharan, 19, at Yaththalaai, Varani, Jaffna, and shot him dead. Sujitharan tried to escape by locking himself inside a room but the killers forced the door and sprayed him with bullets. Sujitharan's house is in a SLA HSZ where the 52nd Brigade Base is also located.

● Unidentified men in white vans abducted two Tamil youths, both natives of Jaffna, from Colombo. One youth was abducted from a telecommunication centre in Wellawatte. In the second abduction, armed men had dragged the youth from his house in Kotahena, put him in a vehicle and sped away.

● Police said they killed a man, alleged to be a LTTE cadre, in Vavuniya. Two youths opened fire at the police, and one was killed and the other escaped when they returned fire, the police said.

● The LTTE said they repulsed a Sri Lankan offensive along the Vavuniya Mannar border. The Tigers recovered the body of a Sri Lankan trooper and claimed to have seized military hardware, including an AK-LMG, following an intense fight that lasted for 30 minutes. Two LTTE fighters were killed in action. The Sri Lankan troopers, who launched the offensive towards Kurichuddakulam, west of Thampanai, were forced to withdraw after sustaining heavy casualties.

● Marimuthu Kanakamma, a

mother of seven, was wounded when two SLAF bombers attacked Karnankudiyiruppu in Puthukkudiyiruppu.

7 May

● SLAF bombers dropped bombs over a fuel storage at Vaddakachchi, Kilinochchi. The fuel storage belonged to the Chamber of Commerce of Private Businesses in Kilinochchi. Some houses located in the vicinity of the fuel storage were also damaged in the air strike.

● LTTE officials handed over the bodies of five SLA soldiers killed in action during a SLA offensive to the ICRC at the LTTE Mannar

Continued on page 14

Norwegian Tamil goes missing

A NORWEGIAN citizen of Tamil origin has been reported missing since March 31, after he was questioned by the Sri Lanka Army in Vavuniya.

Sounthararajan Thambirajah, 31, who has lived in Norway since 1993, had gone to Sri Lanka last year to get married but was trapped in Kilinochchi when violence broke out in August 2006.

He crossed into Sri Lankan government controlled territory at the end of March, a Norwegian daily reported on May 13.

Mr. Sounthararajan (pictured right) has family members in Norway and they have been in continuous contact with the Norwegian mission in Sri Lanka, Klassekampen, the first media to break the story, reported.

The family and Norwegian embassy officials have been working hard to discover his whereabouts, the paper said.

There were some indications that he had been arrested by Sri Lankan authorities until around April 12, the paper quoted the family as saying. The family had remained tight-lipped until recently as they had been attempting to secure Mr. Sounthararajan's release. It was only after the failure of all their efforts that the family allowed Tamil activists in Norway to go public, reports said.

There has been no official documentation of the arrest.

The Klassekampen paper quoted Norwegian Foreign Ministry official, Kristin Melsom, as saying that the Norwegian authorities were monitoring the disappearance closely. However, the Embassy had refused to go into details "due to the nature of the case," the paper said.

The case was a "serious issue" for the Norwegian Embassy and the Embassy officials were con-



tinuously briefing the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, the paper reported.

The Sri Lankan Embassy in Oslo had also been approached by the Norwegian authorities two weeks ago, the Klassekampen reported. This is the first report of a Norwegian national missing in Sri Lanka in a long time, the paper said.

EPDP - Eelam People's Democratic Party
FDL - Forward Defence Line
HRC - Human Rights Commission
HSZ - High Security Zone
ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP - Internally Displaced Person
LTTE - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
SLA - Sri Lanka Army
SLAF - Sri Lanka Air Force
SLHRC - Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission
SLMM - Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission
SLN - Sri Lanka Navy
STF - Special Task Force
TID - Terrorism Investigation Division

NEWS

Violence round up - w/e 13 May

Continued from page 13

district political secretariat in Vaddakkandal. The ICRC handed the bodies to SLA officials at Uyilangkulam army check point in Sri Lanka government held territory. One AK-LMG, 40 mm rocket gun with shells, seven T-56 automatic rifles, a claymore mine, RPG ammunition, 28 hand grenades and 11 bullet-proof jackets, ammunition and military equipment were seized by the Tigers in the area after the attack.

● All Eravur businesses, government schools, offices, and banks shut down demanding the arrest of arsonists who burnt three shops the previous morning. A consortium of mosques, Muslim organizations, and the Jamiyathul Ulama Board in the area organized the protest.

● Masked armed men shot dead Poopalapillai Chelvanayagam, 52, a labourer and father of four, outside his residence in Sooriyapuram, Kaluvanchikkudi, Batticaloa, and then fled the scene.

● Gunmen shot dead Mammangam Rasakumar, 30, an IDP employed as a shop assistant, in Korallankerni, Eravur, Batticaloa.

● SLA soldiers cordoned off and search large residential areas in Kokuvil east, Jaffna. Potpathi Road, Medical Faculty Road, Kangarakai Road, Railway Station Road, and Temple Road areas were subjected to house-to-house searches. Youths were subjected to severe interrogation.

● Armed men opened fire on the SLA Udipiddi junction camp and its sentry posts, positioning themselves between Udpuiddi junction and the road to Vathiri in Vadamaradchchi, Jaffna. The fire fight lasted nearly fifteen minutes, and the attackers escaped.

● Jaffna University students boy-

cotted lectures protesting against the entry by armed men into the campus the previous Saturday morning. The men destroyed memorial photographs of students killed in the conflict and stole funds raised by students to support the refugees in the east.

● TNA Jaffna parliamentarians and Jaffna Technical College students made a public appeal calling for the immediate release of four high school students who went missing the previous week. The parliamentarians said failure to free the students, and postponing the creation of an environment conducive to learning, would result in mass protests and demonstrations by the public and student community. The SLA in Jaffna, anticipating student agitation in reaction to the abduction, deployed troopers in large numbers in front of Jaffna schools, conducting checks and blocking outsiders entering the schools.

● The SLA conducted a cordon and search operation in Thiriyaai, Trincomalee, following an attack on a group of SLA soldiers the previous night in which one soldier was injured.

● Armed men shot dead a Tamil youth at Manatcheanai, in government held Muthur south, Trincomalee. A group of armed men in a white van dragged S. Sasitharan, 29, out of his house, and fired at him.

● SLA soldiers and police evacuated all employees of the Colombo Municipal Council and searched the premises after a tip off that a bomb was about to detonate within the offices. Roads leading to the office and its surroundings were temporarily closed for traffic and civilian movements till the search was over. Nothing suspicious was found.



Sri Lankan soldiers stand around a body dumped in Vavuniya. Photo AFP/Getty Images/T. Vivekarasa

Allaipiddy forensic tests denied

A SRI LANKAN court has refused to allow the police to perform forensic tests on bullets recovered from eleven victims killed in Allaipiddy on May 13, 2006, citing the time lapse.

The officials had wanted to test fire weapons obtained from the SLN and compare them to the bullets recovered from the victims.

The CID claimed that such an examination would shed some light in identifying those involved in the killing of the eleven civilians, including eight from the same family.

Citing the fact that more than a year had passed since the killings and that many of the naval personnel at the Karainagar Naval

base had since been transferred to other locations, the Kayts Magistrate refused to allow the police to proceed.

He also mentioned that the weapons used during the killing would most likely be different to any currently being used, and comparing these bullets will likely fail legal scrutiny, and thus would not serve any purpose.

However, the magistrate went on to specify that if any civilian could identify those involved in the killings, then the bullets from the weapons of those identified could be compared with the bullets from victims' bodies and subjected to forensic examination.

Stressing the critical legal ne-

ed to have an identification parade, the Kayts magistrate adjourned the trial until June 25.

He also directed the police to arrange for an identification parade of the SLN troopers who served in the area during the Allaipiddy massacre.

On May 13, 2006, unidentified gunmen, widely believed to be SLN soldiers, entered the home of Sellathurai Amalathas in Allaipiddy and opened fire. Eight people were killed on the spot, including a four-month-old baby and four-year-old boy. Another person died later in hospital. On the same night, another two civilians were also killed, allegedly by the same group of gunmen.

'The gun is silencing the pen' charge Jaffna journalists

FOLLOWING the recent murder of another journalist in Jaffna by suspected Army-backed paramilitaries, the Journalists Union in the peninsula appealed to the international community to defend media freedom in Sri Lanka.

Despite international media watchdogs' disquiet over threats to Sri Lankan journalists, paramilitaries are openly threatening media workers and civil society activists in the northern peninsula, reporters say.

The journalists appeal was supported by an appeal to the government signed by the Tamil National Alliance, Sri Lanka's largest Tamil party.

In a petition to the United Nations' Secretary General, Jaffna journalists pleaded for the international community to act to protect media freedom.

"The pen is being silenced by the gun. We ask the entire world why they are silent?" the letter said. It urged the international community to "take action ... rather than merely publish annual reports about journalists' untimely deaths."

"We media personnel make this request to the world at large," the letter said. "We humbly ask you to take measures to save journalists' lives and protect democracy in Sri Lanka."

The Jaffna-based Tamil News Information Centre (TNIC), a registered association established by academics, lawyers, former parliamentarians and senior journalists said Army-backed paramilitaries are systematically targeting Tamil journalists.

Journalists critical of government policy and those reporting

on activities of the paramilitaries, are being named and openly threatened on the Army-run radio station in Jaffna, it said.

Some of those named on the Army radio have subsequently been shot dead in the garrison town.

The TNIC, among other civil society organisations in Jaffna, has been involved in probing abductions of youth and social activists in Jaffna and releasing gathered information and evidence to media.

The Jaffna journalists' petition was handed over to UN officials on May 7, after a protest march in Vanni to condemn the most recent killing of a Tamil journalist, Selvarajah Rajivarman.

Rajivarman worked for the Uthayan newspaper, whose staff and offices have repeatedly been

attacked by Army-backed paramilitaries, including those from the Eelam People's Democratic Party.

The EPDP is a parliamentary ally of President Rajapakse and its cadres operate alongside the Sri Lankan military in counter-insurgency against the Tamil Tigers.

EPDP members were suspected in the murder of journalist Mylvaganam Nimalarajan in 2000 and last year's murder of three Uthayan employees, the international watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said in a statement on May 1.

Rajivarman as the second journalist to be killed in a government-controlled area in the past few weeks and is the third member of TNIC to be killed in Jaffna in the past few months.

The organization lamented the

killings were continuing "despite all the complaints and pleas made to Human Rights Commission, Sri Lankan Police and International Human Rights organizations regarding the public threat issued to TNIC workers."

Last month RSF criticized the Sri Lankan government for contributing to the climate of terror. "The impunity reigning in the east and north encourages the militias and death squads to continue their human rights violations. The government, several of whose members regularly threaten the press and human rights activists, is partly to blame for this violence," RSF said.

"The people who murder journalists in Sri Lanka feel so well protected that they carry out fresh murders to mark the anniversaries of their preceding ones."

NEWS

Violence round up - week ending 20 May

Continued from page 10

17 May

● The Sri Lankan Military command in Palali announced new reduced curfew hours in Jaffna, from 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m., a reduction of one hour.

● Artillery attacks by the SLA from their FDL in Iranailupangulam, Nochikulam and Kalmadu towards civilian targets in LTTE controlled Vavuniya inflicted heavy damage on property and livestock in Kovilkunchukulam. More than twenty shells from SLA occupied areas exploded within the premises of a school. As students and teachers used bunkers as trained, no one was hurt.

● The SLA said they had six bodies of LTTE cadres killed during a fire fight at the Vavuniya FDL, and were seeking ICRC assistance to hand the bodies to the LTTE.

● Jaffna University undergraduates from outside the district are considering leaving the Peninsula due to the deteriorating security conditions for students. Escalating student abductions and the recent posters bearing a hit list of students have shaken the student community, and the frequent disruptions to lectures have affected academic progress, student leaders said.

● Armed men abducted three labourers from their house at Kathar Chinakulam in Vavuniya and shot them dead. Subramaniam Chandrasegaran, 28, a father of two, Sinnathurai Vigneswaran, 24, a father of two and Manamo-han Mohanathas, 24, were killed. Their wives said the armed men who took away their husbands spoke fluent Tamil.

16 May

● K. G. Wijayasinghe, 43, a police constable attached to Era-vur Police station, committed suicide by shooting himself. He was allegedly in a disturbed state due to family related problems. Wijayasinghe, a father of three, was from Malkoduwawe, a small hamlet in Kurunagala. He had assumed duties at Eravur Police station three days earlier.

● Eravur Police questioned some Muslim youths regarding the burning of three shops in the town on 6 May. Pamphlets issued in the area named the youths as responsible for arson, but not arrests were made.

● Two LTTE commandos were killed in a clash on the Mullikulam FDL in Vavuniya. Vavuniya police contacted the ICRC to hand the body over to the LTTE.

● SLN Kayts Coast Guards arrested a fisherman who, after his boat had capsized in Mannar Sea, fought for his life for two days, and swam back to the shore at Velanai, Mandathivu. F. Denistus Miranda, 33, a father of five of Pesalai, Mannar, has gone fishing when he was thrown overboard.

After being handed over to Kayts police and then the courts, suspicion was raised regarding his identity. Miranda told the magistrate that SLN at Pesalai allow fishermen to fish only after they surrender their National Identity Cards to the SLN and hence he was not in possession of his NIC.

● The SLA at Avarangkal in Valikamam East, Jaffna, observed the movements of a lorry during curfew hours and fired at the vehicle.

● Alwinas Priyatharsan, 27, from Naranthanai north, Kayts, Jaffna, went missing after he went to obtain permission to travel to Colombo at the Assistant Government Agent's office in Kayts.

15 May

● Kanakarathnam Mohanraj, 17, was killed on the spot and his father was wounded when SLA fired artillery shells hit their house in Pooneryn. The scattered body of the student, killed when he had gone home for his lunch break, was recovered at his home.

● A Sri Lanka Transport Board bus plying the Navvaly-Chavakachcheri route in Thenmaradchy, Jaffna, was burnt. The attackers forced the passengers to alight from the bus before setting fire to the vehicle near the Vaddu-kkod-dai Agricultural Institute on Urumpirai road in Maruthanaamadamm. Chunnakam Police and SLA soldiers rushed to the scene but were unable to contain the fire.

● A civilian was killed in crossfire when Sri Lanka Police attempted to arrest a robbery suspect in Vavuniya. Robbers attempting to rob a house in Pandarikulam the previous week were caught by civilians and handed over to the police. On information provided by the robbers, the police surrounded a house in Vavuniya. K. Mahendran, 52, a family man and a mason by profession was caught in crossfire when police attempted to arrest a suspect in the house.

● A Tamil youth was shot and injured in Uppuveli, Trincomalee. The SLN said that troops stationed at a local detachment had fired at an unidentified person when he attempted to enter the camp through the rear entrance. The SLN claimed it recovered some weapons from the man.

● Two Tamil boys were injured when a hand grenade concealed under garbage, exploded near a Hindu Temple at Chelvanayakapuram, Trincomalee. The explosion occurred when people living in the vicinity of the temple were engaged in clearing garbage along the roadside. Sri Lankan armed forces rushed to the scene and conducted investigations following the explosion.

● The SLA has instructed filling stations in Mannar town to obtain the names of persons who purchase fuel and the registration numbers of their vehicles and driving licence. Employees of filling

station are also obtaining names and signatures of residents who purchase kerosene for domestic use as instructed by the SLA. People in large number were seen from morning till evening in front of the fuel filling station owned by Maanthai West Co-operative Society, at the entrance to Maanaar town, following the introduction of fuel restriction.

● Fourteen Tamil civilians arrested in a cordon and search operation in Wellawatte, Colombo, when they failed to prove their identity and the reason for their presence in the location. The police took about 25 Tamil civilians into custody but eleven were released after they proved their identity and the purpose of staying in the location.

● Two youths, one a Tamil and another a Sinhalese, were discharged by the Colombo Magistrate when the prosecuting police officer told the court there was no evidence to implicate them with any crime. They had been charged with taking photographs of Borella police station with their cell-phone camera. Borella Police arrested Balasubramaniam Ram Kumar of Point Pedro and his Sinhala friend Sunil of Warakapola while they were allegedly taking photographs of Borella Police Station from the first floor of the Borella public market two months ago. Since then both had been detained under the PTA.

14 May

● A Muslim youth was shot dead at Aaththimoaddai, Saambalthivu, along Trincomalee-Nilaveli road. Mohamed Azaath, 25, a native of Irrakakandy, Nilaveli, had been employed as a driver in a private sector van transporting passengers to and from Nilaveli. He had stopped his vehicle at Aaththimoaddai junction to take passengers when an unidentified person waiting at the bus halt got into the vehicle and fired at him.

● A young mother of two from Naaranthanai, Kayts, disappeared in Trincomalee, her parents said in a complaint to the Jaffna office of the SLHRC. Anjani Robert Lessia, 36, has not been heard from since April 13. She had left Jaffna for Colombo on March 11 to receive her husband from abroad. As he could not return as planned due to the volatile situation in Sri Lanka, Lessia had phoned her parents on April 13 said she was proceeding to Trincomalee to travel back to Jaffna on the passenger ship. She has not been heard from since.

● Sivasami Raku, 24, a mentally retarded youth from Velanai in the islets of Jaffna has been missing since April 19, when he was last seen on his way to Jaffna town, his parents said in a complaint to the Jaffna office of the SLHRC.

● Arudpragasam Ravikumar, 25, of Nallur, Jaffna, went missing while going to work.

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NEWS

The Invisible Madeleines

Brami Jegan

THIRTEEN days ago four year old Madeleine McCann from Rothley, Leicestershire, disappeared from the holiday apartment in Praia da Luz, Portugal in which she was sleeping with her siblings whilst her parents had dinner less than 50 meters away.

Since then we have seen endless footage of two young individuals whose pain, sadness and fear for their daughter's safety can not be described nor imagined. One only has to see Gerry and Kate McCann's faces to know that every moment since that night has been a living nightmare for them.

11 days after the incident the reward offered to anyone with information leading to Madeleine's safe return reached £2.5 million. The generosity of the individuals who have contributed to this fund and every other that has taken time to help in some way is a display of human kindness at its finest. Once again we have united as a nation to show our support, courage and strength. We did this after little Jamie Bulger's brutal murder, the 2004 Tsunami and 07/07 and we will continue to do this as future tragedies take their place in history.

Yet there is something very uncomfortable and disconcerting about the media's reaction to Madeleine McCann. As each day passes, it is becoming harder to

ignore the imbalance of their reporting. Why has precedence been given to one child and her family over the countless others in this world who are locked in endless slavery, abuse, torture and poverty?

The media say they report News. Surely it is the media that has driven the news over the past 13 days. The momentum of this front page 24/7 reporting has created a void which is not backfilled by any measured reporting of an issue that affects thousands of children every day of every year. Once again the media have failed to give voice to the poor.

In a report by Human Rights Watch published in January 2004, the report details child abductions in Northern Uganda as one of the most flagrant examples. 'The Lord's Resistance Army has abducted an estimated 10,000 children since mid 2002. These children are forced to fight against the Ugandan People's Defense Forces, raid villages for food, slaughter civilians, and abduct other children. Children who try to escape are killed, typically by other children who are forced to beat or hack the victim or be killed themselves'.

Around Easter this year the plight of children slaving on Cocoa farms in the Ivory Coast so that we can effortlessly eat Easter eggs was given some media attention albeit very minimal. A survey in 2002 by the International



Displaced school children in Vaharai attending classes in a makeshift class rooms. Photo Daily Mirror

Institute for Tropical Agriculture found that 284 000 children were working in hazardous conditions on cocoa farms in West Africa. Many of these children were trafficked. Imagine Wembley Stadium filled three times over. This is how many children's lives are at stake.

Why has this not been drummed, hammered and stamped into our conscience by the media with daily headlines and graphic accounts of these children? Their names, their age, their smiles, their tears. We hear nothing. We see

nothing. Why are we not reminded every day that bonded labour, warfare and child prostitution is an everyday reality for so many of the world's children?

There is no doubt that there is a lot of money being given to aid children whose human rights have and are being violated. There are many selfless and generous people in our world and every bit counts. And there is no question of the validity of the reward to bring Madeleine home. Everyone wants this beautiful little girl to be safe and back in her parents'

arms again.

It is unfortunate that the media has isolated this heart wrenching story and have failed to frame it within a global context. Every child is priceless and most importantly every child is equal. As human beings we have a moral duty to remember the thousands of invisible children who we will never ever hear about every time we think, hope and pray for Madeleine McCann.

originally posted on
avifvolunteers.blogspot.com/

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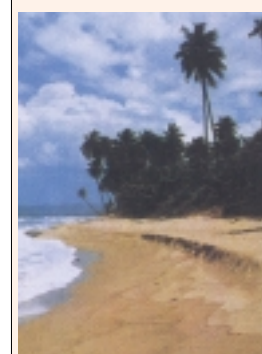
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