

AUSTRALASIAN FEDERATION OF TAMIL ASSOCIATIONS INC.

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URGENT MEDIA RELEASE

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REIGN OF BLIND STATE TERROR IN SRI LANKA

The Australasian Federation of Tamil association joins the International Federation of Tamils (IFT) in strongly condemning the 'Reign Of Blind Terror' imposed by the Sri Lanka Armed Forces on the Academic Community in Jaffna, in which the Vice Chancellor of the Jaffna University, Deans of Faculties, Senior Lecturers and Student Council Leaders were brutally shot at, assaulted, and trampled on their way to the office of the Peace Monitoring Commission on Monday, 19 December, to hand over a memorandum protesting against the recent army and paramilitary atrocities perpetrated on the student population and the civilians in Jaffna within the last two weeks.

The Member of Parliament for Jaffna, Mr Gajendran who was with the marchers was also severely wounded in the army assault. Prof. Perinpanathan of the Faculty of Humanities and Kandeepan, the President of the Medical Students' Union were admitted to the hospital with gunshots. The bullet aimed at the Vice Chancellor, Dr Mohanathas, whistled past, as he was quick to fall flat on the ground along with the other marchers, at the sight of impending danger. However, he and Prof Sivachandran were severely butt-assaulted and subsequently rushed to hospital for treatment along with many others.

The march from the university campus commenced at 10.30 in the morning and progressed peacefully when the SL Army suddenly charged at them without any warning or provocation, violating the civilian right of ordinary citizens meeting with the Monitoring Commission officials.

During the last two weeks, the Sri Lanka Armed Forces had organised a round-the-clock watch on the Student Council Office in the University, and threatened those who visited it. National Identity cards, the Tamils are expected to carry wherever they travel in the country, were confiscated by the troopers from students and destroyed. Women students were threatened and harassed.

The situation in the Jaffna Peninsula was also deteriorating. There were sporadic army assaults on civilians, attacks on auto-rickshaws and sexual violence committed by them. A girl in her early teens, was redeemed in time from a soldier, at the entrance of an army camp, by an angry civilian crowd. Two women had been raped and murdered. The latest was a 20 year old girl, at Pungudutivu, an islet off Jaffna on Saturday, 17 December. Her body was recovered from a well outside the navy camp. The incident had provoked tension. Relatives and friends travelling from Jaffna to attend the funeral were waylaid and assaulted by state forces. Mourners at the funeral service were also attacked. The state military and paramilitary men had gone berserk in a number of islands off Jaffna.

There have been night raids on Tamil homes in Colombo and other Sinhala towns and hundreds, reason being Tamil, have been arrested and detained without charges.

AFTA wishes to draw the attention of the International Community to the gross violations by the Sri Lanka Armed Forces perpetrated on the Tamil people. AFTA asks the International Community to condemn the atrocities committed by the said Forces and bring the culprits to book.

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