



Tamil Information Centre

தமிழ் தகவல் நடுவம்

THULASI

Bridge End Close (Off Clifton Road)

Kingston Upon Thames KT2 6PZ, (UK)

Telephone: + 44 (0) 20 8546 1560

Fax: + 44 (0)20 8546 5701

E-Mail: admin.tic@sangu.org

Committed to Human Rights and Community Development

PRESS RELEASE

Date: 5 September 2006

LTTE's intolerance towards Muslims in the northeast only serves divisive politics

A spirit of traditional tolerance and harmonious coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups existed in the northeast region of Sri Lanka for a very long time. The multicultural, multiethnic heritage has been subjected to severe strain in recent times resulting in break down of trust, friendship, solidarity and mutual understanding.

While worldwide progress is evident in the legal and institutional protection of the rights of religious or linguistic minorities, the treatment of ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka disastrously fails to meet the aspirations and the standards set forth in the constitution and international instruments for their protection.

The Tamil Information Centre (TIC) is deeply concerned over the ongoing and disturbing increase in abuses against the vulnerable Muslim community in northeast Sri Lanka. In this regard, the intolerance of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) towards Muslims in the northeast is shocking, and foreshadows a frightening future. Ruthless violence has been committed by members of the LTTE against the Muslims. The LTTE leadership has assured on many occasions the safety and dignity of the Muslim people living in the northeast, but LTTE intolerance is manifest in numerous incidents and these abuses are increasing in frequency and severity. In this light, it is incumbent on the LTTE leadership to take swift and decisive action to prevent the abuses and to ensure that the rights of all minorities in the northeast are protected. The killing and displacement of Muslims in Muthur have no doubt inflamed Muslim sentiments and has gravely affected Tamil-Muslim relations. This kind of action serves only divisive politics, and has no place in the cause of a community which itself is seeking justice and reprieve from intolerance.

It is our view that Tamil people's silence over the human rights abuses of the LTTE, because of fear or misguided belief as wartime necessity, has also created an unfettered environment for violence against the Muslims. The Tamil people often privately express their revulsion over violence perpetrated against vulnerable communities by the LTTE or other groups. But this is insufficient and will not end the abuses. It is necessary to take up these issues directly with them and make them accountable for their actions.

The TIC stresses the importance of the rights of Muslim and Sinhalese people in the northeast and the duty of the Tamil people and their representatives to demonstrate respect to such rights. The LTTE must take immediate and tangible action to create confidence among the Muslim people, do all within its power to heal the rift between the communities and refrain from inflicting any new wounds. If this is not done immediately with vision and purpose, irreparable damage may be done to community relations, and the LTTE may lose its status to represent the rights and aspirations of all peoples of the north-east region. The TIC feels that civil society also must assume its share of responsibility in addressing the issues that lie at the root of many, if not most, concerns of the Tamil-Muslim-Sinhalese communities in Sri Lanka. It has an important and valuable role in preventing disasters, while making those responsible for abuses accountable for their actions.

End://