



International Federation of Tamils

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Targeted Killing of Rev. M.X.Karunaratnam is a War Crime

The International Federation of Tamils, along with other Tamil diaspora organizations, condemns the targeted killing of Rev. Father M X Karunaratnam, by the Sri Lanka Armed Forces on 20 April 2008. The assassination was carried out by the Deep Penetration Unit (DPU) of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) inside the Vanni region.

This is the second high profile Tamil civilian assassination by Sri Lanka Armed Forces after Sri Lanka unilaterally abrogated the Norwegian sponsored ceasefire on 8 January this year. On 6 March 2008, the Tamil parliamentarian, Mr.K.Sivanesan, was assassinated by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces.

Rev. Father M X Karunaratnam was the chairman of the NorthEast Secretariat on Human Rights (NESoHR), and a prominent social and human rights activist. In the years of the economic embargo and the genocidal war against the Tamil people in the 1990s and subsequent years, Rev. Father Karunaratnam lived and worked amongst the affected population. He led the consortium of NGOs engaged in humanitarian work in the Vanni region.

The NorthEast Secretariat of Human Rights (NESoHR) which Rev. Father Karunaratnam led is one of the landmark initiative of the period of the Norwegian-backed peace process. NESoHR was constituted on 9 July 2004 and functioned as an independent human rights institution. Under the able leadership of Rev. Father Karunaratnam, NESoHR released a number of well researched reports on the human rights situation in the NorthEast of the island. Rev. Father Karunaratnam visited many Western governments and impressed upon them the urgent need to address the humanitarian crisis in the NorthEast caused by Sri Lanka's genocidal war on the Tamil people.

The targeted killing of Rev. Father Karunaratnam by Sri Lanka is a war crime. It is the latest in a series of targeted assassinations by Sri Lanka which include the killing of Tamil Parliamentarians such as Joseph Pararajasingham, Chandra Nehru, Raviraj, and K.Sivanesan. The assassinations reveal system, method and planning. And the absolute impunity afforded to the perpetrators proves the culpability of those in the highest echelons of power in the Sri Lankan state for the crimes committed by those under their command.

Here, we observe that the international community was quick to label the LTTE as a terrorist organisation although the LTTE is engaged in what many regard as a lawful and just armed struggle to free the people of Tamil Eelam from decades of oppressive alien Sri Lankan rule. But, we observe that the same international community has refrained from intervening to prevent the systematic slaughter of Tamil political, social, religious leaders, by the Sri Lanka

Armed Forces although the international community had the power to do so by imposing punitive sanctions on the Sri Lankan state. It should not surprise the international community if the Tamil people regard its attitude as one that amounts to incitement to crime or, at best, criminal negligence, and must be judged as severely as the crimes actively committed by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and its Commander in Chief. Neither should it surprise the international community if the Tamil people are compelled to conclude that Tamil lives are being sacrificed in the altar of the strategic interests of the international community in the Indian Ocean region.

The International Federation of Tamils and the Tamil diaspora salute Rev.Fr.Karunaratnam and honour the selfless services that he rendered to the people of Tamil Eelam in the face of many obstacles and hardships. We share the pain of his loss and together with NESoHR and the people of Tamil Eelam we re dedicate ourselves to the cause for which he gave his life.

(the end)

For Further details: ift@bluewin.ch
