

AUSTRALASIAN FEDERATION OF TAMIL ASSOCIATIONS INC.

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Media Release:

1st February 2006

Abduction of TRO humanitarian workers by Paramilitary Forces in Sri Lanka

Five staff members of the Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO), a Tamil NGO registered in Sri Lanka and helping the war and tsunami affected people in the North East of the country, have been abducted on the 30th of January, allegedly by paramilitary personnel working in collaboration with the Sri Lankan security forces. Another 5 officers working for the Pre School Educational Development Centre (PSEDC) who have gone missing from 29th of January now presumed to have been abducted by the same paramilitary group.

The TRO members have been abducted while travelling in a convoy of vehicles with 10 other staff members from the town of Batticaloa in the east to the Northern town of Vavuniya to attend a training program. Soon after their convoy passed a Sri Lankan military checkpoint, within 100 meters from the military checkpoint a white van had pulled up in front of the convoy and had blocked the road. Paramilitary personnel who were travelling in that white van has then dragged out the 5 senior staff members, forced them into the white van and driven them away. The others were assaulted and forced to return to Batticaloa. There were no eyewitnesses for the PSEDC personnel's abduction.

AFTA condemns this cowardice action by the paramilitary personnel and fear for the safety of these innocent humanitarian workers. Paramilitary groups abducting innocent Tamil people and executing them extra judicially is a common phenomenon in the North East of Sri Lanka after the cease-fire agreement came into effect.

AFTA feels that, these abductions have been masterminded by those paramilitary personnel who are keen on scuttling the peace negotiations scheduled to be held in Geneva soon.

AFTA calls on the Australian government, NGOs and other human rights organizations to condemn these abductions and the Australian Government to exert its influence on the Sri Lankan government to secure the release of these 10 innocent Tamil humanitarian workers whose whereabouts are still unknown.

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