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NORTH EAST SECRETARIAT ON HUMAN RIGHTS
NESOHR

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NESOHR Case Report issued on 23rd January 2006

Arbitrary killing of Thambirajah Arulajanthan on 28th December 2005

Arul

Name: Thambirajah Arulajanthan
Age: 15
Marital status: Single
Address: Kodikamam, presently displaced
Occupation: Student

Arul was a Year 10 student. He was living with his parents and his sister's family in Kodikamam. His brother-in-law Kirubaharan was a member of the LTTE and left the movement six years ago. He is now married with children and was living in Kodikamam with Arul's family. Kirubaharan says he had nothing to do with the LTTE since he left the movement.

Harassment of Kirubaharan

Members of the Sri Lankan military intelligence wing have harassed Kirubaharan on the street several times prior to the killing of Arul. They would ask Kirubaharan if he still works for the LTTE. Kirubaharan has emphatically denied this. However, the intelligence wing personnel have persisted in their harassment according to Kirubaharan.

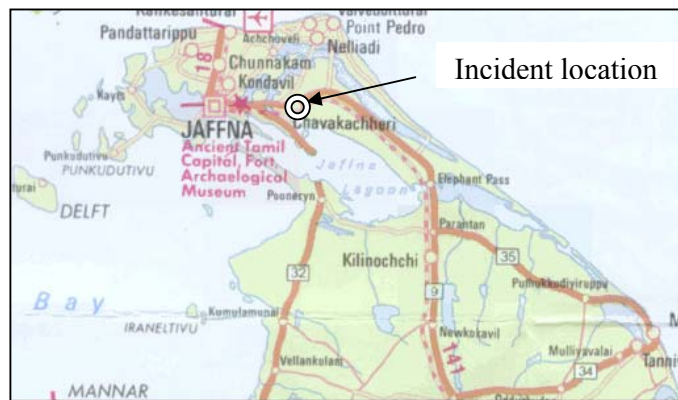
During the period prior to the shooting, the police, the military intelligence wing, and EPDP men came three times to Arul's home apparently to search the premises. They carried out a thorough search.

One day following the search, the family found two grenades in their backyard. According to the family these two grenades were placed there by the military. The family cites the following two points to prove their statement. First, because there are small children in the household they clean their yard regularly. Second, the two grenades were found above the boot marks which could only have been made by the military. Family informed the police and the police came to look at the grenades. Police however did not remove it. Later SLA soldiers came and removed it.

The shooting

On 28th January night the family had just finished watching a movie on the television and had gone to bed around 10.15 pm. Family members state,

“We all felt some movement inside the house but were half asleep. Arul and his mother were sleeping in the front room on the floor. Arul’s father was sleeping in the same room on a bench. Kirubaharan, his wife and children were sleeping in the next room. Arul’s mother was the first to be woken up by the movement of people. She asked “who is it?” One of the invaders covered her mouth and pulled her by the hand. Arul’s mother then tugged at Arul to wake him up. By this time, three of the invaders have gone just behind Arul’s father. Arul’s mother fearing they will harm Arul’s father started to shout. By now Arul had got up and was standing at the entrance to the room. He asked the invaders why they are inside. Suddenly there were three gun shots and the invaders ran away”.



Arul dies without treatment

When the family realized that Arul was shot they tried to hire a vehicle to rush him to the hospital. None of the drivers in the locality who hire out vehicles were willing to take Arul because of fear of retribution by the SLA. By the time Arul’s relatives living at some distance came to the aid to take Arul to the hospital, he was dead.

Arul’s brother-in-law escaped to Vanni and could not even attend the funeral of Arul out of fear.

One of the village hair dressers, outraged by the shooting of a young school student, threw some Palmarah seeds (size and weight of a tennis ball) at the SLA soldiers. Next day his shop was completely broken and the hair dresser is in hiding.

Invaders revisit the house

Two of the invaders who shot Arul the previous day visited the house the next day. The funeral of Arul was taking place. Arul’s family thinks that the two men were revisiting the house to shoot Kirubaharan, Arul’s brother-in-law. However, the two men riding a motorbike, approaching the house from behind, slipped on the gravel and the motorbike fell with the riders. Arul’s school friends who were approaching the house from behind

to attend Arul's funeral saw the men falling. They also saw the pistol from their waist fall off. The men threatened to shoot the students through their ears if they tell anyone about what they have just seen. Arul's family also saw SLA soldiers hiding behind the house when the two men slipped and fell from the motorbike.

Note by NESOHR:

NESOHR is with holding the identities of the people who have provided us with information about the case for their own safety. NESOHR is ready to share more detailed information with any reputable international human rights organizations wishing to inquire into this case.

International diplomats, media personnel and INGO staff in the island have asked us why we have not issued reports on the attacks on the Sri Lankan military. We were surprised by this question. NESOHR is styled as a national human rights organization and its main task is to protect the human rights of those who are unarmed. For this reason we do not bring under our purview the attacks on armed persons like the Sri Lankan military, members of the LTTE and members of other armed groups.

Dr N Malathy
(NESOHR Secretary)