



International Federation of Tamils

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Press statement

IFT appeals for curbing of military violence in North-East of Sri Lanka

The International Federation of Tamils (IFT) wishes to draw the attention of the International Community (IC) to the escalation of violence and disturbance to orderly civilian life in the SL government-controlled areas of the North-East, and request the IC to exert its influence on the Govt. of Sri Lanka to refrain from disturbing the calm, peace and rule of Law in these areas.

We are sure the IC is aware of the fact that the brutal murder of two civilians in Neerveli, Jaffna, near the Sri Lanka Army Cantonment where paramilitary forces are also accommodated, sparked off the recent unrest in the North. The peaceful demonstration by civilians protesting against the murder of the two youths and demanding removal of military cantonments from civilian areas, instead of being handled by the police, when allowed to be rough handled by the SL armed forces and the paramilitary, had caused provocation and escalation into peninsula-wide protests, clamore attacks, loss of lives of both military and civilians, thus creating chaos.

Even the escalation of tension in Point Pedro is attributed to schoolchildren peacefully demonstrating against barricading of roads leading to Hartley College (Boys) and Methodist College (Girls) and arresting of two school children by Sri Lanka army assisted by paramilitary forces. Children going to Jaffna Hindu Ladies College and Senguntha College have been brutally assaulted by the Sri Lanka troops in the city of Jaffna, leading now to escalation of school boycott throughout the peninsula.

In the East, two escapees from a paramilitary group attached to the State Armed Forces based in the Ampara district have made a startling revelation. Puhalventhan and Gnanatheepan, the reneged paramilitary cadres who have sought refuge in the near-by LTTE camp, have confessed they were on the paramilitary team that targeted the Grand Mosque, at Akkaraippattu, where senior paramilitary men had gunned down some Muslims at prayer, with weapons provided by the Sri Lanka military. The murderers escaped and the Sri Lanka media was quick to blame the assault on the LTTE. The incident provoked violent and spiralling riots causing heavy loss to both, Tamils and Muslims. Tension had gripped both Batticaloa and Trincomalee regions. It was in this fear-gripping situation that the timely revelation of the two reneged paramilitary cadres, Puhalventhan and Gnanatheepan, came to

diffuse tension. Leaders from among the Tamils and Muslims are now endeavouring to bring back peace and normalcy. But Puhalthan had to pay the price. Two of his sisters, both under 25, were shot down in their house situated in the government-controlled area, a day after he deserted the paramilitary group, perhaps a price for deserting.

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has expressed fear that the failure to address the deteriorating civil order condition in the North-East, is very likely to escalate into a war. It has appealed to the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE to resuscitate the peace process early, in order to avert impending war.

Mr T.S.Tamilselvan, the head of the Political Wing of the LTTE, has pointed out twice in the recent past that the immediate implementation of the Cease Fire Agreement, including disarming the paramilitary, as stipulated by item 1.8 was the right and sensible course of action.

The International Community that stood firmly behind the peace facilitator Norway, needs now to persuade the government of Sri Lanka to implement the CFA as a first step forward in the peace process.

The IFT recommends that the menace of the paramilitary causing the day's tension needs to be addressed immediately.

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