

**University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna)**  
**Sri Lanka**  
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**The Cost of 'Peace' and the Dividends of Terror:**  
**Sri Lanka's Nordic Winter?**

*"It wasn't so much that criticism was dangerous; it was pointless. Still I never felt free to say what I wanted, never felt a sense of personal freedom..."*

*"In general all people who were independent or who stuck to their own opinions were roughly handled or put to the side when the time came for favours. You could be boycotted; you could be driven out of business. These things were noticed by most people, who learned from the fate of others. It was pure force applied to politics and it meant that the Nazis got anything they wanted... [Such were the reflections of people who lived through the Nazi take-over...]*

*"Perhaps the basic reason for [the absence of resistance] was that there was no Nazi Coup d'etat. Instead there was a series of quasi-legal actions over a period of at least six months, not one of which by itself constituted a revolution, but the sum of which transformed Germany from a republic to a dictatorship. The problem was where to draw the line. But by the time the line could be clearly drawn, the revolution was a fait accompli, the potential organs of resistance had been individually smashed, and organised resistance was no longer possible. In short, the splendid organisation [of the socialist-led Reichsbanner for the protection of the Republic] was to no avail; in the actual course of events it was every man for himself...."*

*(The Nazi Seizure of Power; The  
Experience of a single German Town 1922-1945 by William  
Sheridan Allen)*

## **1. The Season of Frozen Stakes and the Battle for Untruth**

The international funding gathering for the GoSL and LTTE, hosted in freezing Oslo on 25<sup>th</sup> November, ended on a note of confidence in the peace process. The fly in the ointment with consequences yet to unfold was India declining to participate. The LTTE leader's Martyrs' Day speech on the 27<sup>th</sup> that followed with a conditional renunciation of separatism was interpreted as an additional bonanza.

There is however no promise of a season of goodwill and reconciliation even though putative leaders smile and shake hands. The cease-fire and removal of travel restrictions in government-controlled areas have eased the day to day life of civilians, leading to a semblance of normality. But significant sections of the people in the North-East are anxious and feel their very right to exist threatened by this peace process. Many more feel condemned to a long drawn-out period of political and moral suffocation under a totalitarian dispensation.

In the country as a whole the supporters of the process and its opponents, driven together though they have very little in common, are digging behind frozen positions. Almost nothing is being done to challenge the chauvinist ideologies on both sides that are at the root of the conflict. If anything they are being strengthened by the growing feelings of insecurity of their base. The admission of any wrong doing by their side with a view to correction is seen as fatal to their interests. What is more surprising is the current role of civil society and sections in the South generally regarded as more objective, open and enlightened.

The two incidents at Kanjirankudah and Trincomalee that we dealt with in our last bulletin, where the victims were Tamil civilians, are now treated as closed affairs. Versions circulated, a commission report and a magistrate's report exonerate the security forces. Their glaring deficiencies have not been challenged. On top of these comes the chill wind of the High Court verdict on the Mahilanthanai Massacre of 9<sup>th</sup> August 1992 in the Batticaloa District, close to the Polonnaruwa border.

In the face of international pressure, the case was taken up 8 months after the massacre against a record of routine covering up. After the identification parade before the Batticaloa magistrate on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1993, the case was moved to the Polonnaruwa Magistrate's Court. This was done by the Attorney General, the present Defence Minister, on a plea on behalf of the accused that they were not safe in Batticaloa. The victims' plea to the Appeal Court that they could not function in security in Polonnaruwa was refused on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1993. On 8<sup>th</sup> March 1994, the Polonnaruwa Magistrate found that there was a case against 21 soldiers and referred the matter to the Attorney General.

The hearings on Mahilanthanai finally began at the Colombo High Court on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2002 with the bench comprised of the Tamil judge Sri Skandarajah. The accused requested an all-Sinhalese-speaking jury, which the Judge allowed. The Jury of seven gave their verdict on 25<sup>th</sup> November, unanimously declaring all the 18 accused army personnel not guilty, the other three being dead. The Judge, who disagreed, instructed the Jury again and sent them back to reconsider their verdict. The Jury came back with the same verdict.

For those who followed the proceedings in the Tamil Press the verdict was a matter for shock and disbelief. The witnesses had unflinchingly described their harrowing experiences and identified the culprits. To the families of the 35 dead and the 46 witnesses, 42 of whom remain refugees from the time of the tragedy, it has been an unconscionable ordeal of ten years at the end of which justice was denied.

In the South, the verdict has been greeted with silence rather than indignation. There will no doubt be a heavy political price to pay.

Earlier on 31<sup>st</sup> October the Colombo High Court judge Ambepitiya sentenced LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran to 200 years of rigorous imprisonment for the destruction of the Central Bank in January 1996. Even competent laymen can argue that the case is not watertight. But this may not create a problem, as few would seriously contest Prabhakaran's guilt. Even among the Tamils, many would deem Prabhakaran many times guiltier for what he has done to his own people, but that judgement is political and moral rather than judicial. The judicial conviction was based on a confession by a Black Tiger (allowed under the PTA) who was also convicted, the identification of fingerprints on a farewell plaque for the former as Prabhakaran's by comparing with those taken in India 20 years ago, and inferences drawn from these.

The Mahilanthanai judgement that followed throws the Sri Lankan system of justice into ridicule and reinforces the view among Tamils that the judicial system is hopelessly biased against them. The Mahilanthanai case, in contrast, was founded on solid and numerous eyewitness accounts of persons who had persisted through ten years of poverty, loss and intimidation. There was little left to inference.

In comparison with the copious laudatory comments on the verdict on Prabhakaran, there was just one in the English Press on Mahilanthanai. A weekend paper on 1<sup>st</sup> December carried on its front page an emotional picture of a discharged soldier with his family. It was captioned: *"End of an ordeal... after the Colombo High Court discharged him and his mates on a unanimous verdict of the jury"*. The real victims had ceased to exist. It was more insidious than simple amnesia, as will be readily seen by outsiders. This is just one instance of the heavy price paid for trying to defend falsehood. But this is the season of falsehood galore.

## **2. Conning in Bangkok's Rose Garden**

Earlier too, the second round of peace talks between the two parties in Thailand ended on an optimistic note on 3<sup>rd</sup> November. Answering a question posed by a journalist, the LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingam said that the LTTE would 'accept and assimilate' other political groups that operate in the North-East since it was the LTTE's intention to enter the political 'mainstream'. However the reality on the ground is that since those pledges were made, attacks on the opposition by the LTTE operatives have increased. The new weapon in vogue among these 'political cadre', complementing organised 'people's protests', is the sword - a handy weapon to maim and intimidate if not to kill (see below for details).

Balasingam's assurances have a weird history and he is conscious of making history, even if he may not always be privy to what exactly the Leader, Prabhakaran, would do next. He said in early 1990 that they would embrace the EPRLF once the last Indian soldier left Sri Lanka. The Indian Army left. Then on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1990, soon after the Leader recommenced war, many senior EPRLF central committee members, including their charismatic leader Padmanabha, were gunned down while holding a meeting in Madras. A few weeks later Balasingam appealed to India saying that their involvement is necessary to solve the problem in this country. Nine months later, Rajiv Gandhi, who was on the threshold of becoming India's Prime Minister, was killed by an LTTE suicide bomber.

Balasingam apparently assuaged Sinhalese anxieties in Bangkok by saying that the LTTE is 'keen to move into the core issues' and did not presently see the need for an Interim Administration in the North-

East. But the reality is that its control on the ground has gone beyond anything envisaged in an interim entity. In Jaffna it virtually controls the Sri Lankan Police. It orders about administrators, local councils and educational officers at will and, occasionally, even cabinet ministers. It controls schools and through the education department in Batticaloa has distributed portraits of the Leader to be hung up in schools in lieu of the Head of State. LTTE spokesmen (e.g. Puli Thevan) have said elsewhere that the political content of a settlement will have to account for the fact that the LTTE has already an army, navy, police and an 'administration'.

The LTTE has been widely criticised recently for bloating its 'army' by the conscription of children. An unfazed Balasingam once more repeated the claim, first made by the Leader at the 10<sup>th</sup> April press conference, that many underage children have been released to their parents. The reality is that while token releases of children have been made for publicity, many others have been escaping from the 'Eelam Army', and children have continually been conscripted even as LTTE leaders have voiced pledges to the contrary.

It is against this backdrop that the Government and the LTTE have agreed to set up three sub-committees including one to canvass funds from foreign donors and undertake the rehabilitation of the North-East. Clearly, while there may be commercial opportunities for some government ministers and their agents in Colombo, the actual control on the ground will be exercised solely by the LTTE. The Government apparently could not care less and Norway and the International Community have allowed totalitarian control to take root before their very eyes.

The LTTE has for some time been bringing local and international NGOs effectively under its control. Veiled warnings have been given to those who persisted in keeping their independence or tried to take up the issue of children. With the connivance of Norway and the Sri Lankan Government, the LTTE has in effect created a situation where the rehabilitation of war-affected children, and of child soldiers whom the LTTE is pledged to disband, will entirely be in its hands!

### **3. The Implications of Continuing Child Conscription and the LTTE's Norway-Sponsored Public Relations**

The long-running tragedy of the LTTE's use of child soldiers has drawn much global attention. Hopes that this problem is being dealt with successfully have been raised by international organisations against new pledges and claims made by the LTTE. In raising this issue we have always sought to go deeper because it has a whole series of ramifications. Child conscription activity, along with extortion and attacks on dissent, go to the heart of the LTTE's relationship with the people. Trying to deal with it in isolation of the broader issues of human rights and the LTTE's ideology will continue to yield results that are transparently deceptive.

#### **3.1 Basic conditions of child rehabilitation:**

Psychologist Dr. Elizabeth Jareg, advisor to **Save the Children Fund**, spoke to the *Sunday Times* (29.09.02) on the rehabilitation of ravaged children. Referring to the social and cultural vacuum that comes with peace, she said that it is often filled with undesirable activity, such as being drawn to watch gruesome video shows. This is an LTTE speciality in children's entertainment. It is all the time invading schools and community centres and setting up commemorations to show its 'action' videos. The symbolism with which it adorns even children's parks can only be described as gruesome.

Dr. Jareg added that it was impossible to get involved in rehabilitation projects without a clear commitment to disarm. **She said that children have to be completely in civilian hands if they are to benefit.**

Can such conditions be even remotely met under LTTE supervised rehabilitation of children? No less important are the questions on which the outcome of the entire peace process hinges: Is the LTTE serious in its commitment not to recruit children or at least not to take them in forcibly? Is it serious about its pledge to discharge child soldiers and restore them to their families; or, do child soldiers remain an important component of its 'army' to maintain a show of 'strength' against the Government?

### **3.2 The LTTE's position:**

Apart from general statements made by top LTTE leaders, claims of a more specific nature have emerged from Mr. Sinniah, an LTTE representative on the SLMM's Local Monitoring Committee (LMC) in Batticaloa, and from Jay Maheswaran, LTTE representative in the Thai and Oslo peace talks and from the LTTE's rehabilitation unit. Mr. Sinniah's claims are given in Section 4.4 of our Special Report No 15. Maheswaran made his remarks on the final day of the conference on child rehabilitation organised by **Save the Children Fund** at the BMICH from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

Their version is essentially that the LTTE does not recruit children and has only temporary custody of children who came to them on their own. These, they claimed, were children who faced problems at home due to such causes as poverty and marital breakdown. The LTTE, they averred, was looking after these children and intended restoring them to their families when the latter are in a position to have them. Most surprisingly, the SLMM's head, General Trond Furuhojde's reading of the situation went far to support the claims of these LTTE functionaries.

### **3.3 SLMM's General Furuhojde on child soldiers**

General Furuhojde, the Norwegian government appointee who heads the SLMM, talked about child soldiers when he addressed the Foreign Correspondents' Association in Colombo over dinner on 30<sup>th</sup> September. While saying that the LTTE was allowing underage combatants to return home, he contented that more needed to be done (see AFP report, *Daily Mirror* 5.10.02).

Furuhojde said it was important to understand the circumstances that led to the recruitment of child soldiers and it was not a mere *'black and white'* issue. He said that poverty had forced some children to join the rebels. Demobilisation of child soldiers, about which he said that the LTTE was serious, was now posing challenges to humanitarian agencies in an area where there were hardly any facilities to rehabilitate them. *"The LTTE needs support in the way they are adjusting to a changing situation"*, Furuhojde said, *"It is important they get the support. Sending the child soldiers home was not sufficient and they need support to integrate in society and go back to school."*

Remarkably, much of this can usefully be said by LTTE spokesmen at funding sessions such as the one hosted in Oslo. According to correspondents present at the dinner, the General made it fairly clear that maintaining the cease-fire should receive priority over human rights - a position he may have modified later in October (see Bulletin No.29).

We will examine the current situation by addressing the claims above one by one. Firstly, if demobilisation of children were the current norm, one would at least expect that orders have gone down the line not to conscript or recruit children.

### 3.4 Internal orders and public relations:

During late October, nearly four weeks after Furuho's speech, Karuna, the military commander for the East gave instructions to his local area leaders. He once more asked them to expedite the compiling of maps and videos of security forces camps in their area. We had earlier (Special Report No.15) quoted him telling those who had been confined to barracks on the completion of training not to be impatient and that they will see action soon.

Karuna also asked his local leaders to swell their numbers by exerting themselves more zealously in conscription. We reliably understand that the local leaders made known their unhappiness on this score, since their conscription activity has been meeting with increasingly determined resistance from the populace. A greater number of them have been complaining promptly to the SLMM and this creates problems for the LTTE.

On 31<sup>st</sup> October the LTTE in Batticaloa summoned village headmen, *Samurdhi* and Rural Development Society officials from several areas to a meeting at its office in Karadian Aru. These areas included Pavatkodichchenai, Karadian Aru, Illupadichchenai and Koduwamadhu. They were addressed by the political head, Kausalyan. They were pressed to find recruits and told that these persons must be delivered to locations as instructed.

During the same period an apparently contradictory message was given to journalists summoned for a meeting at the Kokkadichcholai office of the LTTE. Addressing them, Kausalyan and Ramanan said that the fighting is over and now it is time for warfare in educational advancement and economic upliftment. The journalists were told that they must firmly be with the LTTE. The LTTE has also, we understand, issued instructions to compile lists of families that have contributed a member to the LTTE's military cause. They have been promised a house and Rs. 1 lakh in cash upon the LTTE acquiring the North-East administration.

About 10<sup>th</sup> November Karuna, after he returned from the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of talks in Bangkok, addressed many of his subordinates in Tharavai. This time, according to LTTE sources, he acknowledged the difficulties in carrying on the kind of forced conscription begun in August 2001. He asked them to use methods of enticement that the privileged position of the organisation and its new access to resources would permit. These include promise of privileges for the family and social importance coming from power and vehicles in which to run about. At the same time, he told them that the peace process will not last and there will be war. What this dual approach shows is adaptation and a change of tactics rather than of substance. Strengthening the LTTE's totalitarian control has counterbalanced any restraint imposed by monitoring mechanisms.

### 3.5 Conscription-related incidents after the SLMM Head's speech

The cases below pertain to a small fraction of the total that came to our notice. We have said before, and is also evident from newspaper reports cited below, that cases of conscription come to light mostly when a conscript escapes or becomes a victim of murder or torture. All cases of conscription below took place after the SLMM Head's speech and Jay Maheswaran's claims at the SCF conference on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

**6<sup>th</sup> October 2002: Miss. Indumathy Subramaniam (13)**, Pilaly Vembu, Vellavelly, Batticaloa District: Indumathy (born 6.12.1998), is the second of two children of the Subramainams. The eldest, a boy, is married. Indumathy was forcibly removed for training on 6<sup>th</sup> October by **Sadha Master**, the LTTE's Vellavelly area leader.

**6<sup>th</sup> October 2002: Miss. P. Chadraleka (16)**, Batticaloa: Chandraleka, was forcibly removed from her home by two female members of the LTTE who came on a motorcycle. She complained to the Urani Police after escaping from the Kaluwankerny camp the following day (*Daily Mirror* 8.10.02). She complained that the two LTTE women had assaulted her mother and threatened her parents with bombing the house unless she was handed over to them.

**12<sup>th</sup> October: Miss. Lajitha Athmalingam (15) , Kalkudah:** The girl who is from Pasikudah Rd, Kalkudah was a grade 9 student at Valaichaenai Hindu College. She was forcibly conscripted by the LTTE on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2002 and taken to the Suwarmalai training camp. Since then she had shown strong signs of rejecting what was imposed on her. She was punished with torture, first by Women's leader and camp leader, Theenthamil. Subsequently, she was turned over to Theenthamil's deputy, Neelamuhi, who tied Lajitha's hands and legs and burnt her hands and legs with a heated iron rod. Lajitha became very ill and completely useless to the group. The LTTE brought her back home on 12<sup>th</sup> October. She is now with friends seeking a new life away from her former home. Such problems are inherent when the LTTE blindly conscripts children having close relatives with different political convictions, whom it treated brutally. (See three further cases of torture of conscripts in Section 2 of our Special Report 14).

**18<sup>th</sup> October 2002: Senaikkudiyiruppu, Batticaloa District:** Though in the government controlled area in the Eravur Division, the village borders the LTTE controlled area to the north. **Theepalogan**, the LTTE area leader for Eravur 5, entered the village with an abduction team and forcibly removed 12 girls amidst agonised protest by the parents. All the girls were students of the Government Central College for Girls. They were taken in a Dolphin van and handed over to **Gadaffi** at Tharavai. (See Special Report No.13 for a case of sexual assault and attempted rape by Gadaffi.)

The names of the 12 girls who were forcibly conscripted are given below with the ages in brackets:

- 1.) **Miss. Pavaji Kandasamy (15),**
- 2.) **Miss. Rajani Baba (15),**
- 3.) **Miss. Sumathy Suntharalingam (15),**
- 4.) **Miss. Prabajini Nadaraja (15),**
- 5.) **Miss. Mallika Kopalasingham (15),**
- 6.) **Miss. Rajani Koplasingham (15),**
- 7.) **Miss. Sutha Sathasivam (16),**
- 8.) **Miss. Amutha Thavarajah (16),**
- 9.) **Miss. Subashini Vadivelu (16),**
- 10.) **Miss. Tharshini Maniam (16),**
- 11.) **Miss. Rathy Thambippillai (16),**
- 12.) **Miss Miss. Amutha Thambirasa (16).**

**29<sup>th</sup> October 2002: Miss. Sumathy Krishapillai (17):** Morakkottanchenai, Batticaloa District: The girl who had recently turned 17 (born 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1985) was forcibly removed in the presence of her parents by the local area leader and handed over to Jim Kelly Thaththa at the Kudumbi Kottai camp. A large number of those conscripted in Batticaloa since August 2001 are now posted in several camps. Apart from the main camp at Tharavai, some of the other camps having large numbers are at Vannaththiaru, Kudumbimalai, Veppaveduvan, Karadianaru, Kalapoddamad, Mylavedduvan, Vitapanamad and Sillikudiaru (Commandos). The message at that time was that war is imminent.

The LTTE has been allowed to impose its network of terror to such an extent in government controlled areas that information on conscription is becoming much harder to come by. The situation is such that even persons in the same village or street are hardly aware of conscription taking place. Their position is, "We do not go and inquire. We will get marked." The following media reports of escapees give an idea of the diversity of situations in which conscription is taking place. This too represents a small fraction of those who escape at the risk of draconian punishment and seek help from the Police.

### 3.6 Escapees: A Story of its Own

**The Island 14<sup>th</sup> October:** Five school children who had been conscripted by the LTTE, and were undergoing training in interior Batticaloa, escaped the previous day and surrendered to the Police in Maha Oya. They are **Jegan, Vasanthan, Prakash, Madhavan** and **Vinodhan**. Two of them said that they had been abducted on their way to school in Batticaloa. The other three had been abducted while attending tuition classes. The Police said that they had been handed over to their parents.

**The Island 17<sup>th</sup> October:** Five youths, mainly from the Kinniya area in the Trincomalee District, escaped from the Uppaar training camp of the LTTE and sought help from Fr. Joseph Dunstan of St. Anthony's Church, Muttur, about 2.30 PM, October 14<sup>th</sup>. They are **A. Kithnam (21), K. Sudhaharan (17), M. Jegan (16), N. Sivapalan (15)** and **S. Suman (15)**. The Church handed them over to the next of kin with the aid of the Police. The youths were evidently under punishment by the LTTE. Details of how they came to be in the LTTE were not given (original source: SL Army web site).

**The Daily Mirror 25<sup>th</sup> October:** Five girls escaped from a training camp in the Kanjikudichcharu - Rufus Kulam area in the Amparai District on 21<sup>st</sup> October. They made their escape when allowed to go for a wash after training. They encountered a farmer who directed them to the Bakkiella Police station where they reported on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. They are:

**P. Udayakuari (15)** of Alaiday St., Mandur: Abducted by the LTTE on 7<sup>th</sup> October when she went to buy sugar at a nearby shop.

**G. Sugandini (16)**, also of Alaiady St., Mandur: Abducted on 28<sup>th</sup> September while on the way to the paddy field.

**S. Shanthini (16)** of Ganeshapuram, Mandur: Forcibly removed from home on 7<sup>th</sup> October.

**A. Sashikumari (16)** of Vinayapuram, Thirukkivil : Abducted on her way to the farm by two armed men on a motor cycle.

**V. Radidevi (17)** of Bakkiella: Forcibly removed from home on 2<sup>nd</sup> October.

**The Island 28<sup>th</sup> October:** **Miss. Mayuri Mahendran (15)** escaped from the Illuppaichchenai training camp and sought help from the Army at Sittandy. She was handed over to the Eravur Police. **N. Kamalendran (16)** escaped from the training camp at Pulukunawa and sought protection from the Police at the Piyangala roadblock in Bakkiella. The Police made arrangements to hand him over to his parents.

Most of the children above had been abducted by the LTTE from so-called government controlled areas. Those who suggest that children join the LTTE because of poverty must ask themselves, where is the

evidence? Do children escape from the LTTE at enormous risk to go back to homes they left because of poverty? They are moreover condemned to the permanent anxiety of being caught by the LTTE and brutally punished (see Special Reports 13 and 14). Escape is a continuing phenomenon, but most escapees seek out relatives and do not go to the Police.

### **3.7 Martyrs' Day, 27<sup>th</sup> November, a Change of Tactics:**

New difficulties over conscription arose from people becoming more familiar with monitoring mechanisms as pointed out. International concern too was something the LTTE could not disregard blatantly. Conscription activity was at low key during November, while the LTTE directed most of its energies in preparing to observe Martyrs' Day on a grand scale. Its control of the administration, local councils and all other aspects of public life was used to full effect in making the occasion a grand carnival. In towns, schools (Mahajana College in Batticaloa) were used as centres for exhibition of pictures of dead cadres.

Organisations, clubs and businesses were ordered to provide cash. In Batticaloa, special lighting was ordered from Colombo and there was music, fanfare and drama. Obeying orders from their new masters, government servants came well-dressed, wearing tie, to act as ushers and helpers. It was an intrusion into the people's lives and purses that they resented, but a high attendance was ensured.

School children were the group specially targetted by the LTTE. The 27<sup>th</sup> being a school day, many parents kept their children at home. Those who went often got lost in the carnival atmosphere. Several children who went to school in Kalmunai ended up attending the ceremony in Kanjikudichcharu and returned home the following morning. More would have gone but for the fact that the LTTE could not muster enough transport. It is too early to assess its effects, but one report from Batticaloa may prove the tip of the iceberg, even though the immediate impact of the festivities on recruitment appears very low key.

Five boys who went for the exhibition at Mahajana College, Batticaloa, together joined the LTTE. The parents of one boy who was 14 or 15 were at a loss where to find him and went to both the ICRC and the SLMM. They both reportedly told the parents to find out in which camp the child was and they would try to get him out. The parents contacted well wishers whom they hoped would have some influence and also went to Senathy, the political head of the LTTE in Batticaloa. They told Senathy that the boy was their only son. Senathy gave them a letter to the LTTE's Kokkadichcholai office requesting to find the boy. The parents delivered the letter and in good time the boy was delivered at home.

And so Senathy earned a name for being reasonable and accommodative. However, the same sources said that of the five boys two were released and three are with the LTTE. The LTTE's right to take in underage children will not be questioned, but the LTTE will play it by ear, case by case, depending on who is pursuing the matter and what influence they have. Senathy, as our earlier reports would show, was involved in forced conscription in its crudest forms while he was area leader in Valaichenai.

We have pointed out that once the LTTE is given the full powers of a totalitarian state, it would not need to conscript children by crude force. It will surround itself with an aura of divine authority and use persons from university lecturers, religious leaders, senior government officers and school principals to inveigle other people's children into the organisation. It happened in Jaffna in the early 1990s. The children of university dons who unexpectedly joined the LTTE were released as a special favour, while some professors acted as pied pipers, piping to other people's children.

#### 4 How Serious is the LTTE About Releasing Children?

So far the LTTE has not responded to specific complaints on conscription raised by the SLMM in Batticaloa. In Batticaloa, moreover, the SLMM has started receiving a spate of complaints from parents of children who were conscripted before the signing of the MoU in February. The LTTE representatives on the LMC have resisted the position of others that these complaints fall within the purview of the SLMM. In signing the MoU, the LTTE agreed to respect International Law that makes it unlawful for it to hold persons against their will, more especially those who are underage.

An even greater travesty of International Law is to punish recaptured escapees by brutal torture, or to hold parents or siblings of escapees hostage (see especially Special Report No.14). *The Sunday Times* of 17<sup>th</sup> November carries the grief-stricken picture of Mrs. Rasvalli Kovindasamy, whose husband Kandiah Kovindasamy was taken hostage by the LTTE on account of their escapee son Rajeevan. She sought the SLMM's help to obtain the signature of her husband, a government employee, so that she could collect his salary. A further recent case, of Sothy of Pt. Pedro, is given below in Section 14.2.

It is a game with no end in sight. The optimists reason that by pushing the LTTE to make token releases of children from time to time, they might precipitate the real thing. The LTTE's reasoning is no doubt the opposite - that token releases of a couple of dozen would confuse international opinion and stave off concerted action against their organisation.

In this connection, well-placed sources charge that the GoSL and Norwegians manoeuvred successfully at the LTTE's behest to postpone the scheduled visit to Sri Lanka of Olara Ottunu's UN mission on child soldiers. However, "**The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers**" submitted recently countrywise briefs on the use of child soldiers to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. This was done for the 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the latter's Pre-Sessional Working Group, scheduled for 3-7 February 2003.

It stated in the summary that, *"For this session, the Coalition believes the country of highest priority is Sri Lanka, followed by (in this order) Libya, Zambia, Cyprus, Eritrea, Kazakhstan, Syria and Jamaica. The only country reporting to the CRC at this session that has a straight-18 record on not recruiting children as soldiers is Morocco.*

*At the date this report was submitted, only two of these countries (Kazakhstan and Morocco) had signed the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and only two more had ratified (Jamaica and Sri Lanka)."*

Further in a press release issued on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2002, "The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers" stated :

*" The Coalition's own report urges the Secretary-General and the Security Council to ensure that Resolution 1379 is used to its maximum potential - recognising that some of the countries with the most severe child soldier problems, such as Myanmar, Colombia and Sri Lanka, are at serious risk of being excluded from the Secretary-General's report.....*

*.. Children as young as eleven are forcibly recruited into Myanmar's national army. With an estimated 70,000 children in its ranks, it is the world's largest single user of child soldiers. In Colombia, there are an estimate 6,000 to 14,000 child soldiers. Boys and girls as young as 8 years old are recruited into armed groups, paramilitaries and militias. In Sri Lanka,*

*the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has a long record of using child soldiers as well as a record of breaking commitments to end their recruitment and use.....*

Further, mounting evidence of child recruitment by the LTTE was brought to the public domain by prominent organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. But the LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingham and its propaganda machine continue to deny these reports. Moreover, Balasingham has been privileged to make these denials in public fora alongside government representatives from Norway and Sri Lanka. This unusual concurrence shows two things.

For the Government, as with the LTTE, human rights and other issues of propriety are tactical weapons to be used against the adversary when it suits them. They have no real commitment to these values. At present they both are on the same side, covering up for and propping up one another for their short-term political survival. But Norway portrays herself as a front-runner in human rights and, especially, child rights. For her to exploit her image to whitewash and legitimise a totalitarian force as part of strategic calculations in "peace making", is bound have enormous repercussions. Being wilfully blind to the stark context in Sri Lanka will have grave implications for the region's future. One hopes before it is too late, that Norway will see it in her wisdom that the road to real peace lies in demanding accountability from all the actors, especially the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE, and not in strategic appeasement.

## **5 The LTTE and the uses of deprivation**

There are many ways in which people have faced deprivation because of the war: through loss of breadwinners in general warfare; massacres and disappearances caused by the security forces, the LTTE and other armed groups in that order; massive displacement, and through restrictions on economic activity. Insecurity and humiliation at the hands of the state forces comprised the major thrust for thousands of youths to join the various militant movements. Disillusionment and betrayal was the feeling many experienced during the latter part of the 1980s.

The LTTE's totalitarian politics destroyed all healthier values of the struggle, which became paralysed by cynicism. In facing the loss of active support from the mature, the LTTE deliberately contrived at deprivation and vulnerability to sustain its military machine. This marked the advent of child soldiers and women fighters!

The possibility that children from vulnerable groups joined the LTTE through poverty-related causes cannot be discounted. But the larger issue concerns an organisation consciously using the deprivation among particular groups of children to conscript them by devious means. It further raises ominous questions of character regarding the leading sections of today's global Tamil civil society, for conniving with this outrage rather than resisting it firmly. The very nature of conscription that is in evidence and the regular escapes from training camps are a strong indication that poverty is not the motive force and something else is happening now. The needs of child rehabilitation too cannot be assessed without an independent study by qualified persons.

### **In the East**

A similar situation has obtained in the East since August last year. In Special Report No.14 we gave instances of the LTTE removing rations meant for the people from co-ops in areas under its control, as it has been doing in the Vanni for several years. Recently this has even been extended to some government controlled areas.

**The Valaichenai Co-op, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2002:** The LTTE went to the Co-op in the government-controlled town north of Batticaloa and warned the Manager. He was told that all government officers were now under them and that he was acting independently. The manager was ordered to hand over half the government rations for the people to the LTTE. He ignored the order and distributed the goods routinely among smaller co-ops. When the LTTE came again, the Manager told them that he had done his duty in distributing the goods where they belonged and they should deal with the smaller co-ops. The LTTE threatened him and forced him to recall the goods and give them what they wanted.

The means by which the LTTE has brought about poverty and ruin to many families are unprecedented. They have resulted in depriving families of breadwinners and a single action, such as the one below (where a complaint was made to the SLMM), can affect many families.

**Mrs. Ehambaram Indran,** Periya Kalapoddamadu, Batticaloa District: The woman has six sons and a daughter, all of whom are married. She lost her husband a long time ago and was living with her youngest son, Amarasingham Varadarajan (25). About October last year Ramazan of the LTTE ordered the woman to hand over Varadarajan. The mother refused, pointing out that he was married and had the responsibility of looking after their cattle and paddy lands.

Ramazan came on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2002 (after the signing of the MoU) and removed 95 buffaloes worth Rs. 2 lacs and 35 goats worth Rs. 70,000 and took them to Thanthamalai. Some animals were slaughtered and sold openly. The family lost their income from milk - a 125 bottles worth Rs.35000 a day. 20 acres of paddy land belonging to the family was also taken.

**Mr. Vadivel,** Santhiveli, Morakkottanachenai, Valaichenai Div, Batticaloa: Retired post master Vadivel has two sons. The elder is a *Samurdhi* worker and the other, a schoolboy. On 24<sup>th</sup> September 2002, Jim Kelly Thaththa, the leader of Kudumbimalai camp demanded that he hand over one of his sons. When Mr. Vadivel refused, he was taken prisoner. The schoolboy son then surrendered to the LTTE to have his father released and later escaped. The LTTE came home and took the elder son hostage. Since the family was dependent on the elder son, the school boy son surrendered the second time to have his brother released.

**Mr. Nahalingam,** Santhivili, Morakkottanachenai: Nahalingam is the father of two girls and two boys. About the same time (late September) as the incident above, Jim Kelly T. demanded one of his children. When he refused, his two shops, two houses and 36 acres of paddy land were confiscated by the LTTE. One house now serves as an LTTE "political office". The family live as paupers in Kallady.

## **6 The SLMM's Inability and the Government's Deceit**

The failure of the ICRC to make an impact on the use of child soldiers since its arrival in 1989 should have been a pointer to the intractable nature of the problem. If the SLMM Head's views cited above are any reflection on Norway's understanding of the problem, the prospects for the children are dim indeed. The advocates of the peace process do not want to hear bad news, even from persons with whom they are closely associated. Regular reports on child recruitment and other abuse of civilians have been sent from Batticaloa to the Government's Peace Secretariat, but no one there has showed much interest. It were as though the letters have been dropped down a bottomless well.

The drive to surrender the people of the North-East to the LTTE and to canvass funds for it to manage them is based on astounding assumptions that fly in the face of common-sense. Any process that advances development and rehabilitation with the people as beneficiaries must also promote democracy

and the rule of law. The LTTE's behaviour since the signing of the MoU does not suggest great respect for either. And Norway has apparently little to contribute in this regard -- not only have the Norwegian monitors not been able to stop child conscription, they have not even been able to protect escapee children from torture (sometimes leading to death) when apprehended or even prevent hostage taking of family members.

We have repeatedly pointed out that any force that relies on such methods must necessarily be a bitter opponent of democracy, dissent and the rule of law. Placing such a force in charge of rehabilitation would be an invitation for misappropriation and tyranny. For child soldiers it would be like putting the wolf in charge of the sheep pen. It is to be expected then that the LTTE will try to ensure that there can be no check on how it spends money. Meanwhile life will continue to be brutish.

## **7 Mystery Surrounding the Deaths of Three Women**

The cases below illustrate a particular nuance confronting civilians in the North-East. The government forces and the LTTE cover up their own misdeeds, but are careful about not confronting one another with wrongdoing directly. In fact they are encouraged to meet regularly and iron out their differences so as to stabilise the cease-fire. When tragedy strikes civilians, they will get little help from either.

**2<sup>nd</sup> October 2002: Thambiluvil, Amparai District:** Death that is utterly inexplicable striking a secure middle-class family sends such shock waves as to cause widespread insecurity. **Mrs. Mehala Sritharan's** husband is a local English teacher who also owns a mill where dried chillies are ground. Her father **Meharajah** was a UNP supporter who had married in Padiatalawa, a mixed area in the interior from which the Tamils were expelled in 1958. Mehala's mother's elder sister had married a local Sinhalese businessman, owing to which connection she had relatives in the security forces. One in the STF is said to have visited the Sritharans recently.

About 9.00 PM on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, two men came home on bicycles and asked Sritharan for chilli powder. Sritharan told them through the window that it was not possible as the powder was in the mill. He then opened the door and went out. The two men, who spoke in Tamil, claimed that they were from the LTTE and wanted him to accompany them to Vinayagapuram for an inquiry on a school matter. Sritharan, according to local sources, argued back saying that he would come to the local LTTE office the following morning. He signalled to his wife in English that something was amiss. He then hit one of the men, jumped over the wall and escaped. The men shot at his wife who had come out and got away. Sritharan returned within a few minutes with the front door neighbours to find Mehala in a pool of blood. Mehala who was taken to Thrakkovil Hospital in a tractor-trailer was found dead on admission.

The bullets found in her body were identified as having come from a T-56. The attackers left behind plaster and a bandage, which were intended to silence the victims. They had also left behind a pair of pliers, a Bata rubber slipper and a bicycle. Initially many were inclined to suspect the LTTE. But certain bits of information that came to light subsequently appeared to point elsewhere.

The people were uneasy that the STF and Police seem to be blaming the LTTE rather than doing a professional investigation. For example, the basic step of bringing a police dog to pick up the scent from the slipper was not taken. According to local sources, two men who allegedly had STF connections visited a garage close to the Sritharans' and asked questions on the fatal day and the day preceding. The garage owner who keeps his place open until about 11.00 PM had on the fatal day closed at six and gone away. He has reportedly not been available for comment.

More to the point are claims coming from neighbours that one of the youths who came home that night is Bakery Balan's son, who was close to the STF. Reports in Thirukkivil claim that he left home and is now staying with the STF. The LTTE too has not pressed matters far beyond saying that they are trying to arrest Bakery Balan's son. According to another source, Bakery Balan's son was detained by the LTTE early this year and later released. Such persons normally have multiple affiliations that are tolerated by adversaries.

**Late October, Thambiluvil:** A story got around that a local girl who was under training by the LTTE died suddenly under mysterious circumstances. The reports said that she was buried secretly and the family was informed. Further inquiries brought responses that the girl was about 21 and came from the *dhoby* community. It is also widely spoken that the girl was pregnant and had committed suicide. Getting more details including the girl's name was hard going. The general reaction to casual inquiries was typically, *"It is true, but don't talk about it. It is not safe!"* Further inquiries on the subject elicited two stories with some similarities.

One said that the girl was pregnant and from the *dhoby* caste, but was from the Batticaloa District, although she had relations in Thambiluvil. The other said that the girl, known as Devi or Rani, had finished her training and was in a local office in the Thirukkivil-Thambiluvil area when some members of the public, possibly her relations, were present. At that time her leader Kiruparani (Sida) scolded her over some matter. She was upset and committed suicide later. Her body was sent by van to her home in Kaluwankerny, Batticaloa District.

The two stories appear to refer to the same person. For girls from this stratum of society who are stalked by tragedy, it frequently becomes their fate to go away unmourned and unnamed, especially when the cause is internal to the society.

**22<sup>nd</sup> October, Kalnattinakulam, Vavuniya Dist.: Lucia Natchathiram** who went to the paddy fields to attend to her goats on the 22<sup>nd</sup> evening, did not return home. The villagers who took out a search party found her body at 6.00 AM on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The post-mortem examination in Vavuniya Hospital revealed that she had been gang raped and strangled. The people felt that the Police were lukewarm in their inquiries. The field where Lucia had last been is frequented by personnel from the Iratperiyakulam army camp and home guards from the Sinhalese villages nearby.

## **8 The Dividends of Terror**

The main factor determining ground conditions in the North-East is the LTTE's twenty year investment in terror. The LTTE's phenomenal success constantly leads outsiders to misjudge it. Several grave issues need to be addressed before we could speak meaningfully about rehabilitation.

### **8.1 Continued Unchecked Attacks on Opponents**

Under the guise of political work, the LTTE has increased attacks on political opponents. Interestingly swords seem to have supplanted guns and grenades as the new weapon in vogue among the LTTE, all the way from Jaffna to Batticaloa. Those at top-level who have undoubtedly instigated this appear to feel that the MoU forbids the use of guns, but not swords. A sword was used in the LTTE-instigated attack on the EPDP in Delft on 5<sup>th</sup> October. Kodewaran of SEP suffered cut injuries at the hands of the LTTE in Kayts on 8<sup>th</sup> October.

Four LTTE men armed with swords and cudgels came on two motor cycles and attacked Soosaimutthu Alexander (Charles) (38), a member of the Chavakacheri Urban Council at 10.45 PM on 1<sup>st</sup> November.

Charles, who had been visiting relatives in Malisanthy, Vadamaratchy, was about to mount his motor cycle when he was accosted. He ran back into the house and defended himself with a bed pole. The attackers, who knocked down the lamp and attacked him, fled with Charles's motor cycle when the people at home struck a light. Charles had received several injuries including a deep cut on his leg. Those present identified two of the attackers as Bharathy and Daya who are in charge of the LTTE's Valvettithurai and Nelliady offices respectively.

In Batticaloa town LTTE men have on several nights been observed hanging about the homes of EPDP and EPRLF(V) members. On 5<sup>th</sup> November at 8.30 PM, Ehambaramoorthy Pratheepan, the EPDP's local leader, set off from home to the office in Bunting's Lane, not far away. The lights had just come on after a power failure. As he was about to take the turn at the junction of Bunting's and Eeswara Lanes, he noticed several men masking their faces, waiting near a blue van (57-9643) with tinted glasses. Pratheepan accelerated his motor bike and dashed past to his office and returned with help. By then the van and the intruders had vanished. They found in the shadows a sword 3 feet long and a club. Others about the place informed them that the intruders quickly discarded their weapons as soon as the lights came on. One of them was identified as Elil, who heads the LTTE's intelligence wing locally.

At the same time during the power failure, other LTTE men carrying a long sword were observed lying in wait nearby, outside the house of Bhaskaran of the EPRLF(V). He too normally returned from the party office about that time. These men too disappeared as soon as the lights came on. Elil of Mahilavedduwan and Sivakumar of Pudur have been identified as the LTTE men assigned to Batticaloa town, to identify opponents, mark their movements and take care of them.

The younger brother of Alahathurai of the EPRLF(V) in Batticaloa lives in government-controlled Mandur. The LTTE's local political leader Ranjan summoned this younger brother over a commonplace village quarrel. The latter, who had no political involvement, remarked that should he need any intervention he would go to the Police. This was conveyed to Ranjan by LTTE agents who also told him that the youth's brother is in the EPRLF(V). On 12<sup>th</sup> November, Ranjan came in a pick up, thrashed this youth badly and tried to take him to Palugamam in the LTTE-controlled area by road. The STF tuned them back, apparently, as the road is not fully open.

The youth was then taken to Palugamam across the lagoon by boat. There he was thrashed again, cracking his skin in several places. He was told, *"The whole world has now come to respect the LTTE, who are you not come when you are called? Had it not been for the cease-fire we would have shot you!"* He was then dropped in his village with the warning that he should not tell anyone.

The next day (13<sup>th</sup> November), his wife and her father had him warded at Kaluwanchikudy Hospital and complained to the SLMM in Batticaloa. It is learnt that the SLMM went immediately to the LTTE men concerned and warned them severely over inflicting violence on civilians. The LTTE then went to Kaluwanchikudy Hospital and demanded from the doctor that the patient be discharged to them. The doctor refused and in the patient's interest transferred him to Batticaloa Hospital. The SLMM then took video pictures of the youth's injuries. Its is now almost impossible for him to go back to Mandur.

On 21<sup>st</sup> November at 11.00 PM, seven LTTE attackers arrived at the home of Rasaratnam Satyendra (Arafat) of the EPDP in Pt. Pedro. Satyendra, who is 33 years old and the father of five girls, was attacked with a sword and clubs and suffered a cut injury on his arm. His wife Meenambikai who came to stop the attackers also received cut injuries. Satyendra's 63 year old father Rasaratnam and neighbours who came to the aid of the couple were also beaten. The EPDP has identified the leaders of the attack as VVT leader Bharathy and Theepan of Karaveddy.

## **8.2 Painting stripes on the Government Administration**

When Jaffna's Additional GA was recently to succeed to the post of Government Agent, he was warned by the LTTE not to accept the appointment as chief administrator in Jaffna. The Government has now appointed the LTTE's choice, Mr. Pathmanthan, a former GA, Jaffna, who was removed in 1998 amidst widespread allegations of corruption.

Why was Pathmanthan the LTTE's choice? To answer that we need only look back at the fate of some other Government Agents in the North and East. Mr. Panchalingam, GA, Jaffna, was murdered by the LTTE in 1989 (our Report, No 3). Among those killed by the LTTE were Makbool in 1985, a prominent Muslim intellectual from Jaffna and GA, Mannar, and several AGAs. Few months back, the last GA, Batticaloa, left after he was reportedly threatened and slapped by a senior LTTE official. It is not that these victims stood on principle and declined to take instructions from the LTTE. Many had regularly consulted the LTTE's wishes. But they were not prepared to work solely as LTTE functionaries.

Against this record, the reinstatement at the LTTE's behest of the former GA, who was widely regarded as corrupt by the people, is clearly not to further their welfare. The LTTE wants GAs who will carry out its orders without any qualms. The same GA was in charge during the infamous 1995 exodus primarily engineered by the LTTE. Those who felt that the best course for the people was to stay on in Jaffna City, appealed to the GA to release food rations from government stores to churches and other institutions to meet their needs. The GA, Mr. Pathmanathan, who met the delegation, abused and derided them in such terms as '*You have got too much fat have you?*' ('*Ungalukku koluppu methhippochuthu*' - roughly meaning '*trying to be smart*') for wanting to stay against the LTTE's orders. He told them that they had better leave.

Recently, instructions have been given to accommodate the LTTE in administrative meetings of local councils in Jaffna. This appears to be a move to corner elected councillors who may not support the LTTE. Several Jaffna councils had earlier passed resolutions condemning extortion by the LTTE. The inclusion of the LTTE in such meetings, aids the group's covert take-over of the administration of the North-East to the exclusion of basic accountability.

## **8.3 Law enforcement and the dividends of terror in Jaffna**

In all recent cases of attacks by the LTTE on its political opponents, complaints were duly made to the Police, in which the attackers were named. No action has been taken. In the cases of PLOTE councillor Jeyachandran who was attacked by Paapaa in October and of Charles above, the LTTE also stole their motorcycles. The Police have not taken any action. The Police Force has become so debased that it is routinely abused by the party in power, leading to the institutionalisation of widespread corruption. Not surprisingly, this same Force came readymade in turn for use by the LTTE.

The PTA, which guided police behaviour from 1979, made it insensitive to the rule of law and the rights of the citizen. Its even older ethnic bias created humiliation and insecurity for the ordinary Tamil people. Like every arm of the state apparatus, which has atrophied over the years, the Police too could readily be manipulated and used by the LTTE when it enjoys the blessings of the ruling party. The LTTE's investment in terror is now reaping handsome dividends, further boosted by incorporating the state apparatus.

In spite of the general decay in the country, several magistrates in the South do struggle to preserve their independence and lawyers do brave intimidation to represent the interests of clients out of favour with the powers that be. In the North-East, however, there is no semblance of judicial independence when it

comes to the LTTE. There is absolutely no prospect of finding a lawyer to represent a victim of the LTTE or to argue against a line it has laid down. It is sheer terror that rules.

There is nothing remarkable in all this. It was all foreseen by those with a common sense understanding of the LTTE when the Prime Minister outlined his plans for peace at the 1999 presidential stakes. The peace lobby now expressing concern about human rights and justice, then simply applauded.

### **9 Norway: Up Against the Limitations of Realpolitik**

When Norway helped carve out the cease-fire pact that started the parties down the road to talks, Sri Lanka had a new government with few scruples [and a human rights record from its previous terms in office that was among the worst in the world]. The UNF (UNP), which hoped to reap some elusive economic dividends, was willing to sell the people of the North-East down the river to appease the LTTE and end the war. By trying to run a peace process along these parameters, the Norwegians too proved that they hardly have more scruples. What may perhaps disturb them is the unravelling of their supposed competence as peacemakers.

Those in the North-East who know the truth are compelled to bear the consequences in silence and watch with equanimity. Meanwhile, the Norwegian government lionizes their oppressors and organises press conferences and photo opportunities for Balasingam's equivocations! All this is done in the name of realpolitik. Whether this will be a peace trap for Balasingam, and eventually the LTTE, or the final trap to fix the Tamil people in the Tiger cage and dump them in the Indian Ocean, only time will tell.

Thus after the second round of Thailand talks on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, Balasingham in the company of Minister G.L. Peiris told the world that far from conscripting children, they look after children without proper homes. He further commended their NGO, the Tamil Refugees Organization (TRO), as having plans, among which the rehabilitation of children, for which they hoped to get funds from donors. The TRO was a front organisation supposedly collecting money for refugees at home from expatriates. One could assume that next to nothing of this reached the refugees, given the objective fact that the LTTE was even depriving refugees of government rations.

Even today the state of the people in Vanni under LTTE control has not changed in many crucial respects. The LTTE still controls the distribution of rations and Village Headmen (Grama Sevakas or GSs) prepare inflated lists and carry out the wishes of the LTTE. Along with the LTTE many GSs too are enriching themselves at the expense of the people. Most essential goods are taxed as before. The customs check when entering the LTTE area continues to be more rigorous than at Katunayake International Airport. Items taken for personal use too are carefully taxed. Items such as plastic buckets sent for refugees by the Rehabilitation Ministry are, according to persons living there, simply taken over by the LTTE.

Anton Balasingam also vowed that they would allow opposition groups to function. By way of qualification he also used the word 'assimilation'. The subtle, but ominous, euphemism was largely lost in the journalistic reporting. For observers familiar the LTTE's past treatment of political opponents and its current attacks on whatever remains of Tamil opposition, 'digesting' them would have been more accurate.

The Norwegians have a lot to answer for as they sit through this deception, applauding the progress of peace and ignoring the LTTE's misdeeds. This is what the Head of the SLMM did with regard to the LTTE and child soldiers, canvassing support for the LTTE.

The MoU that termed the opposition as Tamil paramilitaries to be disarmed conferred on the LTTE an air of legitimacy - no obligation was placed on them to disavow their past. Why did the SLMM immediately call for a commission of inquiry when two LTTE men were beaten up in Kayts, but chose to remain silent on the LTTE's continuing attacks on the opposition and the disappearance of four persons from the EPRLF (V)? The message coming from Norway is that the Tamil opposition and internal dissent are a nuisance to the kind of peace they want.

A most controversial aspect of Norway's role is the provision in the MoU giving the LTTE access to government controlled areas for 'political work' with no reciprocity conceded to other political groups. The matter was made worse by the President being kept in the dark on such matters, until after the MoU was signed. Negotiations required no more than a separation of forces. The mischief done is all too evident today. The LTTE's thuggery did not stop with political opponents. The victims included the Hartley College principal and Balasubramania Kurukkal, a Hindu priest who had met the President a year ago.

Even as Norway was preparing to host a funding session for the LTTE to do rehabilitation work, the LTTE was launching another 'people's protest' to evict the EPDP from Jaffna. This follows a series of threats and attacks since September (see Bulletin No.29).

### **10 Moves to Oust the EPDP from Jaffna**

Following the LTTE-instigated attack on the EPDP in Delft Island on 5<sup>th</sup> October, the handful of EPDP men left when the SLMM too was unable to give guarantees for their security. It became an issue in the South and President Kumaratunga called for a police report on the matter. She may also have her political reasons for it, while the Government too may be worried about such precedents becoming the pattern. An enhanced contingent of the EPDP of about 40 men returned to Delft under navy escort on 17<sup>th</sup> November. The police presence too had been strengthened. Despite LTTE attempts to bring outsiders and instigate a riot to dislodge them, they stayed on. According to an EPDP statement, the SLMM suggested that the EPDP pull out and sort out the matter through negotiation. It added that they (the EPDP) expressed willingness to do so provided the LTTE too pulled out, to which the SLMM threatened to report them to the European Union!

In the night of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November, two firebombs were thrown at the EPDP office in Chavakacheri. On the 21<sup>st</sup> LTTE agents, not with great success, collected people on the roads and school children to demonstrate at the EPDP's Sridhar Theatre office in Jaffna, calling upon the EPDP to get out. Earlier, NGOs under the LTTE's umbrella gave the SLMM a petition calling for the removal of the EPDP. The demonstration was addressed by Gajendran, former LTTE-sponsored Jaffna University student leader. When the LTTE was given entry to Jaffna in April, Gajendran in a welcome speech at the Nallur Temple threatened the Army that if they did not leave Jaffna, they would finish up fertilising its soil. His whole speech at the demonstration was essentially, *'EPDP dogs get out'*

**Ilamparithy** (formally **Aanjaneyar, LTTE's political leader in Jaffna**), told the media that the 'people' wanted the EPDP to leave. It was he who ordered the attack on the Hartley College principal. Also joining the cry for the removal of the EPDP from Delft are the TULF, its TNA partners, and the UNP member for Jaffna. Among them, there is intense competition to win the LTTE's favour to ensure their continuance in Parliament. According to sources in Jaffna, the UNP member, who was openly using his thugs to attack and humiliate EPDP supporters at the last elections, has vowed to get the EPDP

out of Delft. It is known in Jaffna that this UNP member 'Kerosene' Maheswaran's line to the LTTE is, *"You cannot trust the TULF (except for my business partner Ravi) or the TNA, you cannot trust Prime Minister Wickremasinghe, but I remain, your humble and obedient servant."*

## **11 The TULF's Position on the EPDP: Back to the Duraiappah Days**

Now that Balasingam had stated plainly in the famous Sakthy TV interview that the TNA are their (the LTTE's) minions, there is nothing surprising in the TNA MPs having withheld their support for the Government's Interior Ministry vote, demanding that it close down the EPDP's Delft office. Their campaign marks a low ebb in Tamil politics, revealing the ugly wreckage strewn among the shingles.

The TULF's charges about the EPDP's anti-democratic practices in the Islands, which it controlled for ten years, are largely true. Its (the TULF's) dishonest intentions are however evident in what it does not say. During the same period the LTTE killed thousands of Tamils, whom it branded traitors, in its prisons, including elderly TULF supporters. Since the Army retook Jaffna in 1996 the LTTE has killed scores of ordinary civilians in the peninsula including at least 5 leading TULF figures. This was violence that is ideological and institutional. It is both in quantity and quality vastly different from anything the EPDP can be credited with.

The TULF/TNA would have been on very legitimate grounds had they demanded police protection to set up an office in Delft and challenge the EPDP. Their demand is that the Government should pull out the EPDP and surrender the people to the LTTE's draconian regime, as the TULF have done their souls. In their barrage against the EPDP, the TULF have forgotten to mention that the LTTE is not only present in the Delft, but is the sole cause of the current violence. They hardly mentioned one incident of misdemeanour by the EPDP in the last ten months. They have invariably been the victims.

Indeed, the TULF is deliberately engaging in doublespeak. The TULF leader has remained silent. Several senior TULFers outwardly crusading against the EPDP have been sending private messages to reassure them, even as Maheswaran is reportedly pressing the LTTE to order them into the bull ring. They have no doubt that should the LTTE succeed in throwing the EPDP and other opposition groups out of the North-East, they would be next.

The TULF know that they, and not the EPDP, are the authors, not only of ideologically directed political violence, but also of the abysmal level of political discourse in Tamil society. Their purely opportunistic tirade against Alfred Duraiappah as a traitor, instigated his murder and the birth of the LTTE, which in turn made them traitors. To quote Izeth Hussain, *"...the Vellalah Tamil political elites who started off by trying to carve out an exclusive political borough for themselves, have ended up as the retainers of the 'boys' (and girls) they thought they could deploy for their elititarian ends. They have, in a final admission of their historical obsolescence, nominated the LTTE as the sole representative of the Tamil-speaking people"*(*The Island* 8<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Nov.02).

Having brought the community into this hopeless morass, what did the TULF do to get them out? They went under the LTTE's umbrella in time for last December's elections and hid their nakedness by going back to the great days of Duraiappah bashing! This time their target was the EPDP who were roundly abused as traitors and worse. When the TULF holds up the EPDP's fatal attack on the TNA election procession in Velanai as an instance of its villainy, it is well to remember that there was no virtue on its side. When young LTTE spokesmen like Gajendran use abusive language that will shame any society, one must remember that they learnt it from their TULF peers. Were the EPDP the hated and

contemptible nonentity the TULF and LTTE claim it is, why do they waste such inordinate effort worrying about a small disarmed group? Last December's election results give us the answer.

## **12 Some Home Truths on Sole Representation**

The Tamil opposition in the North-East faced a very unequal contest at the December 2001 parliamentary elections. The LTTE's terror supported fully the campaign of the TULF/TNA. The Tamil media had almost become LTTE propaganda sheets - a process now completed under the MoU. Organised vote rigging using the huge non-resident vote was overwhelmingly in favour of the TNA (see Bulletin No. 28). Even so the TULF/TNA, which deputised the LTTE, obtained votes accounting for only 34% of the voters resident in the Jaffna District.

The TULF/TNA's percentage of the valid votes in Jaffna was 55% as against the EPDP's 31%. Given that the TULF was in a four-party alliance, its share of the 55% would have left it with a standing hardly better than the EPDP's. Several senior TULFers admitted privately that the bulk of the EPDP's votes were genuine, polled in areas outside Jaffna town and the Islands where it had very little prospect of electoral abuse. Whichever way one looks at it, it was a big come down for the brand of politics advanced by the LTTE/TULF/TNA.

It may be recalled that at the peak of the nationalist wave in 1977 - the year of the last free and fair elections in Jaffna - the TULF polled more than 70% with a very high turnout. The message in 2001 was one of disillusionment. In spite of an atmosphere of intimidation, many voted for the EPDP purely in search of an alternative. People, who are wary of the EPDP's opportunism and lack of principles, still voted for them to signal their fear of an LTTE dispensation. That is why the LTTE and TULF hate the EPDP. It has been instrumental in exposing them.

The more bluster there is from the LTTE lobby about a people's struggle to evict the EPDP from Jaffna, less convincing are the facts on the ground. The 'huge protests' largely remain a creation of the Tamil media. The recent demonstration at the EPDP's Jaffna office, where Gajendran poured abuse, collected a crowd of less than 150, of whom about 40 were university students. Last December Gajendran had mobilised a large number of university students for election malpractice. Fewer and fewer students have been attending LTTE functions.

The louder Balasingam and his cohorts wax about the supremacy of the LTTE and its leader, the more eloquent is the rejection in real life. Recently, the Colombo High Court slapped a 200-year prison sentence on the man Balasingam declared both the President and Prime Minister of Tamil Eelam. The sentence is not without problems, given that several leaders in the South guilty of mass murder were never tried in Court. When the LTTE organised protests, one might have expected a huge show of indignation by the Tamil people with hundreds of thousands demonstrating on the streets. What resulted was a massive show of indifference.

In spite of the LTTE's efforts, only about 3000 participated in Jaffna on 8<sup>th</sup> November. Merely stating that number does not however do justice to an event that was notoriously a damp squib. The procession was due to leave the Hindu Temple at the Jaffna University at 9.00 AM, but there was hardly a quorum. The University's Dean of Arts had been asked to lead the procession and he had little choice. When the procession did not take off, he told the organisers to call him from his office when they are ready. Nothing happened for a long time. Finally, the Dean was called at 11.00 AM!

The LTTE had desperately gone around making loudspeaker announcements, pleading with, cajoling and forcing people to come. The Co-ops were ordered to release vehicles. At Kalviyankadu, a vehicle was brought and people were called, but hardly anyone responded. The modest number was finally made up by bringing school children from rural areas and teachers from a training college. The *Daily News* of 9<sup>th</sup> November reported a 'three mile long procession' comprising students, teachers, representatives of NGOs, members of the fishermen's society, priests and members of the public. The 'three mile long' actually refers to the distance walked!

This is the general pattern. The LTTE was angry after the demonstration organised for the same purpose in Batticaloa a few days earlier brought only about 200 people. The presence of the SLMM has also limited the LTTE's ability to force people. What is happening today is a far cry from the crowds turning up spontaneously for public occasions and protests down to the mid-1980s. Today's reality is that the LTTE has turned the Tamil Nation into an ass and an ass can be terribly stubborn. Once used, the full force of excruciating blows will fail to move it.

Against this reality, Balasingam's patronising offer to 'assimilate' other Tamil groups is a pathetic attempt at distorting reality. They appear credible only in the light of the Government and Norway misguidedly rewarding terror at the expense of the people.

## **14 The Multiple Shafts of Terror**

The LTTE's actions clearly reveal that it is very unhappy with the extent of defiance that still resides in a terrorised society. It will continue to target individuals suspected of independence in every sector of society. Early in November, the LTTE beat up Balasubramania Kurukkal who officiates near the Primary Section of Jaffna Hindu College. He was among delegates from the Association of Hindu Clergy whom the EPDP had arranged to meet the President a year ago. A clear pointer to the future is the manner in which the LTTE has targetted the educational sector.

### **14.1 Weeding Out School Principals: The case of Hartley**

From the day after the LTTE entered Jaffna, they had been making a beeline for schools. Hartley's troubles began early when the Army refused the LTTE admission to the Hartley College and Methodist Girls' School since they are in a high security zone. The LTTE resorted to 'people's protests', leading to the unruly one on 2<sup>nd</sup> September when the Army had to fire into the air to restore order.

The LTTE's immediate displeasure against the Hartley Principal Mr. Sripathy was based on three matters. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> September incident, he announced at the school assembly that anyone intending to go for a demonstration should not come to school, but must proceed directly from home. Anyone coming to school should not leave the premises until 2.30 PM. Later, speaking at a meeting between leading principals and the army command at Subhas Hotel, he explained the nature of MoU, which provides for settling disputes between the LTTE and the Security Forces through the SLMM. He added that there is no call on anyone to use students and civilians in settling disputes. He further commended the Army's restraint during the protest in spite of the provocation. The demonstrators, among whom contrary to media claims there were very few students, had damaged personal items of security personnel and contaminated their food items, sometimes in vulgar fashion. Mr. Sripathy told the meeting that in the particular incident the Army had behaved like *Bodhi Sattvas*.

On 19<sup>th</sup> September, the LTTE's political head Ilamparithy (Aanjaneyar) summoned the school principals of Vadamaratchy, nearly 70 of them, for a meeting at the regional DE's office at Manthikai. According to teaching circles in Jaffna, speaking of 'some principals' without naming anyone, Ilamparithy listed the

putative offences of the Hartley Principal. He then closed his eyes, after his peculiar mannerism when saying something dramatic and continued: *"When rice shoots appear in the field they are indistinguishable from weeds. In time the weeds put forth flowers when they are clearly identifiable. Then comes the time to pluck them out."* Ilamparity reminded the principals not to have illusions that the MoU would deter them from taking action against undesirable persons.

Two days after Ilamparity's homily, about 15 goons attacked the principal at home in the night (see Special Report No. 15). Some of the attackers have been identified as persons set up by the local LTTE leader Nishantan, who also commandeered a local minibus. The two or so who led the attack are believed to be Ilamparity's men from his home area of Meesalai, Thenmaratchy. Since then, the Central College Principal has come under pressure from 'student protests' to remove him. Teaching sources also said that above 90% of the principals and 80% of the teachers are solidly hostile to the LTTE's activities. But the LTTE is aiming for a clear field in the schools by using selective terror. Ilamparity made that clear. Once this regime is firmly rooted, conscription of children in its blatantly crude forms will become unnecessary (see for example Bulletin No 23 on the Vanni).

## **14.2 The Tamil Eelam Prison Service**

When LTTE spokesmen vaunt their claims to statehood, they list their possession of an army, navy, police, courts and an administration. With good reason they fail to mention their pioneering achievement towards statehood - the notorious complex of prisons built in 1990 with Premadasa's largesse (see Reports 9 & 10). Of the thousands held, the majority was killed. There has been no notable Tamil dissident activity since then. However, given the nature of the LTTE and its paranoia, secret prisons are integral to its outlook. Recently there have been revelations about the new prison complex. This does not appear to be the prison to which those sentenced in LTTE courts are sent. Nor it is the prison seen by Amnesty International delegates last June, after which they made some observations which they thought were well received.

The prison complex we refer to is located in dense jungle in the Vanni bordered by Muthiyankaddu, Viswamadu and Udayarkaddu, north-east of Mankulam. As with several secret LTTE institutions in the same area, the ground has been cleared of shrubs, but the cover of large trees shuts out any view from the air above. A wall topped with barbed wire surrounds the complex that is several acres in extent. The complex is divided into sections isolated from one another.

One category of inmates comprises traders travelling between LTTE and government-controlled areas suspected of passing information to the Army. A number of civilians accused of being friendly with the Army in areas retaken by the LTTE were also held in this complex. Most of them, we understand, were released. Unlike in 1990, the system is more professional. Food is no longer atrocious, at least for the softer categories who have been allowed to prepare their own meals. It is difficult to ascertain if there are some long-term political prisoners being held over for special reasons.

Prisoners who have compared notes, estimate that about 700 prisoners inhabit that complex. There is no indication that any Sri Lankan security personnel are held there. Witnesses who served in the LTTE's Border Force said that a large number of soldiers surrendered to the LTTE when it captured Elephant Pass and were led away. These sources however believe that the soldiers were all killed.

The indications are that this complex is presently operating off-season, as it were, at far below its full capacity. It has been built more in anticipation of future rather than present needs. It would realise its full potential when the hand-over of the North-East to the LTTE is complete.

The kinds of persons and groups already under attack by the LTTE give an idea of the prospective inmates of the complex. The LTTE has already abducted an unspecified number of persons from government-controlled areas, in complete violation of the MoU. Our recent reports have listed a few abducted members of opposition parties. There is another category of missing persons with no political affiliations who would be difficult to quantify.

Under the conditions of the MoU, a Sea Tiger visited his family in Point Pedro. He then took a commercial flight to Colombo, and is believed to have gone abroad. The LTTE arrested his father and took him to the Vanni through the army checkpoint at Muhamalai on the pillion of a motor cycle. This father is known popularly as **Sothy**, a former employee of Sri Murugan Pharmacy and resident of Nagalingan Mudaliyar Lane, Pt. Pedro. He would not have been produced in any LTTE court. His problem is now very common and how many there are like him, we cannot tell. There is no question of ICRC or SLMM access to such detainees whom the LTTE will never admit holding.

While the LTTE is urging various groups, and rightly, to have the Government repeal the PTA, it continues to hold its own detainees incommunicado in complete travesty of International Law. This duplicity is made worse by indications that it is planning for more. The need for these repressive structures gives us an idea of the kind of social order now mushrooming under the guise of peace.

### **15 The Vanishing of the Middle Ground and Danger Signals in the South**

The Government's peace strategy is to hand over the North-East unofficially and use economic incentives, along with the US as a scarecrow, to control or undermine the LTTE. The LTTE has been constrained or slowed down in some respects, such as by having to tolerate the SLMM, but has continued to make decisive gains towards its objective of establishing fascist control. The Government and Norway pretend that all is well while the South is increasingly skeptical.

The biggest losers in this game are the Tamil people. Their fate is being decided, as it were, in a cattle market. But this is not how it is seen in the South. Many Sinhalese who wished for a just political settlement have been overwhelmed by disbelief at how the present government is going about it. This has resulted in a number of sober people losing their balance. In their present articulations they can be mistaken for those who argue that the Tamils have no problems, and are indeed privileged. There is a definite nuance that only the rights of the Sinhalese and Muslims are being jeopardised. The scandal of child conscription becomes a weapon against the LTTE in the propaganda game, rather one that bespeaks the enormous tragedy and destruction suffered by a community condemned to silence.

Statements from the PA opposition and the President too have tended in this direction and are aimed at cornering the Government rather than helping to solve the problem. In this climate the Tamils are being closely identified with the LTTE, who, as it were, not only have a surfeit of rights, but are 'getting their Eelam' at everyone else's expense. The other camp in the South - the peace activists - do not discuss the rights and wrongs of the Tamil problem, but largely identify peace with appeasing the LTTE.

Consequently, the middle ground in the South has disappeared. There is little acknowledgement that the Tamils were, over many years, victims of violence that enjoyed state complicity. Newspaper articles are frequently recounting instances of violence against Sinhalese and Muslims by the Tigers, while pretending that its counterpart - the many times more severe and far more culpable attacks on Tamil civilians by the State - did not exist. The recent controversial court verdict acquitted those charged over

the Army's Mahilantanai massacre - a gruesome affair largely involving elders and children. The lack of comment shows that most people know the truth. It will stop there.

There is hardly any section in the South trying to find out independently the facts after an incident involving the security forces and Tamil civilians. The recent incidents in Kanjirankudah and Trincomalee (see our Bulletin No.29) are more remarkable for the fact that truth can suffer such singular distortion during a peace process. In Trincomalee the policemen responsible for the deaths and injuries appear to be getting away scot-free. In Kanjirankudah, both the Gunatilleke Commission and the Magistrate appear to have skipped the awkward questions arising out of the STF's several versions. Only Tamils are complaining.

These developments have left even very moderate Tamils feeling disturbed and helpless. Tamil civilians have been reduced to the state of 'scavengers' (*'porukki'*) for the LTTE to fashion their disenchantment into human dynamite. If this is the kind of justice the Tamils receive during a peace process, what hope is there for them if war resumes? The country moves deeper into crisis against the growing smug and self-serving presumption in the South that Tamils are invariably liars. The whole system works that way. Take for example the repulsive manner in which officialdom, from the President downward, handled the 1995 bombing of refugees at the Naval Church.

Civil society in the South has singularly failed to exercise a corrective influence on the peace process by lobbying on issues that have long concerned Tamil civilians. Among these are institutional changes to ensure that the security forces become sensitive to the fact that they are also meant to serve and protect Tamils. Little has been done to enhance the dignity and security of Tamils and, in the event of war, it will be back to square one. The peace process has been left hostage to the whims of the Tigers and the elusive restraints the International Community might apply on them.

## **16 No Peace Without Democracy**

While there can be no peace without restoring to the Tamil people a sense of dignity, it has been our contention that the main source of the loss of dignity is fascist politics, rather than minority status. Take an important aspect. The two sides, on their own admission, have each lost nearly 20,000 fighters. The LTTE's recruitment base has a population of hardly more than a million, while for the Government it is over 15 million. Yet, it is only in the South that the losses have made a notable public impact and the Army has to contend with a paucity of recruits and huge desertions. Consequently, governments in Colombo have faced considerable pressure to end the war.

However, even as Tamil society was driven to desperate straits by these highly disproportionate losses, the LTTE has easily been able to override the people's desire for peace. It had so narrowed its options by the weight of its bloodstained history that it could not allow itself to be deterred by mass emigration, a debilitating form of protest. In its self-justifying logic of destruction, conscription of children, underpinned by internal terror, was rationalised as a necessary step to preserve its 'gains'.

It is not that Tamil society accepts this enforced devastation willingly, rather, it has been denied any meaningful democratic expression. In the South, corruption in the Defence Establishment, the incompetence of generals and the non-viability of government policy are issues that are debated in public and ultimately influence decisions of state.

The supposed successes and military prowess of LTTE generals are myths that are seldom seen for what they really are. It is not a success for a guerrilla army from a small minority to have sacrificed an equal

number of fighters in confronting the state army. Rather, it represents megalomania and callousness in the profligate disposal of lives. All that is tragically remarkable is the level of destructiveness that could be achieved through repression that methodically exploits all the foibles of a society.

The slogan coming from the peace lobby that the task of peace is 'to transform the LTTE from a military to a political organisation' is fine so far as it goes. But one could hardly achieve this objective by being wilfully blind to the essential institutional nature of the LTTE and how ideology, glorification of suicide, repression and child soldiers hang together inseparably.

International agencies and embassies function in such a way that they tend to avoid deeper political ramifications and define their tasks to attain narrow objectives. In a recent AFP report (*Mirror* 23.11.02) for example, the local UNICEF head defined their task with regard to child soldiers as not getting into a debate on why there are child soldiers, but getting them out. Formulated in this way, every token release of children by the LTTE becomes a success story. Every agency has no doubt found the LTTE flexible and has a success story to report. Herein lies the danger, while all these success stories taken together are inevitably interpreted as real progress, the reality may be quite the opposite. Moreover, such progress may have no bearing on long term prospects.

Unless there is change at the LTTE's political core, its reliance on terror, war and, of necessity, child soldiers, will not change. Everyone likes to report progress. But mistaken assessments frequently lead to decisions encouraging irreversibly dangerous trends.

The Norwegians see their success as a matter of maintaining the cease-fire and have made regular claims of progress. This 'progress' has served as a pretext for the LTTE to entrench its apparatus of terror in the government-controlled areas. The SLMM's inability to do anything decisive has done little to induce the Norwegians to greater caution. We pointed out that once the grip of terror is complete, the LTTE would have many covert options to induce children to bear arms.

If one were getting about the task of peace, conscious of the malignant phenomenon one is faced with, one would have been careful to enhance rather than throw away assets that are essential for peace. Even in a state of debilitation, the residual right to organise politically, to speak out, elect representatives and for schools and offices to function normally are invaluable assets. Anyone who values democracy knows that to deny political parties the right to function independently and disseminate opinion, raises concerns going way beyond the interests of party members. Such a denial strikes at the heart of basic rights, security and dignity of the ordinary individual. This is why defending the EPDP's right to run a political office in Delft has become a make or break issue for the Tamil people.

What is at stake is reflected nowhere more eloquently than in the strained language and bizarre reasoning of the statement on the Delft imbroglio attributed jointly to the Bishops of Jaffna and Mannar. The statement of 25<sup>th</sup> November clearly pointed to the LTTE as the true representatives of the people. In this context, the EPDP was by clear allusion identified as the party, which for its selfish ends was disregarding the sensibilities of the people. It was further accused of jeopardising the peace process and driving the people into the trap of chauvinists from the majority. In a disingenuous attempt to be correct, it acknowledged ritually the right of any political party to campaign for its programme.

The statement began thus: *"While peace blossoms in the country, while in the month of November the Christians remember their dead; and while at this time all the Tamil people celebrate those who gave their life for the liberation of their soil..."* The statement places All Saints Day in the Christian calendar

which falls on 1<sup>st</sup> November on the same footing as the LTTE Martyrs' Week. The latter, observed from 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> November, includes the Leader's birthday. It has dark ideological connotations.

All those who died from other militant groups and the LTTE's numerous victims are dismissed as traitors and vermin. Child soldiers and distraught victims of this dispensation who committed suicide at the Leader's behest for his dream state, are during this week commemorated as martyrs. When church leaders who are themselves confused lend legitimacy to a diabolical political force, the community as a whole faces a bleak future.

Even under the Nazi regime one would be hard put to identify one Christian leader who went so far to deify the Nazis and their works. We find it hard to believe that this statement originated from the two Bishops who were showing signs of being balanced and even handed. It is more likely that they were under intense pressure to sign the statement drafted by someone else. It has appeared only in Tamil.

Why should the EPDP be singled out and denied its normal rights, while it is the LTTE that is acting with open contempt for the MoU it signed. The Bishops have failed to mention that there is already a concerted violent campaign by the LTTE to evict the EPDP from the entire Jaffna District. The attack on EPDP members is part of an indivisible phenomenon that includes the violent hounding of independent school principals and the conscription of children.

The statement of the Bishops can also be seen as a further unfolding of the logic of the present peace process: *"Forget about human rights, forget about International Law that the MoU enshrines, all that matters is the cease-fire must hold. If you disagree with the LTTE or do not like their ways, get out unless you want to go down!"* If that were to be the end result, the peace process might have been concluded swiftly without putting us through an MoU and months of fuss and ceremony. The only sure means to peace is to give the Tamil community the democratic strength to resist the imposition of war.

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*\* The University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) (UTHR(J)) was formed in 1988 at the University of Jaffna, as part of the national organisation University Teachers for Human Rights. Its public activities as a constituent part of university life came to a standstill following the murder of **Dr. Rajani Thiranagama**, a key founding member, on 21st September 1989. During the course of 1990 the others who identified openly with the UTHR(J) were forced to leave Jaffna. It continues to function as an organisation upholding the founding spirit of the UTHR(J) with its original aims: **to challenge the external and internal terror engulfing the Tamil community as a whole through making the perpetrators accountable, and to create space for humanising the social & political spheres relating to the life of our community.** The UTHR(J) is not at present functioning in the University of Jaffna in the manner it did in its early life for reasons well understood.*