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Sri Lanka: Tamil Tigers leaders should account for latest killings

The leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) should issue a clear statement condemning the recent killings of two members of parliament from the Trincomalee area, Amnesty International said in a letter to the LTTE today.

The appeal follows reports of the killing of Mohamed Maharooof, Member of Parliament (MP) for the United National Party (UNP) and five others on Sunday 20 July attributed to the LTTE. It also follows mounting evidence suggesting that the LTTE was also responsible for the killing of Arunasalam Thangathurai, MP for the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), and five other people at Trincomalee on 5 July 1997.

“Arunasalam Thangathurai had worked for years for the protection of the human rights of the people in his constituency, including many people of the Tamil community,” Amnesty International said. “The killing of such a community leader cannot be justified in any terms.”

“The killing of members of parliament simply on the basis of their political activities is a contemptible act. The LTTE should immediately stop the killing of non-combatants and cease other human rights abuses, including the taking of hostages.”

Background

On 5 July, Arunasalam Thangathurai (MP) and five other people were killed when leaving the premises of a school where the MP had been the chief guest at an opening ceremony.

On 20 July, Mohamed Maharooof (MP), and five others including his driver, the driver's 4-year-old son, a principal of a local school and the MP's bodyguard were all killed when the jeep came under fire at the 6th Mile Post along the Kuchchaveli Road, north of Trincomalee town. The party was on its way to visit relatives of 39 villagers of Irakakkandy who had been taken prisoner by the LTTE on 2 July. Seven hostages were released by the LTTE on 14 July. Amnesty International continues to appeal for the unconditional release of the remaining 32.

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