

Attack by Navy on Fishermen from Negombo on the 27th January 2007.



[COLOMBO, SinhalaNet 2007.01.27 08:38AM] SL Navy fast attack craft fired at three suspicious boats coming towards restricted waters off Colombo around 5:40 a.m., this morning (Saturday 27th of January).

SL Navy sources said, the fast attack craft initially destroyed one boat at a location 6 nautical miles Off Colombo and pursued the remaining boats further westward. Latest reports indicate that the remaining two boats have also been destroyed at a location 11 nautical miles form Colombo.

The detection has initially made by the land sentries manning the southern parameters of the Colombo harbour High Security Zone and informed the Naval Craft at sea.

No fishing vessels are allowed come in to restricted zone of the Colombo port that stretch approximately 10 nautical miles seaward from Colombo port. Further investigations are conducted by the Naval authorities.

THREE SUSPICIOUS BOATS ENTERING COLOMBO HARBOUR DESTROYED

web posted on 27th January 2007

In an abortive bid in the early hours today (around 0520 hrs on 28th January 2007), an attempt made by three suspicious boats to enter High Security Zone in Colombo Harbour was foiled. Naval sailors having observed 03 suspicious boats attempting to enter restricted zone engaged with small arms, which made the suspicious boats flee seawards. SLN boats whilst on patrol pursued the boats and engaged the fleeing boats and one boat exploded 06 nautical miles West of Colombo and another exploded 11 nautical miles away due naval gunfire. Other boat caught fire further 03 nautical miles away on engagement.

A search operation is underway.

(from SL Navy web site)



Media Report on the 27th January 2007.

On the 27th of January the media reported about an attack on the Colombo Harbour. It was said also that the Navy have destroyed one of the boats and arrested some of the terrorists. Divaina of that morning, announced that the Navy has successfully prevented the attack of the suicide carders of the Tigers who entered the Colombo harbour by three boats. Lankadeepa added that some of the fishermen from Negombo have taken one million rupees from the Tigers to pass on information to the Tigers.

The Version of the Victims.

Very unfortunately the victim fishermen did not get any opportunity to tell their story. As such, 'All Ceylon Fisheries Union' (ACFU), held a media

conference to present their facts to the public.

According to their information three boats have left at 4.00am from Negombo for fishing a particular kind of fish called 'Piyamassan'. This particular kind of fishing is done about 15-20 nautical miles away from land, which is an area not covered by the high security zone.

• The Time of the Incident

The fishermen said 'On that day when we stretched out the nets it was about 6.30 in the morning. A Short while after we saw a navy ship coming towards us from the land side. Then, we waved a flag to signal not to get too close to our nets but avoid the area where we stretched our nets. At that instance we saw a Dora boat arriving, and then heard a shot fired at another boat. We saw also the boat catching fire and the smoke too'.



- ***The Treatment We Received at the hands of the Navy***

‘The boat that came near us ordered us to jump into sea. It went near the other boat also. Then, they came back and took us into their boat and ordered us to remove all our clothes and brought us to the land’.

- ***We Were badly Assaulted***

‘What followed next was more terrifying. Our hands were tied together and then blind folded and taken to the harbour. We were then questioned and assaulted saying that we should tell them the truth. We were kept blindfolded until about 4.30 pm. Then our hands were loosened and eyes opened. After that we were put behind bars’.

‘Our family members then came to see us. On the 28th we were freed. Our boats and nets are still there. The fish we caught must be rotting by now’.

These fishermen, who left for fishing hoping to celebrate the feast of St. Sebastian, had to face this most unexpected episode.

- ***Relatives not allowed to see the Detainees.***

Six more fishermen who have gone fishing in two boats have suffered a similar fate. A team of security officers, arrived at Sea Street in Negombo on the 28th January have taken them away. During their search operations for bombs supposed to be hidden in the hull, one boat has been completely damaged.

A note in red colour handed over to the family members gives the address of the security team as Anti-terrorist Investigation Unit, NO. 101 Chaitya Road, Colombo. The family members have been advised to come over to the above address to meet the fishermen under arrest. However, they have not been able to see the fishermen even on the 1st of February but have been told to come over there on a Saturday. Even today (3rd Saturday Feb) they were not allowed to see them.

The Negombo fishermen are very hurt and saddened and express their strong protest about the story published by Lankadeepa that the Negombo fishermen have taken million of rupees from the Tigers to provide information to the Tamil militants. Further they invite the

reporters to visit them in their homes and learn for themselves as to who they are.

It was sad to note only three weeklies appeared at the new conference. The fisher families present there were surprised why the media showed a very low interest about this sad story.

At the media conference, the daughter of W. S. Anthony Fernando 13 years of age appealed that her father be sent home as early as possible. She sobbed with tears in eyes and said ‘I cannot go to school because the friends are asking who has taken away my father’. Hearing her cry all the relatives of the 9 fishermen also began to cry. One even fainted there. Everybody was helpless not knowing what to do at that moment.

It was reported also in the media that one fisherman was a Tamil. When inquired from the mother Nadaraja Chandra, she said ‘My son has been educated up to grade 6 in Wijayaratnam Vidyalaya, at Sea Street Negombo. Due to the hardships the family suffered, he dropped out from the school and started working at the beach to support the family. Then lately he has found work in a boat as a hired fishermen’.

When they were brought home only the relatives realized that they have been badly beaten up. According to the relatives of Baradhi Rames Kumara (17), has walked home with great difficulty due to the injuries suffered in the custody of the Navy.

The Names of the Three Fishermen whose Boat was Destroyed.

1. Warnakulasooriya Anthony Fernando. Age 38 years, with three children.
2. Chaminda Asiri Meninder 20 years of age and unmarried.
3. Bhadari Rames Kumara. 17 years of age, and unmarried.

Fishermen in Custody.

1. W.S. Anthony Raja, 35 having three children.
2. W.S. Jude Sampath, 21 unmarried
3. W.S Sumith Thamel 28 unmarried.



4. Anthony Tyrone Fernando, 28, two children.
5. Sivanaiyah Ranjith Kumara 24, married.
6. W.S Luckshman Newton Fernando, 25 years unmarried.

Names of those arrested at sea on 27.01.2007 and beaten up and released on the following day.

1. Anthony Fernando. 34 years of age.
2. Lukshman 26 years of age.
3. Peases Pieris
4. Terrence Anthony
5. Ranjith
6. Selvar Kumar

The fishermen are now not only scared to go fishing but are scared even to stay at home. People have a fundamental right to their livelihoods. But, in the name of security, the poor fishermen have been deprived of that freedom. Some of these families are one parent families. The eldest son is the bread winner.

Who should be held responsible for the injustices they were compelled to suffer? Who will compensate these fishermen who have lost their boats and nets and their livelihoods?

This episode reminds what the fishermen in Mannar suffered some time back. They may now understand what people in the North and East have been experiencing now.

In time of such a crisis those fishermen in Mannar had their bishop to speak on their behalf. The fishermen of Sea street are like a sheep without a shepherd.

Fr. Terrence, Frs.Nishantha and Kusum Siri from the Methodist Church, Sr. Shirani Perera and Sr. Malathi Dassanayaka were present at this conference

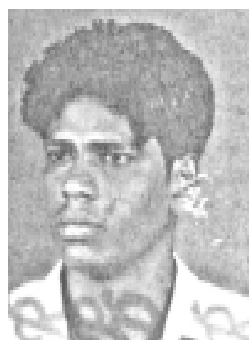
For for information

Gampaha, District council,

no 75,lewis place Sea Street, Negombo ,

Sri Lanka TP – 0094-31-2224418

Family members of the Arrested fisherman



W.Jude Sampath, 21,unmarried -



W.Sumith Tamel, 28,unmarried -



W.Laxman Niwton Fernando,25, unmarried -

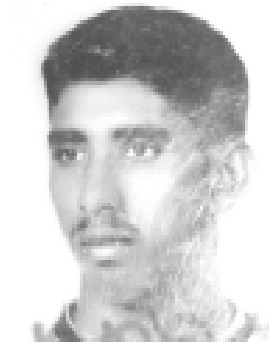
Arrested fisherman



W.Anotony Raj35, married 3 children-



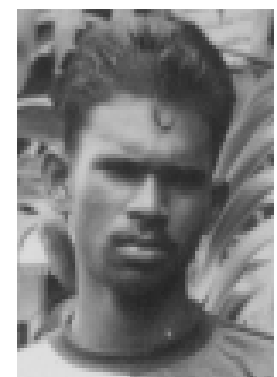
W.Anotony Fernando, 38, married 3 children



Chaminda Asiri Manidar, 20, unmarried



Baradi Ramesh Kumara, 17 unmarried



Sivanaiya Ranjith Baradi Kumara, 24 married



Antony Tyron Fernando 29 married 2 children