



Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation

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Update on Kidnapped and Released TRO / PSEDC Staff

It is with great dismay that the TRO family has watched the coverage of the two kidnapping incidents involving TRO personnel. This coverage and the statements made in the media have exacerbated the pain and suffering of the families of those who have been kidnapped and the larger Tamil Diaspora.

TRO wishes to categorically state that it is, despite statements to the contrary in the media from government sources, **cooperating fully with the investigations being mounted by law enforcement agencies**. TRO has been utilizing all of its resources to facilitate this investigation. TRO has been actively working to convince the women released by the abductors to come forward and make statements even though their lives and the lives of their families will be put in jeopardy.

Currently, the two pre school teachers released on Monday 30 January (kidnapped on Sunday night 29 January) are at the Batticaloa Police Station. TRO convinced these women to come forward and file a police report despite their fears. These women have been at the Batticaloa Police Station since 14:00 hours Thursday February 3. The women were kept over night against their wishes and the Batticaloa Police have stated that they can not leave until a CID team from Colombo arrives. The estimated arrival time of this CID team is not known. TRO requests that these women be allowed to return to their families or the ICRC offices until such time that the CID is ready to interview them.

Monday Abduction reports made & developments:

1. On Wednesday 1 February 2006 staffer Mr. Jan Hammer (SLMM Batticaloa), Mr. Caesar, (Batticaloa District TRO Director), two (2) of the female accountants who were abducted, and subsequently released Monday 30 January, and two of the mothers of the missing men who were also abducted Monday, and are still missing, met at the TRO Batticaloa Office and proceeded to the Welikanda Checkpoint which is in close proximity to the location where the abductions took place. The women described the sequence of events of Monday evening 30 January 2006 to the SLMM and pointed out the location of the abduction.
2. The SLMM then accompanied the two female accountants to the Welikanda Police Station, where they submitted a report to the Police and describing how, when, and where the abduction occurred. While at the Welikanda Police Station, the girls discussed the events of their abduction with two the CID officers who had travelled from Colombo after meeting with TRO Colombo staff on the afternoon of Tuesday 31 January.
3. The mothers of Mr. Shanmuganathan Sujendram and Mr. Thambiraja Vasantharajan who had been kidnapped at the same time as the two women also filed separate missing person reports with the police at the Welikanda Police Station.

Sunday Abduction reports made & developments:

1. At 1:00 am Thursday 2 February 2006 TRO Colombo sent a delegation to Batticaloa to help to facilitate the meetings between the police, the SLMM and the women who had been released.
2. On the morning of Thursday 2 February 2006 the SLMM met pre school teachers Ms. Punniyamoorththy Nadeswari and Ms. Siththiravel Sivamathi at their home in Batticaloa. These are two of the women who had been abducted on Sunday 29 January after passing through the Welikanda Checkpoint. The SLMM took statements from the teachers.



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3. TRO Batticaloa, the SLMM, and the pre school teachers had jointly planned to take the pre school teachers to the Welikanda Checkpoint so that they could describe their experiences and submit a police report to the Welikanda Police Station. The Non-Violent Peace Force (NVPF) also met the pre school teachers and TRO delegates at this time and remained with them throughout the day. TRO wishes to thank them for this valuable service.
4. Ms. Punniyamoorthy Nadeswari and Ms. Siththiravel Sivamathi were told, by the SLMM, that it did not matter where the police report was filed and that they did not need to go to Welikanda to file the police report. The SLMM stated that they could file it in Batticaloa. The SLMM also stated that they could not take the pre school teachers and the TRO delegates to Welikanda as it was too dangerous ensuring the safety and/or security of anyone was not within their mandate. The SLMM then departed.
5. Ms. Punniyamoorthy Nadeswari and Ms. Siththiravel Sivamathi, TRO Batticaloa officers, and TRO delegates from Colombo all felt that it would be too dangerous to travel from Batticaloa to Welikanda without an escort and so ruled the option out.
6. TRO personnel then contacted the ICRC and requested an escort to ensure "safe passage". There were discussions but in the end ICRC suggested that a report be made at the Batticaloa Police Station instead.
7. It was decided that the women would be taken to the Batticaloa police station and a statement would be made there.
8. The women went to the Batticaloa police station where they filed a report detailing their abduction. At this point police officials at the Batticaloa Police Station stated that a "CID team" from Colombo was coming to Batticaloa and that the women would be "held" at the police station until they were interviewed and would then be released. The pre school teachers did not want to spend the night at the police station and strongly stated this to the police. The women and the TRO delegates from Colombo protested against this detention for 3 hours to no avail and in the end they decided that they had no choice but to agree to the detention. They were given assurances that the women would be "well treated".

Response to allegations that TRO did not file police reports in a timely manner:

1. The statements made by various government sources to the media suggesting that they could not start the investigation as no one had made a complaint at a police station is a bit misleading. TRO would like to state that contact with the police began on Monday night when TRO was first informed that there had been "an incident". Family members of those abducted and TRO officials visited police stations to make formal complaints beginning Tuesday morning.
2. TRO would expect that the branches of government tasked with investigating such incidences would have begun their investigations after the initial report filed by TRO at the Batticaloa Police station at 11:00 AM Tuesday 31 January. This was the morning after the kidnapping was made known to TRO. Once TRO had ascertained the facts of the kidnapping, the Batticaloa office was instructed to report the crime to the police. (See TRO website for a scanned copy of this report: www.troonline.org) From TRO's perspective this should have been enough to launch a full fledged investigation.
3. TRO has been hampered by the fact that the Batticaloa-Pollunaruwa region has been a dangerous place for TRO staff. There have been five grenade attacks on the TRO Batticaloa office by unidentified armed groups since the ceasefire agreement. In the last of these attacks which occurred on Wednesday 28 September 2005 a TRO staff member was killed (See Press Release of 29/9/05 - attached). No suspects have been arrested in any of these cases and the results of any investigations by the police have not been conveyed to TRO or the public. As a result not much stock is put in the investigative capabilities of the police.
4. TRO reports to authorities of the abductions at the Welikanda Checkpoint on 29 and 30 January 2006:



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- a. TRO Administrative Officer Mr. S. Mahalingam in Batticaloa filed a Police Report at 11:00 am on Tuesday 31 January 2006 (Sri Lanka Time) at the Batticaloa Police Station concerning the group of TRO Staff that was abducted on Monday 30 January night (See TRO website for a scanned copy of this report: www.troonline.org)
- b. Arjunan Ethirveerasingm, TRO Colombo, notified the IGP Chandra Fernando and the Hon. Mahinda Samarasinghe at the Foundation for Co- Existence meeting on the Ceasefire Agreement at 10:00 AM on January 31 2006. This was done both publicly during the course of the conference and privately during tea and coffee breaks. Only the Monday 30 January abduction was mentioned as the events of the 29 January had not yet come to light. Both of the esteemed gentlemen stated that the matter would be investigated.
- c. The families of the some of persons kidnapped on the night of Monday 30 January, and who still remain missing, traveled to the Welikanda Police Station on Tuesday 31 January and attempted to file a Police Report. They were refused the opportunity to submit a report.
- d. The family of Ms. Premini, who live in Vavuniya, filed a “missing persons” report on Wednesday 1 February 2006 at the Vavuniya Police Station. The report was recorded by PC Wijesinghe (#31736). (See TRO website for a scanned copy of this report: www.troonline.org)
- e. Two of the 9 accountants abducted on Monday night and held for 2 hours afterwhich they were released traveled to Welikanda Police Station on Wednesday 1 February 2006 and filed two separate police reports describing their abductions.
- f. The mothers of Mr. Shanmuganathan Sujendram and Mr. Thambiraja Vasantharajan travelled with the two female accountants and filed police reports on Wednesday 1 February 2006 on behalf of their sons who had been abducted on 30 January and remain in captivity.

For more information please contact:

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