

KINNIYA FAISAL NAGAR – AL-IRFAN VIDYALAYAM LAND DISPUTE BETWEEN TAMILS AND MUSLIMS

WEDNESDAY 08TH OCTOBER 2003

Communal violence erupted between the Tamils and Muslims at 10.00 am on Wednesday 8th October 2003, in Faisal Nagar, Kinniya over a plot of land 3 acres belonging to Al-Irfan Mixed School. Fifteen Tamils were injured – fourteen admitted to Kinniya Hospital and One to Trincomalee for the treatment of minor injuries. A Muslim was abducted by the Tamils and a Muslim student was arrested by the police. In retaliation four Tamils were abducted by the Muslims. Muslim students stopped the ferry service between Kinniya and Trincomalee.

Faisal Nagar – 3857 Muslims and 217 Tamils, 3½ km East of Kinniya. Al-Irfan Muslim Mixed School – 760 students conduct classes from grade 1 -10. Situated in a 3 acre plot. Adjoining this School is the 3 acre land in dispute. Originally this land belonged to Captain Sarawanamuthu of Trincomalee who owned more than 350 acres in the area. Under the Land Reforms, the land in dispute was vested with the LRC in 1972. Muslim Religious School - Madrasa and Hindu Vinayakar Kovil were jointly cultivating the said land for some time without approval from the LRC or permission from the Government.

The Al-Irfan Muslim Mixed School made an application to the LRC for the adjoining 3 acre land for the expansion of the School. Approval was obtained from the LRC, North-East Provincial Land Commission and the Land was surveyed by the Survey Department in 1998. Finally the said land was handed over to the School through the Education Department Kinniya Zonal Director by Kinniya Divisional Secretary on 22nd September 2003. The School Development Society is constructing the boundary wall for the land with the funds allocated by the area Muslim Parliamentarians and Eastern Development Ministry.

When the Vinayakar Kovil Hindus - Tamils came to know the vesting of the land to the school, nearly 18 Tamils unlawfully entered the land, blocked it into small plots and erected temporary fences. Immediately the Principal informed the Zonal Director and the Zonal Director sent a registered letter to the Chaina-bay Police complaining of the unlawful

occupation of the School land by the Tamils and wanted the police to take immediately action. In the mean time the principal checked at the Police Station and conformed that the Police station had received the letter sent by the Zonal Director. However no action was taken by the Police to remove the unlawful occupants.

The School Development Society also complained to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission Trincomalee. The SLMM visited the place on 07th October 2002 but not taken any action to settle the dispute. When there was no action by the Police and the SLMM, Muslim School children protested in front of the Kinniya Divisional Secretariat and took the DS and the Police to the site at Faisal Nagar Al-Irfan School and removed the unlawful fence erected by the Tamils at about 10.00 am on Wednesday 8th October 2003 The Tamils who unlawfully put up the fence pelted stones in anger at the Muslim boys, four Muslims were hurt. In retaliation the Muslim attacked the Tamils and nearly 15 were injured. None of the MPs were available in Kinniya.

The violence erupted when the Muslim students removed the fence put up by Tamils in the 3 acre plot belonging to Al – Irfan School in the presence of Police and Kinniya Divisional Secretary. Tamils abducted a Muslim teacher Mr. Anver of Al-Irfan Vidyalaya. In retaliation Muslims abducted four Tamils. Police arrested a Muslim Student at 2.00 pm. In protest the Muslim students stopped the ferry service between Kinniya and Trincomalee. The Tamils released the Muslim teacher in the evening at 5.00 pm and the four Tamil were also released by the Muslims. The Ulama Sabai safely handed over the four Tamils to the respective families. Police also released the Muslim student and the ferry service resumed at 6.00 pm. The situation returned to normal in the evening.

THURSDAY 09TH OCTOBER 2003

At the boarder of Alankeni – Idiman, Tamils attacked the Muslims in the morning. LTTE Anpalakan invited the Ulamasabai for immediate discussion. When the representatives of the Ulamasabai went LTTE Anpalakan did not turn-up. However, Mr. Parimelalakan from LTTE Political division came. They met and dispersed. Soon after the meeting with LTTE Parimelalakan, the Tamils attacked the Muslims in Alankeni No.10, Situation became tense and Muslims in the boarder villages started moving out to the interior of Kinniya and Kuttikarachi.

SLMC Leader and Minister Hon. Rauff Hackeem visited Kinniya by Helicopter at 3.30 pm and met the local Civil Society Leaders and defused the situation. SLMM Trincomalee and SSP Mr. Daya Samaraweera have also visited the area. Local curfew was enforced from 6.00 pm to 6.00 am the following day. No incidents during the curfew in Kinniya and the suburbs.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Immediate inquiry should be held by the IGP or DIG Trincomalee as to why the Chaina-bay Police failed to take prompt action on the letter sent by Kinniya Zonal Director of Education.
2. SLMM Head Office should hold an inquiry as to why the SLMM Trincomalee did not take prompt action on the complaint made by the Al-Irfan School Development Society.
3. Strengthen Security in the area
4. SLMM Trincomalee should coordinate reconciliation between the Tamils and Muslims with the assistance of Government Security Force, LTTE and Local Civil Society - Muslims and Tamils.

M.I.M. Mohideen
Chairman/ Managing Director

09th October 2003

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