

The Sri Lanka Monitor

Vol 2 No 5 August 1989

Produced by the British Refugee Council

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Death toll tops 1,000 for August in Sri Lanka's killing fields

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The JVP turned their attention to the medical sector, closing down Colombo's hospitals on 11 August, after two employees were arrested for putting up anti-Government posters. The strike spread swiftly to other parts of the country and babies were left to die in incubators and old people from lack of food and medication. Government and private sector offices function intermittently and commercial life is slowly grinding to a halt.

Moving a motion in Parliament on 24 August for the continuation of the Emergency, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vincent Perera said that 841 people were killed in Sri Lanka between 16 July and 18 August. Unofficial estimates for August say over 1,000 may have died in the South, alone.

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VALVETTITURAI:

THE SORROW AND THE PITY

REPORTS from Jaffna say 51 civilians were massacred by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in the coastal town of Valvettiturai on 2 August, following a LTTE ambush which killed six Indian soldiers. Civilian fatalities included a one year old child, eight women and seven students.

After a 48-hour curfew was lifted in the area on 4 August, aid workers found bodies lying in streets, some partially eaten by dogs. Twenty seriously injured were taken to Jaffna hospital for immediate treatment, ten of whom required major surgery.

According to eye-witness reports people were dragged out of temples and houses and shot dead as the IPKF ran amok, looting shops and setting fire to buildings. Some 123 houses, 43 shops, 4 cinemas, 69 vehicles, 12 boats and 129 fishing nets were destroyed in the rampage. Over 5,250 people were displaced and have taken refuge in 13 temporary camps.

Local sources say 56 people were taken into custody but the IPKF admit to arresting only 34. Ironically, over 1,000 people have fled to India following the atrocity and the exodus is continuing.

IPKF sources have denied that Indian troops attacked townspeople but say that 24 people died in crossfire during a clash with the LTTE in Valvettiturai market. The Indian High Commission in Colombo said that the IPKF was an extremely disciplined force with considerable experience in peace-keeping activities in many countries. Valvettiturai residents say, however, the IPKF area Commander was present at the scene of the killings.

A BBC reporter visiting the area ten days after the incident, con-

firmed that there was "compelling evidence to support a massacre by Indian troops".

The agony of Valvettiturai has not ended. Clashes continue in the area and on 15 August two youths were shot dead following a confrontation between the LTTE and the IPKF near Vannichai temple.

Valvettiturai as a traditional stronghold of the LTTE movement and the birthplace of Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, has consistently come under attack by Sri Lankan forces and the IPKF.

Attacks on Valvettiturai by the Sri Lankan Army culminated in "Operation Liberation" in June 1987 when a massive sea and air strike on the Vadamarachchi area pushed the Tigers back to the gates of Jaffna town. Since the arrival of the IPKF in July 1987 - ostensibly as the protector of the Tamil civilian - Valvettiturai has remained a flash-point and continues to take heavy casualties. Some observers say the nature of the guerrilla war in the North and East is such that the IPKF is unable to effectively counter the LTTE who strike and vanish into the local population - or into the jungle. The Indian Army's frustration is inevitably visited on the civilian population - especially in cases where Indian soldiers are shot dead.

Aid workers who have witnessed such incidents, however, say Indian soldiers are trigger happy and shoot first and ask questions later.

Whatever the circumstances, the killing of non-combatants and intentional damage to civilian property clearly breaches international conventions. India's consistent refusal to allow International Red Cross observers access to the Jaffna war zone now seems more disturbing than ever.

Revolutionaries condemned

Twelve Sri Lankan Tamils and four Maldivians were sentenced to death and a further 56 jailed for over 20 years, for their part in an unsuccessful coup last November in the Maldivian Islands. The takeover was allegedly masterminded by the Tamil group, the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam. Tamil organisations worldwide have launched an immediate appeal for clemency.

Aid projects close

West Germany announced on 18 August that it would close down six agricultural development projects in Kandy, Kurenegala and Anuradhapura due to continuing violence in the areas. Expatriate workers and their families would return home, an embassy spokeswoman said.

LTTE leader freed

LTTE leader *Jeevan*, charged with the murder of 13 Sri Lankan soldiers in Jaffna in July 1983 was set free by the High Court in Colombo on 24 August after the State withdrew its case. The 1983 killings sparked off mass riots throughout Sri Lanka resulting in the deaths of some 2,000 Tamils.

Indian government supporters held

Over 20,000 supporters of Rajiv Gandhi's Congress (I) party were arrested in Tamil Nadu, South India by the DMK administration on the eve of a general strike called by India's opposition parties for 28 August.

Human rights lawyer slain

Human rights lawyer Kanchana Abeypala active in "disappearance" cases was shot dead and his father wounded by unidentified gunmen in Colombo on 28 August. Human rights agency Amnesty International drew attention to threats to Mr Abeypala's life in mid-July.

Fighting continues in the North-East

DESPITE consultations between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE in Colombo and between India and Sri Lanka, fierce fighting has continued in the North and East between the LTTE and the IPKF.

According to Joint Security Forces Headquarters, seven IPKF soldiers died when LTTE ambushed an IPKF patrol in Mullaitivu on 12 August. In the counter-attack the IPKF killed a prominent LTTE leader, *Dinesh*. The LTTE said that six IPKF soldiers were killed in an attack at Trincomalee on 15 August.

Mannar came under indefinite curfew after the LTTE attacked an IPKF camp on 16 August killing 24

soldiers, official sources said in Colombo. According to the Indian High Commission in Colombo, the camp was fired on from the Mannar Hospital and the IPKF did not return the fire to prevent civilian deaths.

In another LTTE-IPKF clash on 19 August in Mankulam in the Vavuniya District an IPKF soldier and a LTTE militant were killed and four civilians injured. The LTTE announced in Jaffna that on 21 August at Alvai in Vadamarachchi the LTTE Jaffna District political leader *Dias* Kanthasamy was killed by the IPKF. During a cordon-and-search operation in

Alampil in the Mullaitivu District on 28 August the IPKF confronted and killed nine LTTE members, according to IPKF sources. Five others were injured, another five taken into custody and three IPKF soldiers were killed.

Civilian casualties have continued to escalate in the North and East. In a confrontation with the LTTE in Pandatherippu in the Jaffna District, the IPKF allegedly shot dead two civilians. In Nedunkerny in the Vavuniya District six civilians were killed and ten others injured on 17 August when their tractor ran over a landmine.

Meanwhile residents of Kumulamunai, Alampil and Semmalai in the Mullaitivu District have complained that their paddy fields and surrounding jungles are being shelled continuously from IPKF camps. Villagers say that farm and wild animals are being killed as a result. Pregnant women have been forced to leave the area. In mid-August, a special commando unit of the IPKF established camp and commenced search operations in Sampur village in the Trincomalee District, and the surrounding jungles. People of the area have been ordered not to go into jungle areas.

Plantations under pressure

K SINNATHAMBY, the Hatton Area Regional Director of the Ceylon Workers Congress - the largest Trade Union in the Plantations - was shot dead in Badulla District on 2 August, allegedly by the JVP. It is said that Mr Sinnathamby had made statements earlier in public and private meetings criticising the Sinhalese insurgents.

In mid-August an Estate Committee leader and a District Committee leader were killed by the JVP in Panwila in Kandy District. On 15 August the Superintendent of Wewessa Estate in Badulla was also shot dead.

Plantation Trade Union officers say that the Plantation workers, Unions and management are increasingly intimidated by the JVP, who enforce strikes and non-payment of Union subscriptions. The JVP has also issued orders to some Trade Union office-bearers to resign their positions.

Observers in the plantation areas say that the Trade Unions are now completely infiltrated by the JVP and that fear and suspicion are widespread.

Deaths in hill country areas outside the plantations soared during

August, particularly in the Kandy and Badulla Districts. Kandy residents say that during the first two weeks of the month more than 1,000 people were killed in the District. Villagers in the Mahaweli area are being increasingly targeted by security forces and bodies floating in the river are a common sight. The legacy is one of pollution and fear.

■ SUSPECTED EPRLF youths disrupted a series of interviews for teachers being held at Batticaloa Education Office on 16 August, burning documents and intimidating the staff.

Earlier in the month, voluntary teachers who had not been called for interview fasted in Batticaloa, demanding their confirmation as Government teachers. There are nearly 4,000 voluntary teachers in the North and East, according to the Provincial Council.

North-East Chief Minister A Varadaraja Perumal accused the government of contravening the Provincial Council legislation by ignoring the Council and appointing teachers directly.

■ VICTIMS of the June floods which ravaged Sri Lanka's Southern Districts still lack adequate Government relief according to reports from Colombo.

In Bulathkohupitiya - one of the worst affected areas - villagers are penniless and now landless. Many have been provided with temporary accommodation in ramshackle huts on rubber plantations. Childrens' education has been seriously disrupted and fears of epidemic are growing. The St. John's Ambulance Service provide free clinics twice a week with drugs supplied by the Kandy Rotary Club. Local aid workers say the Government response does not meet present needs.

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