



Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

31 January 2006
9.00 am

Re: TRO Staff Accountants Kidnapped by Paramilitary at Welikanda, Polonnaruwa District

TRO has been informed that five (5) staff members travelling from the Batticaloa office to Vavuniya for training have been stopped by unidentified gunmen immediately after the **Welikanda**, (Polonnaruwa District) Sri Lankan Army Checkpoint at approximately 2:00 pm 30 January, 2006.

Fifteen (15) TRO Batticaloa staff members were travelling from Batticaloa. The TRO staff vehicle had registered at the Welikanda army checkpoint and was continuing its journey when a “*white van*” that had been following them obstructed their path and forced them to stop. Five (5) members were dragged out of the TRO van and forced into the “*white van*” the others were assaulted and forced to go back to Batticaloa.

This incident occurred approximately 100 meters after the after the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) checkpoint on the A11 road from Batticaloa to Polonnaruwa. **TRO Batticaloa Head Accountant Thanuskody Premini** (also currently a university student) and four accountants from the **TRO Children’s Homes (for orphans)** in the Batticaloa District: Shanmuganathan Swenthiran and Thampirasah Vasantharajan of Shanthiveli Murakotanchani, Kailayapillai Ravinthiran of Vanni Nagar Palugamam and Arul Nesarasa satheskarana were forcibly removed from the car. The other ten (10) persons in the vehicle were recent TRO staff recruits on their way to Vavuniya for training.

TRO has contacted the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), ICRC, various human rights groups, international NGOs, Members of Parliament and other significant actors in the Sri Lankan peace process in an attempt to discover the whereabouts and ascertain the safety of these loved TRO Staff Members.

TRO would like to appeal to the Government of Sri Lanka, the international community and the Sri Lankan Civil Society to make every effort to assure the safe return of these persons to their families. These TRO staff members have been involved in post-tsunami/post-war humanitarian relief and development work with orphaned children and are staff of a registered Sri Lankan Charity.



Picture 1: Thanuskody Premini



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Tuesday, 31 January 2006

2.30 pm

The following is taken from a statement made by one of the ladies that were released by the abductors. For fears for her safety, she does not wish to be identified.

A TRO vehicle was carrying fourteen (14) TRO accounts staff plus the driver from Batticaloa to Vavuniya. After making entries at Velikanda military check point, they proceeded another 100m further. A white van that was parked a few metres away from the check point started to follow and waylaid the TRO vehicle. 5 men (aged between 20 and 25) got from the white van and entered into the vehicle. One of them dragged the driver out and dumped him into the back seat, and started driving into the nearby surrounding jungle area.

All the captives were blindfolded and had their hands tied by the men inside the vehicle. They stopped the vehicle inside the jungle area and made all the men sit under a tamarind tree. They gave back the salwar scarfs which were used to blindfold to the girls. All the girls, except Miss Premini, were put back into the vehicle with the driver, and brought back to the main road. Miss Premini and the 4 male staff were kept behind. When they came to the main road one of the abductors shouted that there was a police jeep on ahead, to which another replied that it was not a problem for them. The abductors also suggested that the released persons should make arrangements for the last rites for the 5 people in their possession.

All men were fluent Tamil speakers in casual attire. They were armed with pistols. While there were 5 men directly involved in the abduction and the interrogation of these TRO staff, there were an unknown number in the white van.