

Information Bulletin No.6

Date of release : 20th June 1995

REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN THE BATTICALOA

& AMPARAI DISTRICTS: 9TH JUNE 1995

1. Incidents in the Amparai District

7th/8th May 1995: Kanchikudichcharu:

2 Incidents in the Batticaloa District.

January to 3rd May 1995:

30th April, night: Batticaloa:

11th May 1995 :

16th May 1995 :

22nd May 1995:

23rd May: Thalankuda (5 miles south of Batticaloa) :

3. Problems affecting ordinary people.

4. The Security Forces.

1. Incidents in the Amparai District

7th/8th May 1995: Kanchikudichcharu:

A group of STF men set off from Kanchikudichcharu to Kanjirankuda in two tractors, most of them going home with their bags for Vesak celebrations. On the way, they were ambushed by the LTTE who had a relatively easy target, leaving 19 STF men dead. Subsequently, in Tirukkovil, the STF chased away the patients in the hospital next to their camp. The keeper in the RC church next door was asked to fetch the tractor belonging to the gipsy community and was assaulted when he expressed some doubt. A situation developed where STF men in the Tirukkovil camp tried to go on the rampage and take reprisals against civilians. Wimalasena, the Inspector in charge, according to local sources, stood at the entrance and threatened to shoot anyone trying to leave the camp. In due course Seneviratne, ASP/STF, who had earlier served in the area was promptly dispatched to Tirukkovil to maintain order.

On the night of the 8th, STF men from Kanjirankudah, ostensibly on patrol, about midnight, abducted around 20 civilians from Sinnathottam & Vinayagapuram, took them to the beach and tied them up, apparently to execute them. The OIC, Kanjirankuda got wind of this plan, either through losing contact with the men or through a dissenting member of the party. He

immediately alerted Seniviratne, who radioed the patrol. Not receiving a reply, he took a party of trusted men and drove into the area. Upon locating the party, he reportedly assaulted the radio bearer who had failed to respond. The rest of the patrol ran away. The captives were then released and a major catastrophe was averted. Seniviratne was in Tirukkovil for six days.

13th May 1995: Inspector Ettam, Pottuvil: Inspector Ettam is a small village 3/4 mile north of Pottuvil on the Akkaraipattu road. It had a police post manned by six men. The incident is partly to do with events during the ceasefire. About 8 LTTE boys from the village came home, and all this was noted by the police. Most of these were boys who had joined during the armed forces' atrocities of June-August 1990 that left about 200 civilians dead in the Pottuvil area. The village was resettled in October 1993. On day above, past noon, a policeman went to the enclosure on the opposite side of the road, that was meant for them to ease themselves. An explosion resulted in which the policeman suffered a foot injury. The people claim that the policeman had dropped a grenade whose pin had got loose. The STF, according to local sources, pointed to a hole in the ground that suggested that a mine had been buried.

The men at the police post panicked and hurried down the road towards Pottuvil police station, firing at random, with the injured man supported on either side by two comrades. Subsequently a large group of policemen took petrol from a local filling station and went towards Ettam firing into the air.

In the meantime a group of school children had come from Komary for a sports meet in Pottuvil. From 2.45 p.m. they were waiting for the Komary bus and the firing noises started at 3.00 p.m. The children began to cry. Kulanthai Marikkar, a Muslim teacher at Pottuvil, invited the school party to spend the night in his house.

At Ettam the police set off on a rampage of looting, assault, and burning. In a house close to the police post, a policeman called for 'Radha', a lady teacher who had not responded to his past advances. Easwary (19) who ran out of the next house was mistaken for 'Radha', given a chase and had acid poured on her back. Easwary with about 20 young women of the area took shelter in the house of Mr. Sivaguru. About half the women and children had in the meantime run to the neighbouring settlement at Kallaipattai (Tamarikulam), towards the interior, away from the main road.

At Sivaguru's house, the police asked for his three daughters. The three girls Kala, Sita and Vanitha who came out were soaked in petrol and made to sit in different places. The police threatened to set fire to the three girls unless the others too came out. Sivaguru gave a cry of panic. The other women opened the door. Among them were two sisters Jeeva and Rupa.

Jeeva had been in the police and was staying at home under interdiction. Her story too is one that links the day's events to Pottuvil's tragic past. Janaka was a police sergeant attached to Pottuvil in June 1990 when the LTTE had killed several Sinhalese and Muslim policemen who had surrendered to them. Janaka had escaped by being on leave during Poson. The people of the area accuse Janaka of being a ring leader in the subsequent murder of a large number of Tamils. But Janaka was never brought to justice. He was promoted and is now an SI in the Amparai District. Janaka is later said to have used his position in an attempt to coerce Jeeva into having an affair with him. Jeeva's refusal, it is said, earned her an interdiction on false charges. This meant that she was a marked woman.

When the door of Sivaguru's house was opened, Jeeva got ready to run. The other women

tried to prevent her. Jeeva ran uttering the words, "I do not want the others to suffer because of me". One policeman ran after her, caught her by the hair, and proceeded to assault her and kick her. Rupa screamed upon seeing this. Although none of Jeeva's family had any connection with the LTTE, during the ceasefire an LTTE cadre had come to their home and asked for water. A policeman had seen Rupa giving him water. This policeman caught Rupa by the hair and beat her saying, "So you gave water to your husband". Their mother then arrived on the scene and screamed.

While all this was going on, an STF party arrived under Ranasinghe, IP,OIC/Arugam Bay, fired into the air and brought the rampaging policemen under control. Jeeva, Rupa and their mother were dispatched to Amparai in a lorry under police protection. Jeeva explained their position to the OIC in Sinhalese, who promised to release them the next day. They were released on the third day.

On the same day as the incident, Gnanaraj, the Komary school principal, hearing of the trouble, approached Kirthipala, OIC, STF/Komary. He made arrangements for the night-park bus to go to Pottuvil with Gnanaraj and fetch the children and the staff. On their way back at 6.45 pm they saw fires burning at Kundumadu, the village nearest to the police station, and at Inspector Ettam.

The end of the day found two women (Easwary above and Sintamani (47) with a bullet wound in her hand) and a three year old child of Vijayalatchumi (gun shot) injured. 87 houses were burnt down. Cash and jewellery, worth Rs.10000 to Rs.75000 were stolen from each of at least two houses, one being Gopal's house where a wedding was scheduled for the 19th. Seven small houses, three of them run by widows (Mrs.Karunanithy, Sesamma and Milly), were destroyed.

It must be remembered that more than a quarter of the Tamils in Pottuvil suffered loss of life in the immediate family due to armed forces' atrocities during 1990 and were refugees for three years in Komary, losing such benefits as Janasaviya and without work. Since resettlement they have been living mostly in cajan huts without proper employment and unable to cultivate much of their fields. Outstanding payments to them, arrears pensions/salaries and compensations are yet far from resolved. [\[Top\]](#)

2 Incidents in the Batticaloa District.

January to 3rd May 1995:

Puthukkudyiruppu (south of Kattankudy): During the January-19th April ceasefire, the LTTE came to the village with video cassettes of their Elephant Pass and Pooneryn operations and asked around for a video deck to screen these. Those who were asked refused, on the grounds that once the ceasefire ended - they were clear it would - they would be open to harassment by the Sri Lankan forces. They told the LTTE that they could, if they insisted, take the decks by force. The LTTE brought a deck from elsewhere and screened the two operations. Within three days, four women left the village to join the LTTE. Of the four boys who joined, one was Krishnakumar (16) whose father was a wood-cutter and labourer. The other three, including Chandiran (15), were known in the village as `Therichchans' or `Theriyans' - i.e. louts or bullies. Generally , most parents had prevented their children from watching the videos. It is the 'Therichchans', who towards the end of the ceasefire, had been

active in decorating the place for the Annai Poopathy observance. The latter being a woman from Batticaloa District who went on a fast leading to her death in early 1988. As soon as the war commenced on 19th April, the people themselves cleared all the decorations. The STF too went to Chandiran's house and beat up his elder brother and relatives.

The STF had been in the habit of buying fish from fishmongers at Kirankulam nearby, who could not complain when they were, as usual, underpaid. Once during the ceasefire an LTTE cadre was present while the STF bought fish. When they underpaid, the LTTE cadre demanded that they pay in full. They swallowed their anger and complied. Once the war commenced, they assaulted the fishmongers. Malan (30), among them, was badly beaten.

On 24th April, following the STF suffering a casualty, Chandiran's house was broken up, and the STF beat up several people along the road including Puviraja (13) and Ariyan (27). Several more were beaten up the following morning including a 30 years old male teacher, Arasaratnam (38) and Kopalapillai (50).

Two days later Chandiran, armed with a pistol and a grenade, walked towards the STF camp threatening to blow it up. The people took fright and ran in the opposite direction. Chandiran too changed his mind and ran with the people and then into the jungle. Then the STF came running and beat up the ordinary people.

On 2nd May, the STF upon receipt of information, surrounded a piece of shrub-jungle and shot Chandiran dead. On the same day Mylvaganam Amirthalingam (16), an upper school student from Kirankulam, was taking food to his father working in the chenai fields. The STF shot him dead, dressed him in running shorts in place of the sarong he was wearing, tied an ammunition belt with holster around him and had him photographed. When the parents asked for the body, they were reportedly told that it would be given only if they signed a statement saying that their son was a member of the LTTE. The parents approached the ICRC and Mr. Ganeshalingam, the local PA organiser, to help them out. His school documents were then produced before the magistrate who released the body. [\[Top\]](#)

30th April, night: Batticaloa:

A woman injured by an exploding shell. Security forces refused permission for the woman to be taken to hospital, who then bled to death.

2nd May : Kumaraveliyar Kiramam, Eravur 5 : The area was subject to a morning round up. Ravi (15), a school boy, got frightened when he saw soldiers coming, ran into his house and hid under a bed. Soldiers then went into the house, pulled him out and shot him dead.

Arumugathan Kudiyiruppu, south of Eravur: On the evening of the same day (2nd May), the LTTE shot dead a Muslim policeman. Policemen then rampaged through the area beating up people, including women and children. A rumour then took wing that the killing of the Muslim policeman was a reprisal for the earlier incident.

2nd May : Kiran, Valaichenai : Four persons were taken into custody by the army at Thuraiady (Ferry) Camp. The matter was reported to the Batticaloa Peace Committee on 5th May. The latter contacted the Army, but the search proved unavailing. On 8th May it was reported to the Peace Committee that three among the party had been rescued by firewood

collectors from the jungle close to the Valaichenai Paper Factory Camp. They had been left there with their hands and legs tied. The fourth Kanagaratnam Krishnapillai was not accounted for. It was understood that he was ill and injured following torture, and was kept hidden from the ICRC in the Valaicheai Camp.

Other reports said that at least two boys were tortured at the Valaichenai Camp, with rags soaked in petrol tied around their eyes, leading to permanent skin damage. One was a 15 year old boy. The other is an A/Level student from Shivananda College who also works as a mason's assistant. The latter was hung by the arms and ankles, according to a Batticaloa Peace Committee spokesman, and was beaten in the abdomen resulting in his vomiting blood. [\[Top\]](#)

11th May 1995 :

Karunkaladichenai, Kiran : At 9.30 pm the Army came to the village where only 16 families were then living and asked for their Identity Cards, separating the women from the men. A young girl had no IC. A man and a woman were asked to accompany her while she was sent to fetch her IC, and soldiers followed. When they had gone some distance, the soldiers chased away the man. When the man looked behind, the soldiers beat him up and chased him again. A soldier then took another girl in the group saying that she was to show her IC to the officer-in-charge. Once away from the main group the soldier asked her to lie down. She told him that she was not in the habit of lying down and would show her IC only to the officer. The soldier beat her up and chased her away. This lady went back to the main group and told the others that she had heard the crying of the two girls who had been removed earlier. A boy in the group said that the women must scream so that they could be heard in the nearby army camp. This advice was taken. The soldiers proceeded to run away saying, "Don't say it was us, but say it was the Motor Cycle (Special Forces) group".

The two girls who were raped are Samithamby Pathmini (18) and Vyramuthu Vijaya (17). All the families have now left the area and are living in Santhiveli.

Other cases of rape have been reported as follows, but the details are not yet available: Chettiarkudiyiruppu - 4, Korakallimadu - 1, Pethalai - 2, & Matpandatholithalai - 9. In all or several of these cases the men are said to have come with black masks of the kind servicemen could sometimes be seen wearing even at checkpoints, without any other identification. According to a party that had been instrumental in taking the matter up with the officer-in-charge at the Kumburumoolai Army Camp, the latter reportedly said that the LTTE must have come in black masks to rape. The women are said to be in possession of one black mask that was left behind.

Denial by the Army has only enhanced the fear in which these women victims and their families live. The areas being in the interior, the information is also slow in coming out. [\[Top\]](#)

16th May 1995 :

Pankudaveli on Chenkalady - Badulla Road : Fr.Dias, the RC parish priest at Chenkalady was due to go on a trip to the Philipinnes the following day, and travelled in his vehicle to visit four houses at Pankudaveli. On the way he passed an army patrol at a culvert who waved at him. He too waved back and proceeded. Having finished three houses, he was going to the fourth when LTTE men who were armed asked him for his van. Upon Fr.Dias' refusal they

said that a sick person was to be transported. At length Fr.Dias told them that if it was a matter of transporting a sick person, he would accompany them. The LTTE then dragged Fr.Dias and his driver out, got in, and drove away. The time was about 3.30 pm. They went back the way he had come and attacked the unsuspecting soldiers, killing two. Driving back to Pankudaveli, they abandoned the van and ran away. Placed in a quandary, Fr.Dias approached the officer in another army camp, and explained what had transpired. The officer put him in a lorry and promised to instruct the other camps to offer him safe passage. The lorry was held up by angry men at Koduwamadu camp where the dead soldiers were from, but after a delay allowed to pass. [\[Top\]](#)

22nd May 1995:

Iruthayapuram, Jayanthipuram: The area is a northern suburb of Batticaloa between Trincomalee Road, and the railway tracks going north, the latter lying east of the road and the sea further to the east. Iruthayapuram (City of the Sacred Heart) is a predominantly Roman Catholic area bordering Trincomalee Road. The south of the area concerned borders Rosairo Road. As one goes north from the middle, perpendicular to Rosairo Road, one cuts through Zahira school refugee camp, a cemetery and then some houses, Jayanthipuram police post being in the north-east corner. The area lies between four police posts. Zahira school refugee camp houses 1170 persons from 246 refugee families from Periya Pullumalai in a compound 100 yards x 75 yards, who live mostly in cadjan huts. These refugees were originally from the hill country who moved into the East during the 70s when the confusion resulting from estate nationalisation, populist land grabbing, rising world food prices and state discrimination, plunged the estate Tamil population into starvation and all its concomitant evils. Having settled in Periya Pullumalai in 1975 and beginning to enjoy a measure of self-sufficiency, the war rendered them refugees once more from the mid-80s.

Since the beginning of hostilities in April, the police in Batticaloa town had been boisterous on three previous occasions: 18/4 - Firing from 4.00 am - 7.00 am; 19/4 - Firing from 10 pm - 8 am, 2/5 - Cycle bomb discovered and safely exploded outside Batticaloa police station, followed by assault on civilians and breaking of shops. The first two involved the Jayanthipuram post. Following the second instance and representations made by civilians, the army had also been deployed at Jayanthipuram, less to enhance security than to check the nervousness of the police. It was on the 22nd May that the army contingent was withdrawn.

According to one senior teacher, he had heard a single grenade explosion in Jayanthipuram at 7.00 pm, followed by continuous firing from several police positions. According to others, particularly the refugees, there was no grenade explosion and the whole thing was set up by the police. While admitting the possibility that one or more LTTE persons had thrown a grenade at the Jayanthipuram post and run away, there is no evidence of an LTTE presence at any time subsequently. Nor was there any opposition to the reprehensible activity of the police which followed.

Kept awake by the continuous noise of firing, not just the people in the area, but many others in Batticaloa, spent a nervous night thinking of all the possible contingencies. A shell fired from Batticaloa police station into a residential suburb exploded harmlessly near Kottaimunai Methodist Church.

From about 10.00 pm police personnel approached Zahira camp from the Iruthayapuram direction to the west, firing into the camp. There were bullet marks on a wall hardly two feet

above the ground. Several shells too were fired indiscriminately into the camp at close range during the wee hours of the morning.

Thiagarajah Rajalatchumi (40) who was lying down in her hut was killed by an exploding shell. Her husband was killed by the forces in Periyapullumalai during 1986. She leaves behind three orphans (boy [21], girl [19], girl [15]). Others injured are a young boy Krish, brother of Miss.Vijayalatchumi Muthukarupiah, who cannot now walk, and Rani Alex (28). A shell exploded inside the hut of Headman S.Thankarajah injuring him, his wife, daughter and daughter's son. In all, one was killed and seven injured.

At dawn, police went to houses in the area and called out all the people to come to the cemetery for identity checks. The women and children were first dismissed followed by the older men. At length about 35 boys remained including Sashikumar (18) of Iruthayapuram who works as a mason for Rs.120/- a day while awaiting O/Level results.

Sashikumar's father Tharmalingam (46), mother Malathy and three young sisters were awaiting his release at home when they were told that a bus was brought to take the boys away. Malathy became anxious and went towards Jayanthipuram police station with a 13 years old daughter and younger sister Chandri Preamsri. (Preamsri, a Sinhalese was killed by the PLOTE in 1986 following the STF's Iruthayapuram massacre.) They avoided the road and went through houses. Two doors away from the police post (and west of it), they encountered two policemen who appeared to be drunk. Malathy spoke to one of them about her son. He replied that the son would be released after questioning. The three began to walk back when Chandri heard a gun being cocked. She said,"Acca, they are going to shoot. Run!" Since they were going through houses, Chandri managed to take cover. Since Malathy was walking her daughter along, she was slow. A gun went off and Malathy died. Her daughter escaped unhurt. Chandri thought that the shooting was done by the other policeman.

The 35 or so boys at the graveyard were assaulted, beaten with bones picked up from the graveyard, kicked with booted feet and stamped on the ground. Not one question was asked, even though they were supposedly detained for questioning. When all were released, Sashikumar went home to learn of his mother's death. He still carries bruises on his body and face, including the eye.

The police also fetched Ravi Ragunathan (20), Rasiah Mariathan (37), Nadarajah Pararajasingham (21) and Thurai Uthayasekaran (24) from their homes and took them to Jayanthipuram police post. They were asked to run northwards and shot at from behind. The first three died and people were later forced to drag their bodies and place them under a Palmyrah tree. Details of the story came from Uthayasekaran who survived with injuries, and was warded in Batticaloa Hospital. He was transferred to Colombo on 6th June out of concern expressed for his safety.

The drama came to an end at 9.00 am when the Army arrived on the scene and scolded the police. According to a leading MP, when the matter was raised with Upali Hewage, Superintendent of Police, Batticaloa, he had suggested that the three young men killed were LTTE members and that Nadarajah Pararajasingham was the LTTE leader of the suburban village of Mamangam. The apparent ground for this claim is that he had been prominent in organising a pro-LTTE demonstration during the ceasefire and latter in Annai Poopathy celebrations.

As we understand, no inquiry was held into the incident. The only action taken was the transfer of two platoons of policemen. The firing had been so intense that empty cartridges were strewn over a wide area. One boy picked up 250 in a short space of time. It remains to be explained how a reaction of this kind in a major town, to what was at best a single grenade explosion, could go on for 14 hours, hardly a mile away from a brigadier, a DIG and an SP! It is after all known that LTTE infiltrators are in town much of the time. It is still remarkable that not more than four were killed after all that firing. What would have been the plight of civilians had there been a real LTTE attack? [\[Top\]](#)

23rd May: Thalankuda (5 miles south of Batticaloa) :

Some STF men were travelling at the entrance of a passenger van going to Batticaloa about 10.00 am when the LTTE opened fire killing two STF men, including an SI, and three women passengers. There were no reprisals. An injured man desperately stopped a lorry and pleaded with a lady, soon to be married, to get him to Batticaloa Hospital. The lorry was held up so long at checkpoints on the way with the lady being asked so many awkward questions, that by the time the lorry reached the outskirts of Batticaloa about 4.00 pm, the man died of bleeding. No intelligent initiatives were taken at any of the checkpoints to summon an ambulance or to inform other checkpoints about the state of the passenger.

As is usual in such cases, a rumour was spread that it was not the LTTE that shot the civilians, but a dying STF man determined to take a couple of Tamils down with him, pressed the trigger and swung his gun around.

Other sources said that the incident resulted from the LTTE sending a party to exact revenge from the STF for the killing of Chandiran (2nd May) with orders not to return without doing something!.

The incident has also raised concern about the common practice of armed STF men in uniform using public transport. Two incidents which followed are illustrative:

26th May (approx) : Mandur : The night-park bus from Kalmunai reached Mandur at 6.00 pm. Without allowing the passengers to alight, STF men boarded the bus and ordered the driver to take them to 13th Colony. A lady passenger protested to the conductor. An STF man who understood Tamil scolded her, "It is we who are being killed, not you".

28th May (approx) : Vellavelly : The Mandur-Batticaloa bus stopped at the Vellavelly checkpoint and all passengers alighted. STF men bound for Kaluwanchikudy boarded the bus and occupied the seats adjacent to the central corridor. The passengers were thus forced to occupy the window seats or stand.

6th May (approx) : Vavunathivu: Five LTTE men, including the driver, with the rest standing and dressed as women wearing Punjabi dress approached the check point. At the check point they shot dead four policemen and ran away to be picked up by others who came on motor cycles. Other security men gave a chase and found an old man who had been fishing in the lagoon. They called him, made him sit down, and shot him dead.

23rd May (approx) : Paruthichenai : This and the following incident are typical of the current experience of some of the interior areas. The smaller army camps have been withdrawn. The army occasionally moves through in large companies, firing shells whenever

they fear the LTTE is around. People who were earlier used to the army, now run in fear when they hear of the army coming. Those who encounter the army are often beaten. There have also been complaints of theft of cattle and goods, with damage wantonly caused to property. The army they say leave some of the most offensive work to TELO cadre who accompany them.

On the day in question the army went from Vavunativu to Kurinchamunai, with canon mounted on trucks, and camped there. Shells fired by them, out of fear, according to the villagers, fell in Paruthichenai about 10.00 am, killing three cows and two goats. The villagers took off to Iruttucholai and Kalimadu & returned. At 2.00 pm a woman sleeping in her hut was struck by shrapnel from an exploding shell. Another army patrol which came that way put the injured woman in a tractor and sent her to Batticaloa Hospital.

1st June (approx) : Puthumadattady (Thandiady) on Vavunativu-Kokkadiccholai Rd: An exploding shell caused a hip injury to a woman and a hand injury to a man. Both were taken to Batticaloa Hospital by civilians.

3rd June 1995, Afternoon : Eravur Checkpoint : LTTE cadre coming in a trishaw overtook a parked bus, whose passengers were being checked, shot at policemen left the trishaw and ran away. About two policemen were injured. But others fortunately did not return the fire. According to other sources, the cadre involved are said to have been punished for their lack of success.

Other information from local sources said that several of those recruited during the recent ceasefire with hardly any training are being used in purely disruptive tasks such as that above.

A few days earlier the police shot dead 3 LTTE members who crossed over in a boat from the western side of the lagoon, apparently to escape a military cordon.

28th May (approx) : Chettipalayam STF Camp : Mama, a leading TELO member, and brother of former MP Jana, according to local sources, summoned several local youths to the camp and beat them up, accusing them of having voted for the TULF last August. A further six persons are said to have been summoned.

7th June 1995 : Mahiladitivu, Kokkadiccholai : TELO cadre living near a police post were playing volley ball in the evening about 4.30 pm, when they noticed a stranger observing them. A TELO member went to ask him his business. The stranger pulled out a weapon, shot him and ran away. The injured TELO man was warded in Batticaloa Hospital. The following morning the STF OIC at Kokkadiccholai brought the body of a boy identified from a card in his pocket as Periathamby Uthayan to the Batticaloa mortuary, claiming that it was he who had shot at the TELO member, and in turn had been shot dead by the STF a few minutes later. A Browning revolver wrapped in a plastic sheet was shown as having been found on the deceased.

Such claims although going down on official records, evoke much skepticism among officialdom in Batticaloa. One official said that such weapons are not handed over to the court and that serial numbers are generally not recorded by the Magistrate. It is also known that statements of witnesses going down on official records often differ markedly from their earlier versions. Even as skepticism is rife, the practices themselves are not challenged, and lie at the root of several abuses.

In the case in question, sources from Kokkadiccholai that we had access to, supported the STF version. According to them when the shooting took place, an STF Buffel armoured car that was manning a sentry point nearby, arrived on the scene, gave a chase and shot the gunman. The story of Mylvaganam Amirthalingam cited earlier was an obvious instance of abuse. Under such conditions who killed whom and for what will often remain clouded in obscurity - such as with Thillaiampody Ponnampalam, a milkman killed in Kokkadiccholai, between 7 & 8 pm on 3/6/95. [\[Top\]](#)

3. Problems affecting ordinary people.

These are in general not very different from what we placed on record in [Report 13](#) an year ago. These are often to do with impoverishment, trauma of bereavement, and a large number of young women with children being rendered widows.

Among the key problems is that of the absence of accountability confronting particularly those living in rural settings. Although the present phase has so far been characterized by a sharp decline in reprisals, people do complain of protracted revenge being extracted through the imposition of economic obstacles and harassment.

one instance of this happening is in the South of Amparai District. Farmers have their fields and cattle in the interior areas to the west, away from the coast. Despite massacres by the security forces from 1985 - the first being the 1985 traditional new year (14th April) massacre of about 50 farmers near Kannkipuram by the army detachment from Kondavadduvan - economic life has continued. the IPKF in the late 80s, even while patrolling deep into the Kanjikudiccharu jungles, left the farmers largely to themselves. with the STF things have been different during the 90s. Everytime there is some incident or some tension in the area, farmers fear to go without permission from the STF.

In May last year, for example the STF, at first co-operated with farmers who cultivated their fields in Savaru, Kanjikudiccharu. When the crop came up, those who went to fence were beaten and chased away. During the Autumn 1994 season, 400 acres were cultivated at Pottakulam. When the crop began to ripen and the farmers wanted to spray insecticide, the STF prevented them. Once it began to rain, little could be done. Sometimes as harvest approaches (eg. Savaru, last August), night watches against incursions by animals are prevented. The harvest is often thus reduced by a third or more.

Recently STF posts have been established on the bunds of Rufus, Sagamam and Kanjikudiccharu tanks. The opening of sluices is said to have been prevented on the grounds that the noise of flowing water would cause security risks.

Following the killing of 19 STF men on 7th May 1995, farmers around Thandiady and Thambiluvil - Thirukovil desperately sought permission from the STF to work the fields where they had already dumped capital and which needed attention. It is said that the cultivators (Podis) made a deal with the STF to clear the road from Kanjirankuda to Kankjudiccharu, in return for permission to work. Groups of about 200 people are dispatched twice a week or so to several areas, including Kombukkarasi Savaru, to work gratis, in what are jungle clearing, and effectively mine clearing, operations. Those sent include farmers, those obliged to report regularly to the STF and others going to the STF on business such as with requests to issue identity cards for cattle herding etc. There is also no consistency in the policies followed by different STF camps. In Thandiady, the cattle herders are allowed to go

into the jungle, but not around Thirukkovil. In Sagmam (Kannakipuram), the STF recently had discussions with farmers about mutual arrangements.

However, overall, the impoverishment of Tamil communities everywhere in the Amparai District is a fact of life. Educational levels have plummeted, and a large number of children, particularly when their mothers are war widows, drop out of school prematurely.

The STF too is said to be becoming increasingly corrupt with the unchecked power it enjoys. In some of the interior camps bags of rice as a form of tax are unloaded at STF camps, which are then sold to merchants. In Akkaraipattu, STF men have been charged with underpaying for items such as jewellery ordered, the balance promised later, but remaining effectively uncollectable. A responsible official charged an STF OIC in an interior area of getting farmers to cultivate ganja in chilli plots, transporting 17 bags of the stuff to Colombo.

Abuses by the STF in using civilians as forced labour with the prospect of serious harm have also been reported in the interior parts of Batticaloa District (Maruan Macan Markar in Sunday Times, 11th June 1995). According to a Batticaloa Peace Committee spokesman, for some time after 19th April, the Army was forcing civilians to walk ahead of route clearing patrols along the railway track. This he said, had been stopped following complaints made by them.

A similar situation of impoverishment, alienation, and anxiety linked to constant anger exists particularly in the interior areas of Batticaloa District. There are no arrangements to compensate farmers for economic losses resulting from actions and decisions of the security forces. These losses could hardly be borne by them. Driven by desperation, they go out to earn what they can in the knowledge that anything could happen. The problem is further exacerbated for the Tamils in the Amparai District by the absence of representation in a communalised environment. [\[Top\]](#)

4. The Security Forces.

Much that needs to be said is implicit in the foregoing. On the part of the Government, the will displayed so far towards curtailing reprisals against civilians, deserves to be appreciated. In Batticaloa town and its suburbs, the brigade commanded by Brigadier Egodawela has received praise from several quarters. The treatment of detainees in the town and Kallady is said to be generally acceptable. Those detained had also been located within a short time with the help of Captain Suleyman. According to Fr. Miller of the Batticaloa Peace Committee, the brigadier had encouraged them to bring problems directly to him with the caution that he had limited influence over the Special Forces (Motor Cycle) Brigade, which operates mostly in the Sittandy and Kiran areas. In one instance the SBF found the picture of a girl on the person of a dead LTTE cadre. They located the family and wanted them to fetch their daughter and bring her to their camp. The parents approached the Batticaloa Peace Committee, who in turn approached the brigadier. The latter arranged for the girl to be questioned by him in the BPC's presence and released her.

We have seen that the situation is quite different in the interior areas. Camps named by Fr. Miller as places where torture is bad and where the treatment of detainees is far from satisfactory are Commathurai, Kiran and Valaichenai. One might also mention that it is from these areas that the LTTE recruited recently in significant numbers. No one had a good word for the Special Forces Brigade. Their reputed crudity in handling civilians and offering of

money to procure women have been resented. Whether a Government fighting a war with the political objective of securing peace should use such a force needs to be questioned.

It may also be remarked that neither the STF nor the SFB in the Batticaloa District have the kind of civilian contact, such as with the BPC, that has helped to maintain some semblance of order and sanity around Batticaloa town. Neither is this the case with the brigade at Valaichenai - which has of late a new brigadier. It appears to be the case that complaints relating to Valaichenai and the SFB are often relayed to the BPC and then to those units through the brigadier at Batticaloa. This results in long delays and many people feel so isolated that they dare not complain and go back to their homes. In this situation, the cases of rape, such as those mentioned in the foregoing, may never get taken up.

Although the STF's area of operation comes very close to Batticaloa, its area Superintendent has his office in Karaitivu about 30 miles to the south, and the BPC has found it extremely difficult to deal with him. Consequently there is little check on the STF in Batticaloa District. The incidents linked to the STF in the Batticaloa District would be uncharacteristic in comparison with the fairly creditable reputation it now enjoys in say Kalmunai.