



# Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

5 April 2006

## **PRESS CONFERENCE** **New Developments and interviews with** **FAMILIES OF THE ABDUCTED TRO STAFF**

**Location: TRO Colombo Office**  
**410/112 Bullers Road**  
**Colombo 7**

**Time: Thursday 6 April 2006 10:30 am**

**Re: Abducted TRO Staff MISSING 67 Days**

The TRO employees abducted on 29 and 30 January 2006 by paramilitary forces in the Welikanda area of Polonnaruwa District are still “disappeared” 67 days after having been abducted.

- ◆ **Mr. Kasinathar Ganeshalingam** TRO Director / PSEDC NorthEast Province Secretary (abducted 29/01/06)
- ◆ **Mr. Kathirkamar Thangarasa** PSEDC Driver (abducted 29/01/06)
- ◆ **Ms. Thanuskody Premini** TRO Batticaloa Chief Accountant (abducted 30/01/06)
- ◆ **Mr. Shanmuganathan Sujendran** TRO Accountant, Children’s Home (abducted 30/01/06)
- ◆ **Mr. Arulthevarasa Satheesharan** Accounts Trainee, Vellavali (abducted 30/01/06)
- ◆ **Mr. Kailayapillai Ravindran** Accountant, Children’s Home (abducted 30/01/06)
- ◆ **Mr. Thampirasa Vasantharajah** Accountant, TRO Batticaloa (abducted 30/01/06)

Over the past 6 weeks TRO has worked with third parties, the Human Rights Commission and police investigators to ascertain the whereabouts and facilitate the safe release of the abducted TRO staff. TRO and the families received messages through 3<sup>rd</sup> parties stating that if TRO and the families “kept quiet and did not speak to the media” the abducted would be quietly released. While continuing to answer media queries TRO did, as a result, reduce its exposure to the media.

Current TRO staffers in Colombo and throughout the NorthEast have also endured incessant threatening phone calls and faxes over the past two months. Despite this harassment the humanitarian work that TRO is engaged in has continued and will continue as long as there is a need. TRO will not capitulate to intimidation or threats.

The families of the abducted have continued to visit the ICRC, SLMM, and TRO offices on a daily and weekly basis in an effort to keep the issue of their “disappeared” loved ones alive.

The families of the disappeared have had to endure a coordinated campaign by the tabloid press and various government representatives that question the authenticity of the abductions. This has caused a great deal of pain and suffering for the families and for TRO as an organization. The lack of any support from civil society and humanitarian organizations has further marginalized TRO and the families.



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## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

(ALL TIMES APPROXIMATE)

- 29 January, 20:00 hours: TRO/PSEDC vehicle (V1) with 5 TRO/PSEDC employees stopped, occupants blindfolded and abducted.
- 30 January, 14:00 hours: TRO accountant's vehicle (V2) with 15 persons stopped, occupants blindfolded and abducted.
- 30 January, 17:00 hours: 10 persons from V2 released with vehicle. 5 remain with the abductors.
- 30 January, 21:00 hours: 2 Pre-School teachers from V1 released. They travel to their homes and do not report their experiences to anyone until 1 February. Thus TRO has no knowledge of the abduction of those in V1 until 1 February
- 30 January, 22:00 hours: TRO Colombo is informed by TRO Batticaloa of the abduction of 5 staff and the release of the 10.
- 30 January, 23:00 hours: TRO Colombo informs the following via telephone of the abductions:
- 1) Sri Lankan Police Force
  - 2) SLMM
  - 3) ICRC
  - 4) Embassies and Consulates in Colombo
  - 5) Peace Secretariats (GoSL & LTTE)
- 31 January, 9:00 hours: Arjunan Ethirveerasingham announces V2 abductions (the only one TRO knew about at the time) to civil society at a Foundation for Co-Existence conference on the CFA. IGP C. Fernando and Hon. M. Samarasinghe, MP are in attendance. Assurances are given of a through investigation.
- 31 January, 11:00 hours: TRO Administrative Officer Mr. S. Mahalingam files Police Report/Complaint at Batticaloa Police station regarding the abduction of the 5 TRO accountants in V2.
- 31 January, afternoon: Mothers of 2 of the disappeared travel to Welikanda Police Station and attempt to file a Police Report/Complaint. They were denied the opportunity to make a statement.
- 31 January, afternoon: C.I.D. officers interview TRO Colombo Staff at the TRO Colombo Office.
- 31 January, evening: TRO Kilinochchi informs TRO Colombo that Mr. Ganeshalingam and the others traveling in V1 did not show up for a scheduled morning workshop with FORUT
- 1 February, morning: Pre School teachers who were released on Monday evening contact TRO Batticaloa. TRO confirms that fear that Mr. Ganeshalingam's group (V1) has also been abducted.
- 1 February, all day: SLMM, 2 female accountants from V2, and two mothers of those abducted and in custody travel to Welikande to file a police report and describe the events to the SLMM.
- 1 February, afternoon: Ms. Premini's brother files a police report in Vavuniya
- 2 February, 1:00 hours: TRO Colombo dispatches a British National TRO Staffer and a human rights lawyer to Batticaloa to provide support for the released TRO/PSEDC staffers.
- 2 February, 15:30: Pre School teachers (Ms. Nadeswari & Ms. Sivamathi) from V1 present themselves (accompanied by Colombo TRO Team and the Non-Violent Peace Force) at the Batticaloa Police Station to make a statement. They are detained against their will for 23 hours.
- 3 February, 14:30: Pre School teachers released by Police. After consultation with the women's parents it is decided that they should travel to Colombo with Colombo TRO Team for their safety.
- 8 & 9 February, all day: Human Rights Commission (HRC) interviews each woman separately. **To date the results of these interviews and a report on the investigation have not been conveyed to TRO or released publicly.**
- 10 & 11 February, all day: C.I.D. Colombo interviews the Pre School teachers for approximately 10 hours each day. **TRO has not received any feedback from these interviews and/or any investigation into the abductions.**

**For more information please contact:**

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