



Tamil Information Centre

Tamil House
720 Romford Road
London
E12 6BT, (UK)

Telephone: + 44 (0) 208 514 6390

Fax:: + 44 (0) 208 514 0164

E-mail: tamilinfo@compuserve.com

Committed to Human Rights and Community
Development
PRESS RELEASE

16 DECEMBER 1997

Ref: TIC/PR/DEC97

Massacre of Tamil Detainees

Tamil Information Centre (TIC) is alarmed at the massacre of Tamil detainees at the government prison in Kalutara located south of the Sri Lankan capital Colombo, on Friday 12 December 1997.

The Centre has expressed deep shock and dismay over the killing of Tamil detainees, Muthulingam Dharmalingam, Shanmugarajah and sharif Jehan who were hacked to death by Sinhalese prisoners in the presence of security officers who were on guard duty at Kalutara prison. Several other Tamil prisoners were seriously wounded. The attack was premeditated, according to reports received by the TIC, involving prisoners, prison guards and security officers. The actions of some prison officers. Are not merely callous, but have gone well beyond the norms expected of responsible public officers.

The Tamil Information Centre has urged the government to initiate a full, impartial public investigation, publish the result of such enquiry and punish the perpetrators of the brutal and inhuman act.

In a letter to President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge and Justice Minister G L Peiris, the TIC has expressed the view that the incident presents an opportunity for the government to demonstrate to the

Tamil people who are struggling for equality and justice, that it is sincere and honest in dealing with human rights abuses and that effective measures are being taken to protect the rights of the Tamil people. The TIC's letter has also stressed that it is important that government measures in this regard are genuine and immediate rather than out of courtesy for the international community.

Tamil Information Centre has noted in its letter, similar incidents involving security personnel took place at the high security Welikade prison in 1983 where 37 Tamil political prisoners were massacred on 25 July and another 18 killed on 27 July. No enquiry has been held to identify the perpetrators. There have been many other incidents subsequently, even during the present government, most notably the Bolgoda Lake murders, and the trial relating to which appears to have been abandoned. These incidents have created deep scars in the minds of the Tamil people. Government's positive action would not only go a long way in healing these wounds but would

also prevent such abuses in the future.

END

Tamil Information Center is a non-profit making company limited by guarantee. Registered in England No. 2563348