



Tamil Information Centre

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Sri Lanka: Urgent inquiry needed into civilian killings

The attack on a bus in Anuradhapura District on 15 June 2006, killing and wounding innocent civilians is a reprehensible crime. In this attack near the town of Kebitigollewa, 64 people are reported killed and over 50 injured. Similar claymore mine attacks have killed civilians in the past in the Kebetigollawe area. Seven people were killed on 22 February 1996 in Mahanikawewa; the chief priest of the Siripura Maha Vihara, Ven. Dhammaloka Thero was killed on 18 November 2001, and two officers of the Irrigation Department were killed on 12 October 2001 on Kebitigollawe-Padaviya Road.

The Tamil Information Centre strongly condemns the continuing violence and the unrestrained killing of civilians in Sri Lanka.

There are worrying reports about the mounting casualties among civilians who find themselves caught up in a cycle of attacks and retaliation involving the Sri Lankan Security forces, LTTE and paramilitary groups. Questions must be raised whether these casualties could have been avoided, and whether needless deaths could be prevented in the future.

These killings leave deep scars in the memory of people. No amount of talk about national security, sovereignty, rights, peace and justice will provide consolation to the families of the victims or ever erase these memories. Retribution and vengeance will only perpetuate the cycle of violence. Until the people of Sri Lanka, on all sides, wake up to the reality that they have an undeniable responsibility and a critical role in protecting the lives of the innocent, irrespective of the reasons others provide to justify the circumstances or in fervour of nationalistic glory, we fear that this phenomenon will continue and ultimately engulf the entire society.

- **We call upon the Sri Lankan government to launch and facilitate a full and impartial investigation into the incident;**
- **We also call upon the Sri Lankan government to provide the evidence to the public in order to make an informed judgement, and to take the next step to prevent such incidents occurring; and**
- **We urge the international community not to remain satisfied by merely condemning the killings, but to take all possible steps within its power to prevent them happening in the future.**

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