



# Execution-style killings 17 ACF Aid Workers

CASE REPORT

Deat of incident: 4th August 2006

Place of incident: Mutur east, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

NO: 1

End of August 2006

“ I have been struggling in my mind against the conclusion that the SL government is trying to kill or terrorize as many Tamil people as possible; that the government is trying to keep the conditions of the war unreported internationally, because if those conditions were reported, the actions of the military would be perceived as so deplorable that foreign nations would have no choice but to condemn them. And this would be embarrassing to everybody. But it seems now that no other conclusion is possible... “

*Professor Margaret Trawick*

“...Against partisans backed by the entire population, colonial armies are helpless. They have only one way of escaping from the harassment which demoralizes them .... This is to eliminate the civilian population. As it is the unity of a whole people that is containing the conventional army, the only anti-guerrilla strategy which will be effective is the destruction of that people, in other words, the civilians, women and children...”

*Jean Paul Sartre 'On Genocide'*

On 4 August 2004, in Mutur east in Trincomalee, 17 ethnic Tamil employees of the International NGO Action Against Hunger (ACF) was told to lie face down on the ground with their hands on their head and shot dead. Each received scores of bullets to their bodies. All the jewels on the slain men and women were removed when the bodies were eventually retrieved. Who did it? Some available evidence is given.

ACF Director-General Benoit Miribel said the group wanted to send a team to the area but was prevented from doing so by soldiers.

A journalist from international news agency said that he was among those taken to the area by the SLA. Although the SLA was keen to discuss alleged killings by the LTTE, it did not mention the killing of the 17 ACF employees.

Father of one slain man Richard Arulraj said, “We believe it was the SLA”. Father-in-law of another slain man, S Navaratnaraja, said that his son-in-law called and said that the LTTE told them to leave because the LTTE is leaving the area and therefore cannot protect them.

People of the area speak of one employee who escaped and has told the story but is hiding out of fear for his life.

There were previous threats and attacks on INGOs operating in Trincomalee.

**International Federation of Tamils**

18 Rue des Pâquis, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel: 00 41 22 7320 831, Email: ift@bluewin.ch

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court Article 2 -

“war crimes” means -

2 (c) In the case of an armed conflict not of an international character, serious violations of article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, namely, any of the following acts committed against persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention or any other cause:

(i) Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;

(ii) Committing outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment;

(iii) Taking of hostages;

(iv) The passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgement pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all judicial guarantees which are generally recognized as indispensable. ...

2(e)

(i) Intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as such or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities;

(ii) Intentionally directing attacks against buildings, material, medical units and transport, and personnel using the distinctive emblems of the Geneva Conventions in conformity with international law; ...

(iv) Intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives;

(v) Pillaging a town or place, even when taken by assault;

(vi) Committing rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, ... enforced sterilization, and any other form of sexual violence also constituting a serious violation of article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions; ....

(x) Declaring that no quarter will be given;

...

## Names of those killed :

1. G. Kavitha (Female, Age 27, Hygiene Promotion Officer)
2. S. Ganesh (Male, Age 54, Driver )- Kavitha's father
3. K.Kovarthani (Female, Age 28, Hygiene Promotion Officer)
4. S.Romila (Female, Age 25, Hygiene Promotion Officer)
5. V.Kokilavathani (Female, Age 29, Hygiene Promotion Officer)
6. G. Sreetharan (Male, Age 36, Advanced Field-Officer)
7. Primus Anandarajah (Male, Assistant Promotion Manager)
8. Matahavarasa Ketheeswaran (Male, Age 36, Supervisor)
9. M. Narmathan (Male, Age 24, Field officer)
10. R. Arulraj (Male, Age 24, Field officer)
11. P.Pratheeban (Male, Age 27, Field officer)
12. M. Rishikeshan (Male, Age 28, Field officer)
13. Kodeeswaran Y. Kodeeswaran (Male, Age 31, Field officer)
14. Muraleetharan (Male, Age 35, Driver I.)
15. K. Koneshwaran (Male, Age 24, Driver )
16. Abdul Latif Mohamed Jauffer (Male, Age 31)
17. A. Jaseelan (Male)

...“I offer my condolences to the victims and strongly urge the authorities to do everything possible to apprehend the perpetrators of this crime and bring them to justice,”...

Former US president Bill Clinton  
08.08.6

Officials promised a full probe, but truce monitors say the investigation is stalled.

“I can't see any action on that,” said chief monitor Henricsson, adding that as a result government forces were the prime suspect in the killing.....

Reuters 23.08.06

# Clinton calls killing of Sri Lankan aid workers 'wanton act'

08 Aug 2006 NEW YORK (AFP)

Former US president Bill Clinton, who is a UN special envoy on tsunami recovery efforts in the Indian Ocean, expressed shock Monday at the killing of 16 aid workers in Sri Lanka.

**"I was shocked and saddened to hear of the killings in Sri Lanka" of the workers "who I understand were providing assistance to tsunami survivors in the eastern part of the country",** Clinton said.

The slain workers were staff in the Sri Lankan city of Muttur for the French aid group Action Against Hunger (Action Contre le Faim), which has decided to withdraw from the country because of the attack.

"I hope that this wanton act will not deter the critical efforts of aid workers in Sri Lanka, who have operated with courage and determination under difficult circumstances," added Clinton in a statement released by the UN's office of the special envoy for tsunami recovery, set up after the December 2004 disaster in the region.

**"I offer my condolences to the victims and strongly urge the authorities to do everything possible to apprehend the perpetrators of this crime and bring them to justice,"** said Clinton.

## EU urges probe into killing of aid workers in Sri Lanka Document Actions

07/08/2006

The European Commission said Monday it was "deeply shocked" by recent attacks on civilians and aid workers in Sri Lanka and called for a probe into the killing of 16 members of a relief agency.

The Paris-based charity Action Against Hunger (Action Contre la Faim, ACF) earlier on Monday recovered the bodies of 16 local staffers who were killed while fighting was going on between Sri Lankan troops and Tamil Tiger rebels.

**"We are deeply shocked by the spate of violent attacks on civilians and humanitarian aid personnel in Sri Lanka culminating in the execution-style killing,"** EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Louis Michel said in a joint statement.

Aid officials in Sri Lanka said they were not in a position to say how the staffers had been killed but several witnesses who saw the bodies Sunday said they had been shot dead.

**"The Commission urges the authorities in Sri Lanka to investigate these killings immediately and**

**thoroughly and to give assurances that they will do everything possible to ensure a safe humanitarian space in the country,"** the commissioners said.

ACF said it sent staff to recover the bodies of 15 staff members, but found 16 corpses at the offices in the northeastern town of Muttur where heavy fighting raged last week.

The relief agency had struggled since the weekend to get access to the area. But sporadic long-range attacks, which continued throughout Monday and which Tiger rebels said killed another 15 civilians, hampered efforts to reach the fishing town.

The two commissioners warned that if attacks continued European Union- financed relief might not reach the more than 325,000 highly vulnerable, uprooted

... "This is plainly a crime, not only to us but to those we serve," said Guy Hovey, head of delegation for the US-based United Methodist Committee on Relief which has been working to evacuate people since the fresh conflict began...

# UN condemns killings of aid workers in Sri Lanka, urges probe

August 08, 2006

**The United Nations on Monday strongly condemned the execution-style killings of 15 aid workers from French organization Action against Hunger in northeastern Sri Lanka, calling on the authorities to apprehend those responsible.**

The aid workers, who were providing assistance to survivors from the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, were killed in the town of Muttur, according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Country Team for Sri Lanka, which is chaired by the UN's humanitarian coordinator but also brings together nongovernmental aid agencies.

"The country team said the killings were 'a totally reprehensible act' and called for an independent investigation. It added that many civilians have been killed since fighting started in the area and called for a cessation of hostilities," UN spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters in New York.

UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery and former United States President Bill Clinton expressed his shock

at the killings, extending condolences to the affected families and urging the authorities to do **"everything possible to apprehend the perpetrators of this crime and to bring them to justice."**

"I hope that this wanton act will not deter the critical efforts of aid workers in Sri Lanka, who have operated with courage and determination under difficult circumstances," he said in a statement.

Last Friday, the UN refugee agency expressed deep concern about the plight of civilians caught up in the violence between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have been fighting for more than 20 years in a conflict that has already claimed some 60,000 lives.

... "Aid and relief workers should not be harmed or killed. We are a neutral force. We are bringing help to these people," said Ahmad Raslan from the Islamic Red Crescent medical agency...

## ICRC condemns killing of aid workers

The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) strongly condemns the killing of 15 national employees of the French humanitarian organization Action Contre la Faim (ACF) in the town of Muttur, Trincomalee district, Sri Lanka. "We are appalled at what happened to the ACF staff. This was a deliberate attack on a humanitarian organization that was doing valuable work for the people of Muttur," said Yvonne Dunton, head of the ICRC's sub-delegation in Trincomalee in a press released issued Monday evening.

The release further states:-

"The ICRC is deeply concerned about the serious deterioration of the security situation, which has severely hampered the efforts of aid workers to provide assistance for the country's most vulnerable people.

"The ICRC calls on all the parties to the conflict to respect the work of humanitarian agencies and to refrain from any acts that might jeopardize their staff or their activities. It also urges the relevant authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure that aid workers assisting the civilian population and persons no longer taking part in the hostilities are spared from attack and can move about freely and safely. "Today, the ICRC provided displaced families in the town of Kantalai with assistance consisting of 335 tarpaulins, 335 hygiene kits (soap, washing powder, razors, bath towels and shampoo) and 112 baby parcels (blankets, towels and baby powder). It is also installing sanitary facilities and two water-distribution systems in the camps where the families are sheltering. More relief activities for the displaced population are planned for the coming days."

... "We believe it was the army," said 50-year-old Richard Arulrajah, whose 24 year-old son was among those shot dead. "On Friday he phoned and said he would be back by Saturday. After that, we heard the military personnel came and shot them."...

# Families tell of Sri Lanka aid staff's final hours

Tue Aug 8, 2006 -By Peter Apps

TRINCOMALEE, Sri Lanka (Reuters) - Some family members of 17 Sri Lankan aid workers found executed blamed the army for the killings, as details emerged on Tuesday about the final hours of the team trapped in a town at the centre of fighting with rebels.

Sri Lanka's government denies any involvement in the killing of the tsunami relief staff from international aid group Action Contre La Faim (ACF). The charity itself says it does not yet know who murdered its mainly Tamil staff.

"We believe it was the army," said 50-year-old Richard Arulrajah, whose 24 year-old son was among those shot dead. "On Friday he phoned and said he would be back by Saturday. After that, we heard the military personnel came and shot them."

Some Sri Lankan hardliners have in the past accused aid agencies of being pro-Tamil, ignoring the majority Sinhalese and backing the Tigers.

Other aid workers have been attacked by Sinhalese mobs in recent days, and troops had been under strain in heavy fighting. A precise cause for the massacre remains unclear.

Fighting between the military and the Tamil Tigers over water supplies entered a 14th day on Tuesday in the most serious outbreak of conflict since a 2002 ceasefire.

Outside the hospital in the northeastern port town of Trincomalee, where the bodies of the aid workers arrived late on Monday night, relatives wailed while policemen covered their noses and mouths with scarves against the stench of death.

The staff had travelled to the eastern town of Mutur last Tuesday by ferry from Trincomalee, aiming to return the

same day. That afternoon, a Tiger attack on a troop convoy in the harbour trapped them there.

## UNABLE TO ESCAPE

Before dawn on Wednesday, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) launched an assault into the town.

"They called on the phone and you could hear shelling," said Sinathambi Navaratnarajah, 52, who lost his son-in-law. "They called ACF and were told to stay in the office." Fighting raged through Mutur, with the Tigers taking positions in key buildings in the centre. The last contact with the aid team was on Friday, as most of the town's people fled.

"They said the LTTE came and told them to leave," said Arulrajah, who believed the Tigers would not have killed the ethnic Tamil workers. "They said: We are leaving this place so you must also leave or we can do nothing to protect you."

By this time, Action Contre La Faim vehicles were trying to break through from the south, but could not get past columns of displaced Muslims and frequent mortar fire. The last radio transmission was recorded early on Friday morning, ACF says.

Most bodies had several bullet wounds, mainly to the head. The pathologist said they likely died later on Friday.

It was all too much for Ponuthurai Yogarajah, 62, who lost one son in the killing and another in January when five youths were shot dead on Trincomalee beach as violence worsened.

"There is no use in living," he said as coffins were prepared for the bloated corpses. "Better to have died before them."

## Sri Lanka atrocity tales rage but proof impossible

Wed Aug 23, 2006 6:09am ET

By Peter Apps -COLOMBO (Reuters)

... Generally the pressure for a proper investigation only really comes when outside groups get involved, hence the execution-style killing of 17 Sri Lankan staff from international aid group Action Contre La Faim is the best documented so far.

Photos show the bodies lying apparently where they fell in the agency's compound in the northeastern town of Mutur. Most had been shot several times.

Officials promised a full probe, but truce monitors say the investigation is stalled.

"I can't see any action on that," said chief monitor Henricsson, adding that as a result government forces were the prime suspect in the killing.....