



தமிழர் புனர்வாழ்வுக் கழகம் Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 29th, 2005

TRO Batticaloa Office Attack: 1 Dead, 2 Injured, 6 Vehicles destroyed 2nd statement on attack (clarifications and information added)

In the TRO Press Release of 28/09/05 it was mistakenly reported that two policemen were injured in the attack on the TRO Batticaloa Office. **This is incorrect. No police were in the vicinity of the attack and no police were injured.**

Though there are 2 police checkpoints located within 100 meters of the TRO Batticaloa office, no police or military responded to the attack, which lasted for over 35 minutes, and only arrived at the office after the attackers had escaped. This is surprising due to the heavily militarized situation that exists in Batticaloa Town with numerous military and police patrols and checkpoints. The Sri Lankan armed forces and police have complete 24 hour control of all areas of the town and their failure to maintain the safety and security of the population is troubling.

On Wednesday September 28th, 2005 at approximately 8:45 PM two (2) unidentified men riding on a motorbike arrived at the TRO Batticaloa District Office located on Station Road in Batticaloa Town.

The men threw 5 grenades into the compound and then entered the compound and began to fire automatic weapons at office staff. The attack continued for the next 35 minutes without the police or Sri Lankan military intervening.

Mr. Thambyappa Vellaiuthapillai, the 70 year old TRO watcher, and two (2) TRO Technical Officers were in the office at the time of the attack. Mr. Vellaiuthapillai was killed during this attack. TRO condemns this cold-blooded murder of an unarmed man in the employment of a registered Sri Lankan charity. The two TRO Technical Officers were injured and are being treated at the local hospital.

The TRO Batticaloa Office has sustained over US\$ 300,000 (Rs. 30,000,000) in damage to the building, computers, stores, vehicles and relief items. Six (6) vehicles were completely destroyed during the attack:

- Lic. No. EP JZ 1012: a 3-wheeler
- Lic. No. WP JP 3312: Toyota Double Cab
- Lic. No. WP JP 2575: TATA Lorry (Half body)
- Lic. No. WP JS 6300: Lanka Ashok Leyland (Half body)
- Lic. No. WP JP 5887: Lanka Ashok Leyland (Bus)
- Lic. No. WP JP 1990: Lanka Ashok Leyland Tipper Comet

The loss of the TRO staff, 6 vehicles, relief items, office equipment and the destruction of the office will hamper TRO's humanitarian work in the Batticaloa area and the NorthEast.

Mr. K. P. Reji, expressing sympathy for the family of Mr. Velauthapillai and for those injured, stated that these losses of personal and equipment have forced TRO to temporarily suspend all Phase 3 tsunami work in the Government of Sri Lanka controlled Batticaloa Town and surrounding areas. This is out of concern for the safety of TRO personnel, international volunteers and TROs local and international partners. International volunteers are being evacuated to Colombo until their security can be assured by the police and armed forces. Mr. Reji further stated that these attacks will not dissuade TRO from its humanitarian mission and the TRO Batticaloa Office will be re-established as soon as is feasible.

TRO is shocked and dismayed that this attack occurred in the heart of the Batticaloa Town where there is a large Sri Lankan military and police presence with numerous police stations, military camps, checkpoints, and patrols.



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The attack continued for 35 minutes without the military or police responding. It is difficult for civilians to travel in Batticaloa at night and TRO is shocked that the attackers were able to avoid the checkpoints prior to the attack and easily make their escape after the murder of Mr. Vellaiuthapillai and the destruction of the office.

This is the 4th attack on the TRO Batticaloa District Office since the Ceasefire Agreement between the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka. Thus far there have been no arrests for any of the attacks. TRO strongly urges the authorities to fully investigate these instances of terrorism and bring the perpetrators to justice.

TRO is a humanitarian agency that works with the Government of Sri Lanka, the LTTE, International NGOs, UN Agencies, foreign governments, and local NGOs to provide relief, rehabilitation, development and reconstruction to the war and tsunami affected people of the NorthEast.

The TRO family wishes to express the utmost sympathy to the friends and family of Mr. Vellaiuthapillai. Our thoughts are with you.

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