

£SRI LANKA

@The "disappearances" from Eastern University Refugee Camp on 5 September 1990

On 5 September 1990, 159 young Tamil men were rounded up from the Eastern University Refugee Camp at Vantharamoolai, Batticaloa District. None have been seen again. The men were taken away in front of thousands of witnesses, some of whom would be willing to give evidence, yet no attempt has been made to hold an official inquiry into the case. Instead, relatives who have for three years sought an explanation from the authorities and tried to trace their husbands and sons have been fobbed off with false and conflicting stories. The names of those who "disappeared" that day are listed at the end of this report.

Amnesty International highlighted the "disappearances" from Eastern University Refugee Camp in a report on northeastern Sri Lanka published in September 1991, *Sri Lanka - The Northeast: Human rights violations in a context of armed conflict*¹. Yet still no action was taken by the authorities to ensure the "disappearances" were properly investigated or to compensate the relatives.

More recently, the Human Rights Task Force (HRTF)² has published an account of these "disappearances" in its *Annual Report of 29 September 1993*. This account is based on interviews conducted by the Chairman of the HRTF and the Regional Manager of the HRTF in Batticaloa. The HRTF names four officers who witnesses said were involved in these "disappearances" and calls for proper investigation of these events as well as for compensation and death certificates to be given to the relatives. Their account is reproduced below.

There were nearly 45,000 refugees in this camp at Vantharamoolai. Early morning on the 5th September 1990 a batch of soldiers many of whom were from the HQ8 Brigade at Valaichenai, arrived at the Refugee Camp in several jeeps bringing along two buses. The women were asked to stand aside while the men were asked to line up in 3 queues. Two hooded men stood along with the soldiers and the people who were in the lines were made to walk past them. Every time the hooded men nodded, it was taken as identification and the man or boy involved was taken into custody. While this was going on there was a group of LTTE³ men who had taken refuge in the Eastern University who had ignored the army orders to line up outside and were hiding inside the Assembly hall. Accidentally or otherwise there was a bomb blast inside the Assembly hall which killed some of the LTTE men who were in hiding and severely injured the others. They were all taken away in the jeeps. The bomb blast no doubt added to the acrimony of the proceedings. In all 158 persons were rounded up on the identification of the hooded men. Their hands were tied behind their backs and they were bundled into the two buses while the parents and kinsmen looked on helplessly. The soldiers said the men would be released after inquiry. There are many willing witnesses to the incident which took place in broad daylight in the presence of nearly 45,000 people. The University authorities whose names are available and will volunteer as witnesses if called upon, kept a list of the persons who were taken away as they were responsible for all the refugees who had taken shelter in the Eastern University Camp. Among the men taken there

¹ AI Index: ASA 37/14/91, September 1991

² The Human Rights Task Force was established by the Government of Sri Lanka in August 1991 to monitor the welfare of detainees and maintain a comprehensive register of detainees. Its second *Annual Report* was published on 29 September 1993 and covers the year from 10 August 1992 to 10 August 1993.

³ LTTE is the acronym for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which is fighting the Government of Sri Lanka to establish a separate Tamil state in the northeast which they call Eelam.

were young and old. One at least was as young as 11 years. There was much indignation at this outrageous removal of many innocent people solely on the identification of 2 hooded men whose credentials and creditworthiness are unknown. Four army men have been identified among the soldiers who took part in this inhuman exercise.

The names of four officers are given, one of whom is said to use an assumed name. The officers concerned are said to be from the Chenkalady Army Camp, the Valachchanai Army Camp, the Batticaloa Camp and the National Intelligence Bureau, Batticaloa. Amnesty International has asked the Government of Sri Lanka what steps it has taken to investigate these allegations against the four officers since the publication of the HRTF report. The report continues:

The statements of several parents and kinsmen of the men and boys who were taken were recorded by us. Apart from the witnesses the University authorities have identified the four army officers who were responsible.

Most of the witnesses are able to identify Capt. [name given]. Masquerading as [x] he was the bane and terror of the defenceless inhabitants of Batticaloa during this period. Among the public he was feared and very well known. Representations were made to the Ministry of Defence. On 17 October 1990 Air Marshal A W Fernando who was the Secretary to the Hon. Minister for Defence sent a reply to the inquiries made in which he states that only 32 persons were taken on 05.09.90 from the Vantharamoolai Camp. The names of 31 boys and men were listed as having been taken... The letter said they had been taken only for questioning and all had been released within 24 hours. But regrettably none of these persons who had reportedly been released reached their homes. Among the persons so said to have been released was a young boy V Wijeratnam only 11 years old and one S Sudakaram 16 years of age. It is necessary to mention that No 18 in the list of names given was that of N Stanley, 35 years of age from Vantharamoolai. The supreme gaffe came during the Presidential Mobile Services at Batticaloa in July 1993. Stanley's wife had complained about her husband's disappearance. She received a reply to say that Stanley was never taken by the authorities. This was the standard reply on a cyclostyled form issued to any person who complained of a missing person. This in the teeth of what was stated by the Secretary to the Ministry of State for Defence that N Stanley was among the 31 taken for questioning and released. There is yet another matter to be mentioned. In response to the representations made by the people the Government Agent apparently wrote on 22 September 1990 to the Army authorities about the incident. Maj. S Seneviratne from the Headquarters of 8 Brigade Group, Paper Mills Quarters, Valachchanai wrote back on 29 October 1990 to the GA that the troops which conducted a search operation, rounded up and questioned over 200 inmates of the Eastern University Refugee Camp and no one had been detained. Add to this tragic farce of blunders the fact that in the evening news bulletin of SLBC (Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation) on 7 September 1990 an announcement was made that 148 persons had been taken into custody from the Eastern University Camp by the Army for inquiries. This incident is a dastardly crime which cries aloud for a proper investigation. The HRTF has not been able to trace even one single person out of the 158 that went missing on that fateful morning of 5 September 1990. The losses are irrevocable. The least that can be done now is to pay adequate compensation to the bereaved families many of whom have lost their breadwinners and to issue death certificates.

LIST OF PEOPLE REPORTED TO HAVE "DISAPPEARED" FOLLOWING ARREST AT THE EASTERN UNIVERSITY REFUGEE CAMP, VANTHARAMOOLAL, ON 6 SEPTEMBER 1990⁴

	Name	Age	Occupation		Name	Age	Occupation
1	Vivekanandan Shanmugam	26	Manager	10	Nadarajah George Stanly	40	office worker
2	Rajanayagam Shanmuganathan	25	security guard	11	Nallathamby Raveendran	24	labourer
3	Mylvaganam Koneswaran	18	student	12	Arumugam Sathananthakumar	25	theatre manager
4	Kandiah Sathianandan	35	businessman	13	Selvam Suntharesan	18	mechanic
5	Pathmanathan Sivalogeswaran	19	student	14	Vadivel Ravi	26	labourer
6	Velupillai Vijeyaratnam	52	businessman	15	Rasiah David	77	labourer
7	Ayathurai Baskaran	26	businessman	16	Seenithamby Vaithilingam	29	businessman
8	Samithamby Shanmugam	30	labourer	17	Muthulingam Mohanasundaram	29	labourer
9	Kathirkamathamby Casithamby	26	farmer	18	Govindan Babu	17	student
19	Ponniah Jeevaratnam	35	labourer	35	Velupillai Rasu	22	labourer
20	Joseph Suntharalingam	31	labourer	36	Kathamuthu Ramachandran	35	mason
21	Ponniah Alagiah	41	labourer	37	Sundaram Sathyaseelan	22	labourer

⁴ Lists received by Amnesty International contain information on the names, ages, addresses and occupations of the "disappeared". Amnesty International is only publishing the names, ages and occupations where known of those concerned.

22	Arumugam Kanthalingam	28	washerman	38	Senathirasa Sugumarasa	30	tobacco worker
23	Apruraman Vijeyakumar	23	labourer	39	Sellathurai Puthisigamany	23	carpenter
24	Krishnapillai Rasanayagam	34	businessman	40	Kandasamy Kidnapillai	25	goldsmith
25	Sivalingam Ravinathan	28	businessman	41	Muthiah Muthukumar	19	sales rep
26	Kanthalingam Sahathevan	26	mason	42	Kidnapillai Uruthiran	22	labourer
27	Gopal Mahendran	34	labourer	43	Nallathamby Nagarajah	25	barber
28	Seenithamby Pillainayagam	25	toddy tapper	44	Ganeshan Thiyagarajah	25	manager
29	Manikan Suthakar	23	student	45	Kandiah Anandaratnam	32	fisherman
30	Konamalai Kanesan	21	labourer	46	Singappu Thevathas	23	student
31	Simmathamby Nagarasa	29	contractor	47	Muthiah Chandran	49	labourer
32	Muthulingam Sivarasa	18	businessman	48	Kandasamy Sriskandarajah	25	labourer
33	Eliyathamby Pakianathan	25	labourer	49	Rafael Alexander (Abraham)	40	businessman
34	Tharmalingam Canagasingam	33	businessman	50	Arumugam Thamothersampillai	23	farmer
51	Nagarasa Ganeshamoorthy	20	goldsmith	67	Gabriel Alexander	23	businessman
52	Ratnam Vinayagamoorthy	21	driver	68	Thisaveerasingam Mahadevan	48	goldsmith
53	Simmathamby Vinyagamoorthy	33	fish monger	69	Kaniah Thayalan	20	labourer
54	Nadesan Subramaniam	29	blacksmith	70	Tharmalingam Sureshkumar	24	labourer
55	Vellappan Ravendrakumar	19	labourer	71	Poologasingam Loganathan	26	fisherman

56	Arumugam Kandalingam	21	washer	72	Arumugam Selvarajah	48	
57	Nagalingam Arulanantharajah	14	student	73	Soosaipillai Thevanesan	29	barber
58	Sellathurai Ramachandran	29	labourer	74	Poopalapillai Theivendramoorthy	34	labourer
59	Sellathurai Vijeyasekaran	26	carpenter	75	Jacob Lasar	40	labourer
60	Sathasivam Kupinthiran	20	carpenter	76	Chellathamby Ahamparam	45	
61	Vyramuthu Nallathamby	21	businessman	77	Arunasalam Uthayakumar	22	carpenter
62	Kandasamy Varatharajah	30	tailor	78	Kandiah Selvarajah	35	businessman
63	Suppiah Balasubramaniam	28	mason	79	Thambimuttu Peethamparam	20	labourer
64	Sampunathapillai Tharmarajah	30	driver	80	Sabaratham Jesudasan	32	driver
65	Kandasamy Navaratnarajah	21	goldsmith	81	Selvadurai Uthayakumar	25	labourer
66	Arunasalam Sinnathamby	34	fisherman	82	Somalingam Vasavan	21	student
83	Subramaniam Suthagaran	26	welder	99	Raju Giri	27	teacher
84	Asalin Lakshman Pushparajah	26	railway guard	100	Samuel Yogendran	20	farmer
85	Sithamparam Rajalingam	36	businessman	101	Sinnappu Yogarajah	27	farmer
86	Alagiah Yogarasa	19	labourer	102	Sivalingam Mahendran	33	blacksmith
87	Kidnan Gajendran	33	businessman	103	Pararajasingam Ragulosan	19	student
88	Thamirasa Uthayakumar	24		104	Panchadcharan Nadarajah	26	businessman
89	Sithamparapillai Thanigasalam	41		105	Amirthalingam Jayashangar	26	goldsmith

90	Muthu Raman	22	labourer	106	Sivalingam Sellathamby	25	blacksmith
91	Suppiah Retnam	23	labourer	107	Kanapathipillai Thangathurai	20	farmer
92	Kandiah Muthuvadivel	19	labourer	108	Palanimuttu Punniyamoorthy	29	cashier
93	Selvarasa Navaratnam	29	tractor driver	109	Nagiah Vigneswaran	21	student
94	Joseph Kiddnapillai	21	labourer	110	Mariadas Gnanasekaran	31	businessman
95	Kathirkamathamby Suthaharan	19	labourer	111	Kandapody Jeyaseelan	20	labourer
96	Nadarasa Ramkumar	18	student	112	Kandapody Pulendran	15	student
97	Nagamany Karunanathan	36		113	Sivasubramaniam Kirupkaran	22	student
98	Theivanayagam Thevathanan	22	student	114	Kandiah Shanmugam	22	businessman
115	Thamothrapillai Nallaratnam	24	mason	131	Michael Thevakumar	20	student
116	Thamirasa Thayalan	22	toddy tapper	132	Poopalapillai Ravichandran	18	labourer
117	Samuel Thevathanan	39	business	133	Sigamany Puvikamalan	16	student
118	Subramaniam Sondaramohan	26		134	Sinnarajah Rajendram	23	student
119	Eliyathamby Uthayakumar	23	businessman	135	S Edmond	23	
120	Sathasivam Muralitharan	20		136	S Thuraiyan	18	
121	Ratnam Sabapathy	32	mechanic	137	G Thavarajah	20	
122	Thangarajah Rajendrakumar	26	labourer	138	G Thuraijarah	22	
123	Velupillai Yogan	31	labourer	139	E Pakkiyanathan	24	labourer

124	Sinnathamby Mathan	22	mason	140	S Gajendran	23	
125	Velupillai Packiyarasa	35	labourer	141	S Thuraiatnam	15	
126	Sinnathamby Johnas	36	mason	142	Nagamany Karumananthan	32	
127	Mariyappan Thamilselvan	14	student	143	S Muthusamy	21	
128	Sivenesarajah Suthaharan	20	student	144	P Jeevaratnam	35	labourer
129	Subramanium Sutharsan	21	cleaner	145	K Kalaiamuthan	17	
130	Fernando Nanthakumar	22	mechanic	146	S Mahendran	29	
147	Iyathurai Jeyarajah	19	carpenter	154	S Murugan	22	
148	Vellaichamy Karuniam	36	farmer	155	R Sinnathamby	22	
149	Nagarajah Mohan	18	student	156	K Murugesu	24	
150	Rajendra Gerald Thavendra	21	student	157	T Shanmuganathan	25	
151	Rajendra Edmond Navendra	19	student	158	A Mahadeva	51	businessman
152	Kandumany Yogendran	18	student	159	K Kandasamy	31	
153	Ramiah Lingam	22	labourer				