

Muslims hacked to death on eve of Ramazan in Pottuvil, Eastern Province on Saturday 16th September 2006

Ten Muslim civilians hacked to death on Saturday – 16th September 2006 near the Radella tank in Pottuvil created tension and fear among the Ampara Muslim population.

The government blamed the LTTE for this brutal killing but the civilians suspect the Government Special Task Force (STF).

According to the Ampara police the victims were workers employed by a Muslim contractor of the area and were reported missing hours after they went to carry out repairs to the Radella anicut on Saturday - 16th September 2006

Their hacked bodies were later found by a search team near the anicut in close proximity to the Panama STF camp. The hacked bodies of three of the victims were found near the anicut on Sunday - 17th September 2006 and the rest were found the following morning.

The victims, most were said to be around 18 years, identified as M. Anurdeen, M. Nafar, M. Samsudeen, A.M. Faizal, L. Anees, M. Jauffer, S.L. Rizard from Pottuvil, A.M. Ajmeer, M. Fairooz and M.I. Shiyam from Akkaraipattu.



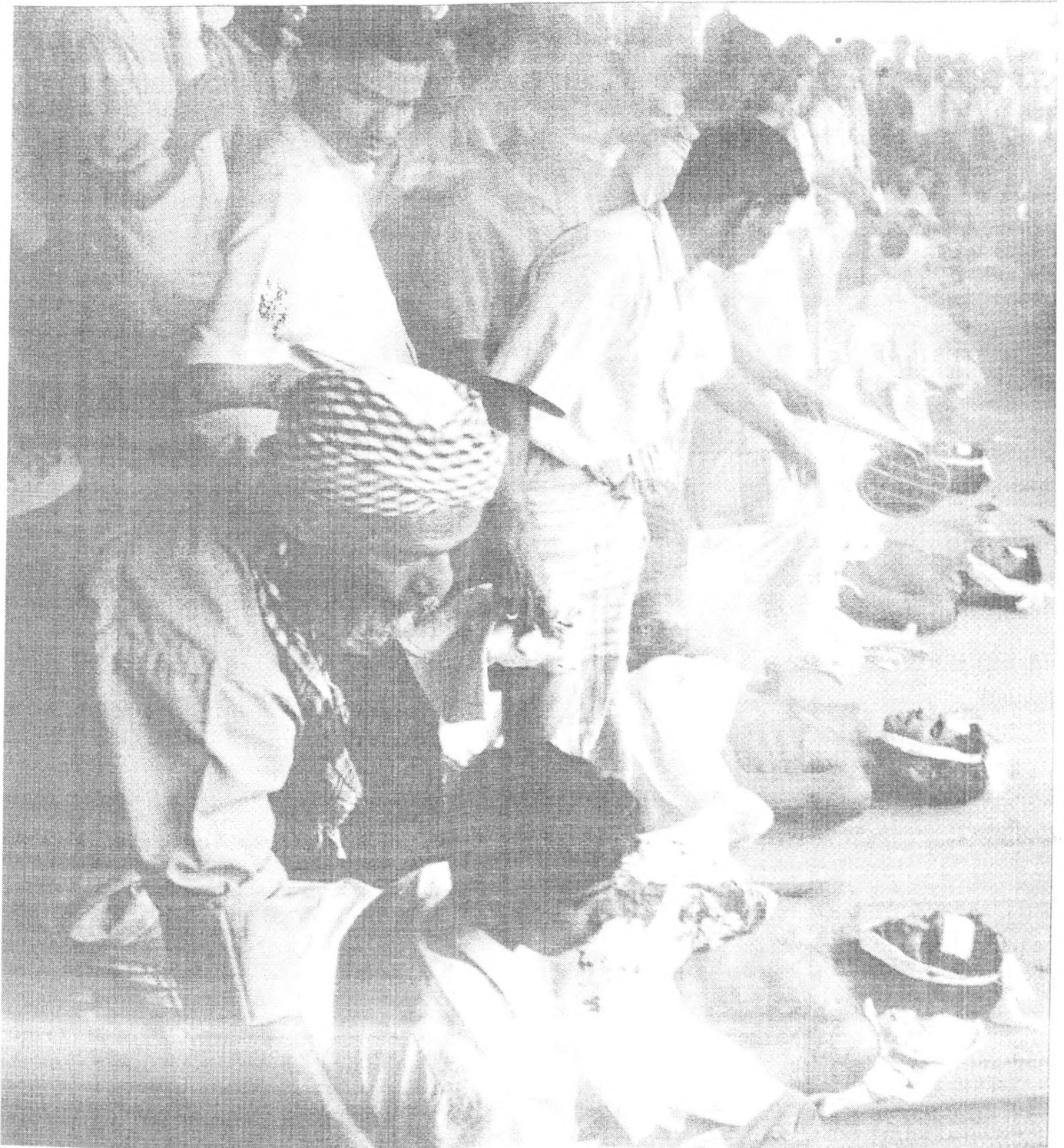
Initially the police said eleven Muslims were killed, but a later count confirmed that 10 people died and one man had escaped with injuries.

The lone survivor Meera Mohideen (60), who was in a serious condition after suffering cut injuries was admitted to the Pottuvil hospital for treatment and was later transferred to Ampara.

According to Pottuvil division Acting ASP W.K. Sirisena, the survivor in a statement to police, had said that the LTTE committed the brutal crime.

The killing sent shockwaves through the Pottuvil area resulting in virtually empty streets and closed shops. Police were patrolling the area to make sure law and order was maintained. But the calm was short-lived as Muslims angered by the incident pelted stones towards STF personnel and the vehicle of IGP Chandra Fernando who rushed to the site.

The bodies of the victims were later buried under tight security with family members, relatives and villagers in attendance.



The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) said its monitors had decided not to visit the site of the massacre to carry out investigations as high tension prevailed in Pottuvil throughout the day.

A group of Muslim parliamentarians both from the government and opposition visited the site of the massacre last afternoon together with media personnel from Colombo.

According to reports from the area the victims were found blindfolded, hands tied and hacked to death in a vicious and brutal manner in close proximity to the Panama STF camp, which was said to be an area with no jungle thicket as was earlier claimed. This area is fully under the control of the security forces so there does not seem the likelihood of the LTTE entering this area.



Meanwhile the journalists who visited Pottuvil on Monday the 18th September 2006 said the area was gripped by tension with civilians assigning the brutal attack was clearly the work of the security forces and not the LTTE.

Muslim leaders condemn massacre



Western Province Governor Alavi Moulana who visited the massacre site in Pottuvil yesterday with a group of Ministers, senior police and security officers said a team of CID officers would be sent to the area today to carry out a full probe.

He assured an impartial probe and added that the government had decided to pay 30,000 to the families of the victims.

The Governor said there had been a slight misunderstanding among the Muslims and the STF in the area but the situation improved later.



Railways Minister A.H.M. Fowzie said suspicion falls on the LTTE who have been known to have the ability for this style of killing. The LTTE, therefore should own up or else owe an explanation to the world, particularly, the Muslim Community as to why they should commit such heinous crimes against a weaker section of the community who knows nothing about the LTTE antagonism against the poor and helpless victims," he said.

The victims had been tortured before being killed. They had been slaughtered in the same execution style as the twelve irrigation workers who were returning after cleaning an irrigation canal in Welikande in the Polonnaruwa District, last May.

"The people who have been killed in the attack are innocent Muslim civilians of the East. They were not militants fighting against any party, but common people who wanted to live peacefully. We deplore these cold blooded murders whoever committed them," he said.

The Minister appealed to the International Community to pressurize the LTTE to refrain from such brutal acts and return to the negotiating table.



SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem is to meet the UN representative in Colombo on 19th September 2006 to request for foreign assistance to investigate the brutal killing of 10 Muslims in Pottuvil.

On his return from the site of the massacre yesterday, Mr. Hakeem said the request for a UN sponsored investigation followed claims by civilians of the area that the massacre could not have been carried out by the LTTE.

He said that he cannot come to the conclusion that the LTTE did this. People of the area whom I spoke to said there was no way the LTTE could have carried out this act and instead they had their own conclusions and are demanding the UN envoy in Colombo for assistance. Mr. Hakeem said that until a transparent investigation was completed he would desist from pointing fingers at anyone.

General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and MP, Hassan Ali also unequivocally condemned the killings and called upon the Government to strengthen the security provided for Muslims in the East.

"The SLMC is very much disturbed by the incident and concerned about the security of the people in the area. This is similar to the unfortunate situation which civilians in Muttur had to face a few months back. The only difference is that this happened in the other end of the Eastern province," he said.



SLMC leader Rauf Hakeem discussed the issue with President Mahinda Rajapaksa requesting him to give additional protection to Muslims in the threatened areas in the East.

The Police launched an immediate investigation into the massacre on the directive of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who telephoned the relevant defence officials immediately after hearing the news.



"The survivor Meera Mohideen will tell the truth to the world," IGP Chandra Fernando said. A special CID investigations team is being sent to Pottuvil, he added.

Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Leader Rauff Hakeem called for an impartial probe inclusive of a forensic investigation on the lines of the Muttur incident.

He said the innocent villagers had been killed ruthlessly and the culprits should be brought to book. Justice should be served to the villagers. Western Province Governor Alavi Mowlana and Minister Hussain Bhaila condemned this inhuman act of terror. "Whoever did it, the murderers should be brought to justice," they said.

Minister Mervin Silva and Felix Perera also had visited the scene yesterday.

The initial investigation was conducted by the Pottuvil OIC M. Karunaratne.

The incident caused outrage among the local population with a hartal declared in the Muslim dominated areas of Pottuvil and Kalmunai where all shops and businesses were closed and transport paralysed.

Curfew in Pottuvil as Muslims clash with STF



A tense atmosphere prevailed in Ampara as Muslims angered by the slaying of 10 of their people just two days earlier clashed with Special Task Force (STF) personnel in an area between Periya Ullai and Shashtravali resulting in serious injuries to at least 8 people.

Police said the STF officers, opened fire in self defence, on the angry mob seriously injuring three civilians while at least 14 others who received minor injuries in the ensuing commotion were admitted to the Kalmunai hospital and discharged after receiving treatment.

The injured STF officers were admitted to the Panama hospital for treatment while the 2 officers who suffered serious injuries were airlifted to Colombo for further treatment, Ampara police told.

A police curfew was imposed in the Pottuvil division to prevent further clashes as angry Muslim protesters begin to gather on the streets after the hartal to protest the killing of the 10 Muslim labourers entered its second day.

Protestors had set a few tourist cabanas ablaze earlier in the day before they launched the attack on the STF convoy further escalating the already deteriorating relationship between the Muslim community and the STF in the area.

Muslims of the area blame the STF for the killing but the Government said the slaying had the hallmarks of the LTTE while it was reported that the lone survivor had also made a statement to the Ampara police claiming that armed LTTE cadres were the real perpetrators.

Family Members and SLMM refused access to sole survivor of Pottuvil massacre



Is it the LTTE, the STF or some other unidentified group that allegedly massacred the ten Muslims in Pottuvil are glaring questions that still remain unanswered while the government and the LTTE accuse each other of the crime.

Though police reports said the sole survivor Meera Mohideen (60) had made a statement to police detectives implicating the LTTE in the massacre, but what his 23-year-old-daughter, Rujja said was quite the contrary.

“My husband and other family members visited him in hospital and found his condition to be critical. He is unable to speak at all. A tube was inserted into my father’s throat,” Rujja said. Recalling what happened she said on the 17th September 2006 Mr. Mohideen accompanied by 10 others had gone to repair an anicut and he was expected back home at 3 pm.

She said several times when her husband went to the Ampara hospital the security forces refused to let him in but subsequently in the last few days her husband was allowed to see her father.

Ampara hospital medical superintendent Dr. Lankathilake Jayasinghe said the injuries to Mr. Mohideen were mainly around the neck and throat area and as such the patient was advised not to talk.

SLMM head Maj. Gen. Johan Solvberg was yesterday evening expected to visit the lone survivor at the Ampara hospital to record his statement, informed sources said. Meanwhile President Rajapaksa has appointed a special CID team to probe the killing of ten Muslims in Pottuvil. Police Chief Chandra Fernando yesterday transferred the OIC of the Pottuvil Shasthraweli STF camp. OIC Gunaratne who was transferred after the residents agitated for his removal would be temporarily attached to the STF headquarters in Colombo.

Controversy arose over the statement that police claim was made by the sole survivor of the Pottuvil massacre after the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) was prevented access to the victim yesterday.

Police at the Ampara hospital where the victim was warded refused entry to SLMM monitors claiming the victim was not in a condition to speak for at least two more weeks.

“Our monitors tried to see the victim yesterday but police at the hospital said the monitors won’t be allowed to see him as the victim had injuries on his throat and is not in a position to speak for at least two weeks,” an SLMM official told.

The SLMM however said it would continue to seek permission to at least have a look at the victim to identify his health condition which was initially reported as being serious upon his admission to hospital.

Interestingly it was reported yesterday the victim, Kareem Meera Mohideen (60), had given a statement to the police claiming the LTTE was responsible for the brutal slaying of the ten Muslim labourers in Pottuvil on Monday the 18th September 2006

According to the police the victim had said a group of rebel cadres armed with knives and axes had stormed the location where the labourers were repairing an anicut on Sunday evening abducted and blindfolded them before killing them.

Mr. Mohideen escaped with severe cut injuries and was initially admitted to the Pottuvil hospital before being transferred to Ampara General Hospital where a police team had obtained a statement from him.

The lone survivor of the incident, the only witness, was considered crucial with Muslims in the area charging that the massacre was carried out by other elements and not the LTTE as claimed by the government and the refusal for the SLMM to visit him has added to the growing controversy.

Meanwhile Muslims who staged a hartal in Ampara over the last two days had decided to call it off following an assurance that the STF chief of the area would be removed.

SLMC Leader Rauff Hakeem briefs President Mahinda Rajapakse and President's advisor Mr. Basil Rajapakse regarding massacre of Pottuvil Muslims in Panama

The Leader of the SLMC and MP Rauff Hakeem in a letter addressed to the President Mahinda Rajapakse had requested an International Commission of Inquiry to be appointed to inquire into the Pottuvil massacre.

The barbaric hacked to death ten innocent Muslims in Rattal Kulam, Pottuvil which took place during the absence of His Excellency the President in the country, had earned public outrage and international condemn-nation.

Following this massacre, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour declared that there was an urgent need for international community to closely monitor the human rights situation in Sri Lanka.

SLMC Leader Rauff Hakeem visited Pottuvil with IGP, the Commandant of the STF and a few parliamentarians on Sep, 18th 2006, in order to assess the situation. The following day Hon. Minister A.H.M. Fowzie together with a few other members of the Cabinet and parliamentarians too visited the area.

On his return from Pottuvil, Mr. Rauff Hakeem briefed Senior Presidential advisor Mr. Basil Rajapakse about the public perception of the whole episode. He explained that the people in the area strongly suspect that either individuals from or associated with the Special Task Force (STF) are responsible for this mass murder.

He said that the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), however believed that it was too premature to come to such a conclusion and understand the need for an independent investigation into the killings, which would help clear the names of parties which have been falsely accused, if there were any.

Mr. Basil Rajapakse was sympathetic towards the people. At the end of the discussion Mr. Rajapakse offered to address the concerns of the people and help ward off some unfounded fears among them.

SLMC in the meantime appalled the haste in which the Defence Spokesman of the Government Hon. Keheliya Rambukwella dismissed the proposal to set up an independent International Commission of Inquiry probably misunderstanding our motive behind the initiative. Our proposal was not made on the basis that there were no competent persons in Sri Lanka to inquire the killings but largely on the acceptability of the ruling, both locally and internationally. An investigation by independent Commission of Inquiry would certainly add value and creditability to the proceedings making it transparent and legitimate.

Muslims acknowledge with great appreciation, the mammoth contributions made by the STF in providing security to a number of Muslim villages in the Eastern Province. Even the people in Pottuvil, are not apportioning the blame on the STF as an institution, but only on few individuals.

With the precedent set by inviting Australian forensic experts to investigate into the massacre of 17 aid workers of Action Centre La Falm, it would be grossly discriminatory if the government moves to ignore the local and international request for an international commission of inquiry into the carnage in Pottuvil.

An independent international commission will help the government to regain the lost confidence among the country's Muslim community and also the international community, which is awaiting a positive response from the government.

Hakeem meets Norway's Ambassador and SLMM chief



At two separate meetings with Norway's ambassador Hans Brattskar and SLMM chief Maj. Gen. Lars Johan Solberg, yesterday, SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem reiterated his party's demand for an international forensic team to probe the Pottuvil massacre.

"I told Mr. Brattskar and Maj. Gen. Solberg that the SLMC would not budge an inch from the demand to get down an international forensic team to investigate into the massacre. The Government has already set a precedent by inviting an Australian team for the Mutur mass murder" the SLMC leader told.



Mr. Hakeem had insisted that the SLMC did not rule out any party's involvement in the crime, while at the same time, at no point, had said that it was the work of the Special Task Force (STF).

"I explained to both Mr. Bratskar and Maj. Gen. Solvgberg that it was the villagers who maintained that this flagrant, barbaric act was committed by the STF and that their assumption was based on a series of events that took place in the run up to the crime" Mr. Hakeem told.



Mr. Hakeem had told ambassador Brattskar and the SLMM head, his party would not jump to any conclusions, till solid evidence was produced.

However, he had pointed out that the manner in which Government forces rushed to remove the bodies from the scene and the de-routing of the sole survivor to Ampara hospital, when the villagers were taking him to Kalmunai hospital, creates suspicion of complicity by certain parties.

Curfew in Pottuvil

Inspector General of Police Chandra Fernando flew to Pottuvil area and held discussions with community leaders in a bid to maintain law and order in the area, STF DIG Nimal Leuke told.

"The Police curfew imposed in the area will continue till Thursday morning," the DIG added.

He said additional troops were also called to the area in view of further strengthening the security in the area.



According to Police, four civilians who were injured in yesterday's incident are now being treated at the Batticaloa and Kalmunai hospitals.

Government Defence Affairs Spokesman Minister Keheliya Rambukwella said the Government consulted all the parties involved and took immediate steps to bring the situation under control in Panama.

"The situation is now completely under control and no incidents were reported from the area", the Minister remarked.

Meanwhile, a press release issued from the Ministry of Public Security and Law and Order said the Inspector General of Police under the instructions of the Defence Secretary has appointed a special CID team to conduct investigations into the murder of civilians.

"The LTTE who is making use of this incident to their advantage is misleading the general public and the international community with fabricated versions of the murders to tarnish the image of the Government and the Security Forces," the press release said.

Four people sustained minor injuries in Pottuvil yesterday morning when the Army was sent in to assist the police to disperse the crowds in a demonstration against the killing of ten Muslim civilians at Radella in Pottuvil on Monday, Director General Media Centre for National Security, Lakshman Hulugalle said in a statement yesterday.

A Foreign News Service yesterday quoting the SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem and SLMC parliamentarian Mohamed Mustafa said the protesters were demanding the transfer of the local STF

chief and shut down shops in the area. They blamed the killings on the Government Special Task Force - STF.

“On September 20 around 1000 Hrs, an unruly mob of Muslim youth obstructed the main road at Periya Ulle in Pottuvil when the STF administrative patrol was moving from Arugam Bay towards Panama, and launched attacks on the five-member patrol causing serious head injuries to PS Senaratne and minor injuries to four STF troops. STF troops were compelled to fire warning shots in the air to evacuate the seriously injured PS Senaratne and the four STF troops to the nearby Panama Base Hospital to save their lives. Thereafter, PS Senaratne was airlifted from Panama via Ampara to Colombo for urgent life-saving medical treatment at the National Hospital in Colombo.

“In this situation, three Muslim civilians of the unruly mob sustained gunshot injuries while 9 other Muslim civilians sustained minor abrasion injuries when the advancing STF reinforcement patrols acted to restore law and order after this unruly Muslim mob started setting fire to identified non-Muslim establishments in the locality, and looting in the process. The situation has been brought under total control with the police assisted by Army troops from Ampara.”



SLMC leader's STF security withdrawn

Barely a month after government intelligence reports indicated a major security threat to Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader Rauff Hakeem, the Police Chief yesterday gave orders to withdraw the contingent of six STF personnel providing security to Mr. Hakeem, party sources said.

Inspector General Chandra Fernando's order comes in the wake of a request by the SLMC leader for an independent international commission of inquiry on the Pottuvil massacre for which the residents blame the STF.

Police sources confirm the IGP had ordered that Mr. Hakeem's STF security be withdrawn from Friday – 22nd September 2006.

Before the decision to withdraw his security, the SLMC leader in a letter to President Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday reiterated his demand for an international commission of inquiry.

Mr. Hakeem said that appointment of an independent international commission of inquiry to probe the Pottuvil massacre would help elevate the Government's stature internationally and restore good relations with Muslims.

"Our proposal was not made on the basis that there were no competence or expertise locally to investigate into the killings, but largely on the acceptability of the ruling, both locally and internationally, given the accusations made by people in the area," Mr. Hakeem said.

Mr. Hakeem said that while people in the area suspected that individuals from or associated with the Special Task Force were responsible for the crime, his party's position was that it was too premature to arrive at such a conclusion.

Acknowledging the contributions made by the STF in providing security to a large number of Muslim villages in the Eastern Province, Mr. Hakeem said even the people in Pottuvil were not apportioning the blame on the STF as an institution, but only on some individuals.

"It would be grossly discriminatory if the Government ignores the local and international call for an international commission of inquiry now that it had agreed to one for the Mutur massacre", Mr. Hakeem said.

Hakeem refutes denial

The Media Centre for National Security issued a statement denying reports there was a curtailment of security for Mr. Hakeem.

However Mr. Hakeem said that the six-member STF contingent of his security said goodbye to him in an emotional farewell and informed him they would not report to work from today.

"Since October 2000 I had been provided with a STF contingent as there had been regular reports of threats to my life. It appears that the Government is resorting to intimidatory tactics to get me to drop my demand for an international commission on the Pottuvil massacre" Mr. Hakeem said.

While the elite STF commando guards were withdrawn, Mr. Hakeem will continue to have is Ministerial Security Division guards.

Hakeem's security intact : Ministry

The Defence Ministry yesterday denied speculation that it had cut down the security of Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader and Parliamentarian Rauf Hakeem following certain remarks he made after visiting Pottuvil in the aftermath of the massacre of 10 Muslim civilians.

A high ranking official of the Defence Ministry said the MP's full security contingent was intact and that the Ministry of Defence was not in the habit of pruning the security of MPs irrespective of whatever remarks they make. "Hakeem still has his full security complement he is entitled to both as an MP and a party leader," the official said.

The MP still has the four MSD officials plus another batch as his security detail. The Defence Ministry under no circumstances will cut down the security of MPs or others to whom the Government has assigned security, the official added.



Moulana, Hakeem clash over Pottuvil issue

Western Province Governor Alavi Moulana yesterday accused SLMC Leader Rauff Hakeem of attempting to gain political mileage out of the Pottuvil issue, while Mr. Hakeem responded saying Mr. Moulana was presenting distorted versions of the whole issue in Colombo.

Mr. Moulana said the SLMC leader was only shouting slogans having failed to take up the matter with the IGP while in Pottuvil.

“He is going to town with his slogans after keeping mum in Pottuvil where he could have easily taken up the matter with the IGP” he said. Responding to Mr. Moulana’s charge Mr. Hakeem said it was unfortunate that Mr. Moulana has made such a comment after being with him in Pottuvil and seeing what had exactly happened there.

“If I wanted to get political mileage what I would have done was to talk back to the IGP and the STF chief then and there when thousands of angry people confronted them in my presence. Rather than making them go through that embarrassment, I let them listen to what the people had to say and kept quiet” Mr. Hakeem recalled.

“I only expressed my disappointment and disillusionment to the IGP on the way back, when we were flying together from Pottuvil to Colombo. I thought that was the most prudent thing to do. Mr. Moulana should speak to the IGP and set the record straight” he added.

Mr. Hakeem said the Western Province Governor who told Pottuvil people that he would convey their sentiments to the highest authorities had done an about turn on his return to Colombo and had since then been presenting a distorted version of what the people said.



The SLMC leader also said having listened to the people in the area, Deputy Minister Rohitha Abeygunawardena who also went with them to Pottuvil, promised to get the STF OIC transferred having realized the individual contribution made by the officer to the strained relations between the STF and the people in the area.

Hakeem was unfair – STF chief

Special Task Force chief DIG Nima Lewke yesterday said while his men were providing security to the people in LTTE threatened areas, SLMC leader Rauf Hakeem was leveling unfair allegations against the STF.

He told that his men had nabbed a large number of timber racketeers several in the Ampara District. The LTTE and several other parties, were behind the illicit timber racket and they had plotted to get the STF out of the Ampara District so that they could continue their rackets unhampered, he said.

Everyone in East must value STF's services – Anver Ismail

The Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims in the East should value the services of the Special Task Force (STF) and continue to get their services to these areas, said Irrigation Minister M. Anver Ismail.

In 2003, during the period of the United National Front Government, the LTTE burnt bodies of those killed at Valachchenai when the bodies were being taken for burial, in front of the members of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Committee and the Armed forces. Did Hakeem request for an International inquiry into this incident?

Further in that year, when residents of Mutur were killed at Kattaparichchan, Hakeem demanded then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to visit Mutur and that he will not come to Colombo until Wickremesinghe arrived in Mutur.

But Wickremesinghe did not visit Mutur. Hakeem sought the help of the Navy officials at Trincomalee Base and returned to Colombo with their assistance. Has Hakeem forgotten all this?

Hakeem is trying to gain popularity through the killings in Pottuvil and issuing statements to this effect is a cowardly action. It is a sad fact that Hakeem has forgotten the services and the security provided to him for so many years by the STF.

Muslim Council calls for International Inquiry

The Muslim Council of Sri Lanka, which is a network of more than 70 National Muslim organizations has expressed its shock and vehemently condemned the brutal massacre of the 11 Muslim youths in Pottuvil and has requested the President to appoint an independent International Commission of Inquiry to be nominated by the Commonwealth of Nations to probe, identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of the massacre and clear the minds of the Muslims.

“There is much doubts in the minds of the Muslims of the area as to who would have perpetrated this dastardly massacre of innocent Muslim who are in their prime of youth.

Questions have also been raised as to why the lone survivor Meera Mohideen (60) who was been transported to the Kalmunai Ashraf Memorial Hospital, in a critical condition was redirected to the Ampara Hospital by Sri Lankan armed forces personnel manning the check post at Karaithivu before being admitted to the Kalmunai hospital.”

The MCSL has said “We firmly believes that government should have provided adequate security and safety to the Muslims of the area since it is the primary duty of the government to safeguard the lives, property and rights of its citizens.”

We request, President Mahinda Rajapakse to appoint an independent International Commission of Inquiry to be nominated by the Commonwealth of Nations to probe, identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of the massacre and clear the minds of the people of the area and the Muslims of Sri Lanka as to who the actual perpetrators were” the MCSL had said.



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පසුගිය 18 දා පොතුවිල් ප්‍රදේශය රඳාල පැවැත්වූ ප්‍රතිසංස්කරණයේ නිරතව සිටි මුස්ලිම් ජාතීන්ගෙන් 11 දෙනෙකු සාකච්ඡා කිරීම එල්ටීටීඊ සංවිධානය විසින් සිදුකරන ලද්දක් බවට ගෙන යන ප්‍රචාරයක් තරයේම ප්‍රතික්ෂේප කර පොතුවිල් වැසියෝ එ ඩිලිබරේට් ස්ථාපිත පාර්ශ්වයන්ගෙන් සමන්විත විධිමත් පරීක්ෂණයක් සිදු කරන ලෙස රජයෙන් ඉල්ලා සිටිති.

තම අනන්‍යතාව හෙළි නොකරන ලෙස ඉල්ලා සිටිමින් ජාතියට කරුණු පොතුවිල් ප්‍රදේශයේ පුද්ගල පුරවැසියන් කණ්ඩායමක් රජයට අවධාරණය කළේ

මෙම සිදුවීමට පෙර විශේෂ කාර්ය බලකායේ පිරිසක් හා ප්‍රදේශයේ මුස්ලිම් ජනතාව අතර ඇතිවූ මතභේදයක් මෙම ප්‍රහාරයට හේතු වී ඇති බවය. එමෙන්ම අදාළ වැව ප්‍රතිසංස්කරණ කටයුතුවලදී මියගිය මුස්ලිම් ජාතීන්ගේ සමාජ සේවය කළ සිංහල ජාතික කම්කරුවන් 9 දෙනෙකුම අදාළ ප්‍රහාරය සිදුවන දිනයේ පමණක් සේවයට වාර්තා නොකිරීම පිළිබඳව මහජන පළ කරන පොතුවිල් ප්‍රදේශයේ පුරවැසි කණ්ඩායම පවුන් එම දිනයේ සේවයට වාර්තා කිරීමෙන් පැළකි සිට ඇත්තේ රජයේ ආරක්ෂක අංශ විසින් කරනු ලැබූ බලපෑමක් නිසා බව සැක කරති.

මෙම සාකච්ඡාවට දින දෙකට පෙර

පොතුවිල් නගරයේ මුස්ලිම් සුසාන භූමියක මිහිදන් කිරීම සඳහා මුස්ලිම් හක්කියෙකු නොවන සිංහල හා ද්විධ සම්භවයක් සහිත පුද්ගලයෙකුගේ මළ සිරුරක් රැගෙන ආ මොහොතේ ප්‍රදේශයේ මුස්ලිම් ජනතාව එයට බලවත් ලෙස විරෝධතාවය ප්‍රකාශ කර ඇති අතර, පසුව විශේෂ කාර්ය බලකායේ පිරිසක්ද සිද්ධිමත්ව මැදිහත් වී බලාත්කාරයෙන් එම සිරුර මුස්ලිම් සුසාන භූමියේම මිහිදන් කිරීමට තැත් කර ඇතත්, එය ප්‍රදේශයේ මුස්ලිම් ජනතාව විරෝධ කර තිබේ.

එයට පසුදින මුස්ලිම් ජාතික කර්තව්‍යයටත් පිරිසක් සිය කර්තව්‍ය පවිත්‍ර කළේය. — 2 වැනි පිටුවට

පොතුවිල් සාකච්ඡා...

1 පිටුවෙන්

කිරීම සඳහා රඳාල වැවට ගොස් සිටි අවස්ථාවේදී විශේෂ කාර්ය බලකායේ හට පිරිසක් ඔවුන් නිරුවත් කර පහරදී ඇතැයි කියැවෙන අතර පසුව වනයෙන් දූව කැපීමේ චෝදනා ඉදිරිපත් කරමින් ඔවුන් පොලිසිය වෙත භාරදී තිබේ.

මේ අතර අදාළ මිලේච්ඡ ප්‍රහාරයෙන් පසුව දිවි ගලවා ගත් එකම පුද්ගලයා බරපතල තුවාල ලබා සිටියදී ප්‍රදේශවාසීන් විසින් ඔහු කල්ලිගෙන් අණර් අනුස්මරණ රෝහල කරා රැගෙන යමින් සිටියදී උල්ලෙයි මාසන්ඩියේදී විශේෂ කාර්ය බලකායේ හට පිරිසක් එයට බාධා කරමින් රෝගියා ආසන්නයේම පිහිටි කල්ලිගේ රෝහලට ගෙන නොගොස් වඩා දුර පිහිටි අම්පාර රෝහලට රැගෙන යන ලෙසට ද අණකර ඇතැයි ප්‍රදේශවාසීහු පවසති. එමෙන්ම අදාළ රෝගියා ප්‍රකාශයක් සිදුකිරීමට තරම් සෞඛ්‍ය තත්ත්වයකින් නොසිටින අවස්ථාවක අදාළ ප්‍රහාරය සිදුකරන ලද්දේ

එල්ටීටීඊය විසින් බවට ප්‍රකාශයක් ලබාදීම කිසිසේත්ම පිළිගත නොහැකි කරුණකැයි ඔවුහු වැඩිදුරටත් ප්‍රකාශ කරති.

මේ පිළිබඳව අප අම්පාර රෝහලේ වෛද්‍ය අධ්‍යක්ෂ ජයසිංහ මහතාගෙන් කළ විමසීමකදී ප්‍රකාශ කළේ පසුගිය 19 දා අම්පාර පොලිස් අධිකාරී ජයන්ත වික්‍රමසිංහ මහතා අදාළ රෝගියා හමුවට පැමිණ ප්‍රකාශයක් ලබාගැනීමට කටයුතු කළ බවය. රෝගියාගේ තත්ත්වය පිළිබඳව අප කළ විමසුමකට පිළිතුරු දුන් වෛද්‍ය අධ්‍යක්ෂවරයා ඔහුට තට්මක් පොදිත් කපා කළු පැති ඔට්ටනික සුරයක් ලබා නොමැති අතර, යුගලේ උදරය පරපා බටයක් දමා ඇති නිසා හා ඔහු සිටින බරපතල තත්ත්වය හේතුවෙන් මේ පහ වීම කිසිවෙකුට ඔහු සමඟ කතා කිරීමට ඉඩ නොදීමට නමා උපදෙස් ලබාදී ඇති බවය.

මේ පිළිබඳව ජාතිය පොලිස් විශේෂ කාර්ය බලකායේ අධ්‍යක්ෂ ජයසිංහ මහතා පොලිස්පති, නිමල් ලෙව්කේ මහතාගෙන් කළ විමසීමකදී ඔහු කියා

Pottuvil Massacre – No evidence to show LTTE has done it - “Ravaya”

Pottuvil people have rejected the attempt to hold the LTTE responsible for the massacre of 11 Muslim Youth who went to Radalla to repair the irrigation tank on the 18th of September and are demanding from the government to appoint an independent body to hold an inquiry.

A group of leading civilians in Pottuvil on conditions of anonymity disclosed that due to some disputes between some STF personnel and the civilians this massacre took place. They also expressed surprise why the 9 Sinhala workers who normally work with them did not report for work and suspect the STF may have pressurized them to keep away.

Two days before this incident an attempt had been made to bury a dead body of a Sinhala-Tamil mixed person in the Muslim burial ground and had been opposed by the Muslims of the area. Thereafter an attempt had been made by the STF to bury there but the Muslims had prevented that attempt.

Next day when some Muslim carts had been taken to Radalla Wewa for washing a group of STF personnel had arrived and after removing all their clothes had assaulted them and framed bogus charges of cutting trees in the jungle and handed over to the police.

Thereafter when the only survivor in a critical condition from this barbarous attack was being rushed to the close by Ashraf Memorial Hospital at Kalmunai the STF at Ullai junction had prevented that and forced them to take the patient to the far away Amparai hospital. Furthermore they reject outright the police claim that the patient gave a statement that the LTTE was responsible for the attack as he was in critical condition and not in a position to make a statement.

In this regard when we inquired from the Director of Amparai hospital Dr. Jayasinghe he said that on 19th the OIC of Amparai police Mr. Jayantha Wickremasinghe visited the patient and arranged to get a statement. When we inquired about the patients state of health the Doctor said he had instructed not to allow anyone to talk to the patient as his condition is serious and not in a fit condition to talk and a tube has been inserted down his throat.

Muslims demand International Inquiry on Pottuvil Massacre



A demand for an international commission of inquiry be appointed to probe the Pottuvil killings has been made by the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and many Muslim Civil Society Organisation. But Cabinet Defense Spokesman Minister Keheliya Rambukwella has said that a foreign inquiry into the incident is not necessary and that there are enough capable people in Sri Lanka who could conduct such inquiries.

Why the Muslims demanding a foreign commission to inquire into the incidents? This is a matter that has to be gone into very carefully. Some doubts have been cast about the role of a particular division of the sector connected with the country's security.

In the wake of certain misgivings that have arisen, even in respect of the treatment given to the lone survivor there is suspicion that there would be interference in the inquiries that would be conducted by local authorities. The SLMM is reported to have been denied the opportunity to meet the survivor. It is in this context that the call for an international commission of inquiry has been made.

The government has given its approval for an Australian Commission of Inquiry relating to the killing of 17 employees of a Non Government Organisation in Mutur. Condition should be created

to inspire the confidence of people on inquiries conducted. It is urged that the commission of inquiries should be so constituted as not to shield individuals but to lay bare the facts as they are.

Muslim Organisations appeal to His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapakse to immediately implement his promise of Security for the Muslims in the Eastern Province

17 Muslim Organisations appeal to His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapakse to implement immediately the most important election pledge given to the Muslims in the Mahinda Chintanaya regarding Security for Muslims in the Eastern Province. **From Mahinda Chintanaya Quote “I consider the need to dispel the fears of the people of the Eastern Province is of utmost importance. I am firmly of the view that no ethnic group should be reduced to being hostages of another group. I will therefore ensure that the security of the people of the Eastern Province is not threatened. I will pay special attention to the Security of the Muslim community”.**

The most effective way of achieving this objective will be by implementing immediately the following security measures.

1. Recruiting sufficient numbers of Muslim youth to the Sri Lanka Police force and deploying atleast 75% Muslim police personnel in each police station in predominantly Muslim areas in the Eastern Province with a Muslim DIG in charge and Muslim SSP's, SP's, ASP's and OIC's, so that the entire chain of command have full powers to take all decisions with respect to security threats in Muslim areas and maintain law and order.
2. Muslims should be enlisted to the regular Sri Lanka Army to serve in any battalion and in any part of the country. For this to be a success provision should be made for their religious obligations namely-
 - a) Daily prayers
 - b) Provision of Halal food
 - c) Arrangements for Fasting during the month of Ramazan
3. Sufficient numbers of Home Guards should be recruited similar to the Sinhala areas.
4. Warning Sirens should be installed at strategic locations in vulnerable Muslim areas.
5. Vigilance Committees should be established in all Muslim areas to detect and prevent strangers infiltrating.
6. Army camps should be located in strategically important Muslim areas as in the case of Sinhala areas.

All previous governments have allowed the Muslims to be sitting ducks for LTTE attacks for reasons only known to themselves and causing 40% of the Muslim population of Sri Lanka to live in constant fear, brutalized, plundered and discriminated denying their Human and Fundamental Rights.

We are hopeful and fully confident that Your Excellency will see this monumental injustice against the Muslims and order immediate remedial measures as outlined above in the same brilliant and very successful manner in which you took prompt action to resettle the Muthur population drawing the admiration and appreciation of the entire Muslim community in Sri Lanka and Muslim countries worldwide.

Council of Muslims of Sri Lanka	-	A.H.G.Ameen LLB,LLM JPUM
Moor's Islamic Cultural Home	-	A.A.M.Marleen P.C
Southern Muslim Civil Forum	-	M.D.M.Vazeer
All Ceylon Moors Association	-	Mohideen Rajabdeen
YMMA Conference	-	Jiffry Haniffa
Ceylon Missionary Society	-	A.C.M.Zuhair
International Assembly of YMMA	-	Ashroff Hussain
North East Muslim Peace Assembly	-	M.I.M.Mohideen
Muslim Rights Organisation	-	I.L.M.Ibrahim
Forum for the Northern Muslims	-	M.Jamaldeen
Peace International	-	Ahmed Izzeth
Sri Lanka Islamic Society	-	Ruzaik Farook
Education for Progress	-	Ashroff Ghany
Muslim Welfare Association	-	Faizel Faleel
Ceylon Muslim Education Society	-	M.Rifath Saleem
Maligawathe Janaza Society	-	N.M.M.Razeen
Council of YMMA'S	-	Jainudeen Ahamath

SLMC Demand Independent Inquiry

Is it the LTTE, the STF or some other unidentified group that allegedly massacred the ten Muslims in Pottuvil are glaring questions that still remain unanswered while the government and the LTTE accuse each other of the crime.

The residents agitated for the immediate removal of the Sastaweli STF camp chief S.N. Gunaratne, as the Muslims believed the STF was directly or indirectly involved in the massacre. On Wednesday the IGP transferred the area's STF chief to Colombo.

The protests took a turn for the worse when on Wednesday the STF was compelled to open fire on a group of protestors in Periya Ulla, who had blocked the path of a vehicle carrying some STF personnel returning home on leave. In the melee five STF personnel and 14 Muslims were injured.

Prior to the tension last week, a series of clashes had occurred between the Sinhala and Muslim communities in Pottuvil.

The day before the massacre, a dispute arose between the two communities when some Sinhalese wanted to bury the body of a Sinhala villager in the Muslim burial ground and the Pottuvil Pradeshiya Saba was called to settle this dispute.

“Separate plots of land were given to the Muslim and Sinhala communities for cemetery. The land belonging to the Sinahala Community – which is close to the Muslim cemetery – is occupied by squatters who are not from the same area. As a result the Sinhala Community had lost the land reserved for the cemetery. We explained this during the clashes and that necessary steps will be taken to evacuate the squatters from the land and give it back to the Sinhalese for use as a cemetery,” Pottuvil Pradeshiya Sabah chairman A.L. Mohamed Rauf said.

He said another crucial problem was that a number of outsiders were encroaching on others lands.

“Pottuvil ia an area which is highly populated by Muslims, but this area is also considered a tourist resort. So people are trying to grab land through various means and also by intimidating Muslims by acts of thuggery. I think these reasons may also have led to such clashes,” Br. Rauf said.

Meanwhile, the contingent of six STF personnel providing security to Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader Rauff Hakeem was withdrawn last Friday, as he called for an international commission of inquiry to carry out an impartial investigation into the massacre.

Defence spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella said there was enough expertise in Sri Lanka to carry out such investigations and there was no need for the government to invite foreign experts. "We have appointed a special CID team to investigate the Pottuvil massacre. Only Mr. Hakeem is calling for an international commission of inquiry and not the Muslim community", Minister Rambukwella said.

However, Mr. Hakeem said he called for an independent commission of inquiry as a means of restoring the confidence in the government.

The people are calling for an independent commission of inquiry because the government was in too much of a hurry to point its fingers at the LTTE even before any investigation. This had created doubts about the government's credibility," he said.

Mr. Hakeem said he requested the IGP to consider the transfer of the STF officers alleged to have problems with the community, but the IGP only acted after the alleged STF shooting of protestors in Periya Ulla.

"If the IGP had transferred the relevant officers prior to the shooting incident, the people will have confidence in the government's investigation," Mr. Hakeem said.

Appoint an Independent Commission to probe killing – National Peace Council



Jehan Perera -
Head of the NPC

The National Peace Council yesterday urged President Mahinda Rajapaksa to follow up on his pledges to safeguard human rights. Welcoming President Rajapaksa willingness to invite international human rights observers into the country, the NPC joined other human rights and Muslim rights organizations calling on the government to appoint an independent commission to investigate the massacre of the 10 Muslims in Pottuvil. "Due to the contested nature of many of the human rights abuses taking place at this time, the National Peace Council believes that is imperative to appoint such a commission," said the statement.

It called the brutal killings of ten Muslims in Pottuvil was another instance of the breakdown of law and order related to security of life in the country and growing practice of impunity.

The killings took place in government-controlled territory in close proximity to a camp of the Special Task Force of the Police, it noted.

However as has become the norm the government forces and LTTE have both denied their involvement in the killings, and each has blamed the other, it said.

All Ceylon Moors' Association too ask for an independent inquiry

At an emergency meeting presided over by M. Mohinudeen Rajabdeen the All Ceylon Moors' Association, unanimously resolved to condemn the wanton manslaughter of the ten (10) Muslims, who were performing an act of duty within the electorate of Pottuvil.

The resolution said as Sri Lanka is a member of the newly created Human Rights Council of the United Nations the perpetrators of this heinous crime should be brought to book as it had violated their human rights. The association requested to hold an independent inquiry to find out the culprits.

“As the civilians had died on duty, the association, demands that the immediate families of the deceased and the sole survivor, be paid compensation and further that the next of kin of each those families be entitled to a monthly subsistence, as their general welfare should be looked after by the Government, taking into consideration the loss of lives and opportunities,” the resolution said.

Muslim National Alliance wants independent inquiry into Pottuvil killings

Nazeer Ahamed Secretary General of the Muslim National Alliance (MNA) while strongly condemning Wednesdays shooting of 14 Muslims by the STF. Said ‘There has been animosity between the Muslims and the STF for the past few months and calls had been made for the removal of the commander of the camp, but such demands had fallen on deaf ears’. He added today’s incident gives further justification and urgency for the commander’s removal.

Nazeer Ahamed said he believed there was a sinister motive behind the horrible massacre ‘Muslims in Amapara believe this brutality could have been carried out by Sinhala chauvinist forces within the STF to embarrass President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the UN where he is billed to make an address’.

He called for an immediate and impartial inquiry into the slaughter of the innocent civilians and said the Government should accede to the demand of foreign participation in such an inquiry ‘if we have nothing to hide’.

Muslims may be forced to take up arms, charges UNP Muslim Politicians



The UNP MP “My own” Mustafa yesterday warned that should Muslims in the east continue to be victimized by both the government and LTTE, they might be forced to take up arms.

“The last time I visited them after the shooting of 14 people, the youth shouted for arms, which I said I did not have because I had just come to see how they were,” UNP Digamadulla District MP, M. Mustafa said.

Mustafa said the government had completely failed in its duty to protect the Muslim population in the east.

“They got regular notices asking them to leave. They’re pushed back and forth. Many Muslims in Kinniya are now starving and unable to fast during the Holy month of Ramazan. It is a pathetic situation,” Mustafa said.

Meanwhile former Colombo Deputy Mayor, Azath Salley said that with regard to the shooting of 10 Muslims, the Muslims had suspected one STF member and not the STF as a whole.

“This man had caused problem before, besides which there had been an incident where they had brought a Sinhala dead man to be buried in the Muslim area and had been refused, with the result that a threat was issued stating 10 Muslim bodies would have to be buried in the place,” Salley charged. He added that the area was 100% STF controlled.

“We call for an international committee to be appointed to investigate the killings, like in the case of the 17 aid workers killed in Mutur,” Salley said.

Muslims Accuse STF. OIC pleads ‘not guilty’

Many residents of Pottuvil are convinced that the Officer-in-Charge of the Sastrawela STF detachment was responsible for the slaying of Muslim youths in Pottuvil. The STF has vehemently denied the accusation.

People in Pottuvil remained convinced that the STF was involved in the murders or were at least aware of the culprits. Though the survivor had indicated that the killers were fluent in Tamil many believe that either the STF or home guards carried out the massacre. The Chief Trustee of Pottuvil grand mosque Maulavi Adambawa called upon the residents of the area to show restraint in the face of the massacre. He was troubled by some news reports which suggested that the Muslims along with the LTTE and timber racketeers wanted CI Gunaratne transferred.

“We have no connection with the LTTE or the timber racketeers. We requested this officer to be transferred since his arbitrary actions were hurting the people,” said the priest’s. Sharing the priests views the former Chairman of Pottuvil Predeshiya Sabah Kadar Mohideen says that it is only this particular officer the people have a problem with. “We have no issues with the Police or the STF and we have not forgotten what they have done for the community but the actions of this particular officer in the past has resulted in the people suspecting him to be involved in the incident” says Mohideen.

DIG Special Task Force – STF defends his men

Deputy Inspector General of Police Nimal Lewke, Commandant of the Special Task Force is of the view that the STF is being targeted with false propaganda for two main reasons; the timber racket which has been going on for years in this area was being curtailed by the STF after a Presidential decree to do so a couple of months ago. Another reason is that the LTTE is getting weak now, and wants to divert attention from their losses. DIG Lewke who adamantly protests any suggestions that his men were involved in the killings. Lewke was critical of “some” politicians trying to score political brownie points during this tragedy. He says that these politicians have “played to the gallery” rather than looking at the facts.

A fact against the STF in this matter is an incident which occurred in January this year. In Trincomalee five youth were killed allegedly by a STF team which was sent to the town on special duty. The Matter was swept under the carpet and the investigation has not yet yielded any conclusive outcome. The STF which has a better track record compared to other arms of the security forces regarding human rights, lost much of its credibility due to this incident.

STF Chief Inspector

The STF gold medal winning boxer, Gunaratne became unpopular with the local populace due to his high handed attitude with issues. He was instrumental in curbing logging in the Radella Forest Reserve. This lucrative trade had been going on for years and was mostly ignored by the local police and the Wildlife Officers. However since the presidential decree a few months ago to halt this activity, the STF had taken a more proactive role.

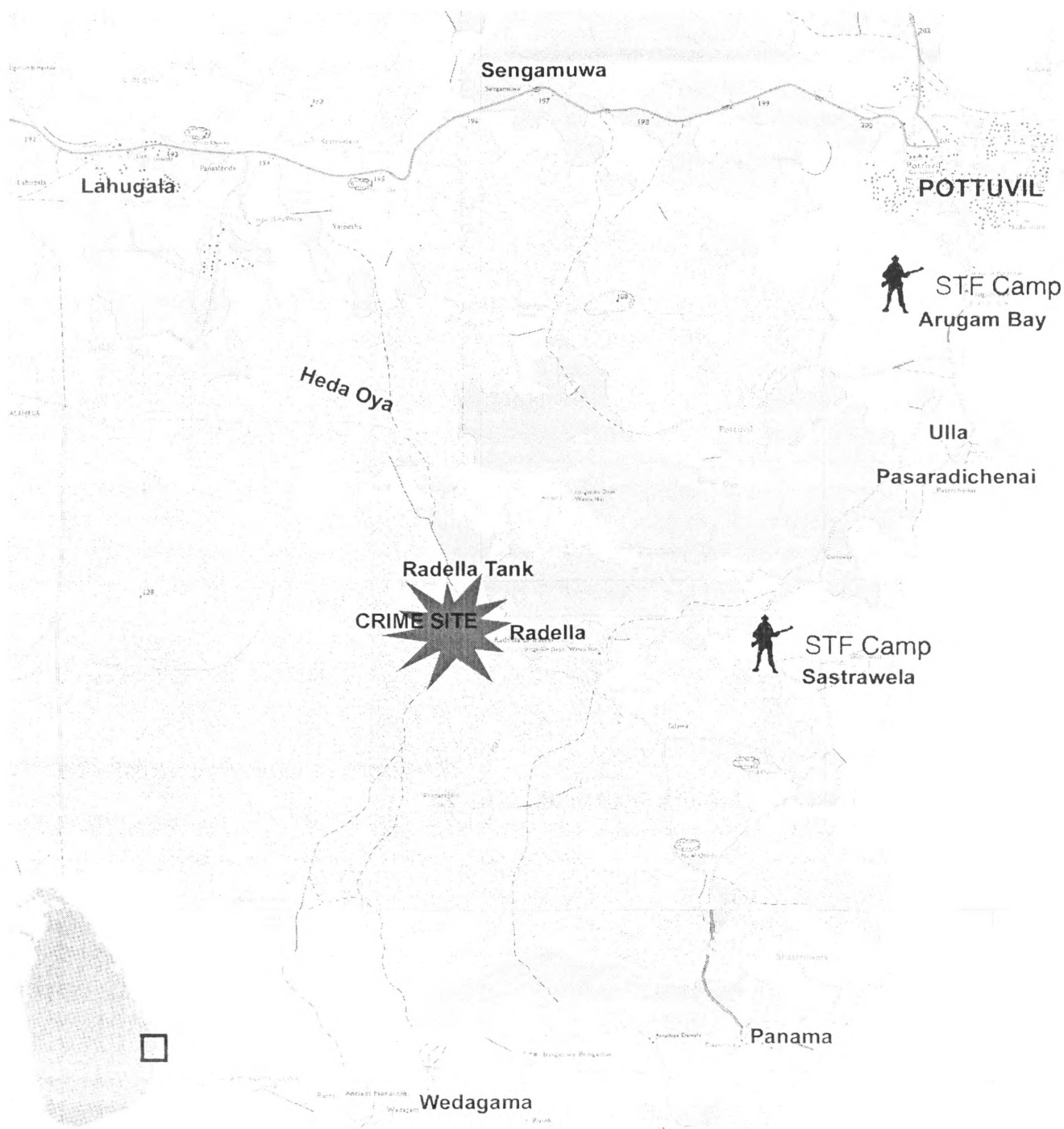
The local people however complain about the humiliation they had to undergo when they were caught by Gunaratne with some people even being beaten up by the officer. The people of the area saw these actions of the STF officer as in excess of his duties since it was the Police which were supposed to take such action. Even more frustrating to the residents of Pottuvil was what they perceived as discrimination when taking legal action against the loggers.

“We don’t see any Sinhalsies from Panama or Lahugala being produced in court” says Ramathulla a community leader in the area expressing his anger at the STF officer who he firmly believed discrimination against Muslims. Many Muslims in the area believe that this particular STF officer was involved in the massacre due to some of the harsh statements he had made regarding the people venturing into the disputed Radella area. They say Gunaratne warned them a few days before the incident of dire consequences if they returned to Radella. Chief Inspector S.N. Gunaratne had a love-hate relationship with the Muslims of Pottuvil.

MUSLIMS HACKED TO DEATH IN POTTUVIL

Saturday 16, September 2006

Plan Showing Crime Site and STF Camps



Lahugala Sinhala Majority A.G.A. Divisions was part of former Muslim Majority Panamapattu DRO’s Division – Land area 472.1 sq miles. The balance area of Panamapattu is the new Muslim Majority Pottuvil A.G.A. Division, 1981 population 19,831, Land area only – 103.9 sq. miles -

22%, where as the population of the new Sinhala Majority Lahugala A.G.A. division combined Lahugala Village in the North and Panama Village in the South is only, 7085; but the Land area allocated for this Sinhala Majority Lahugala A.G.A. division is 368.2 sq. miles – 78%.

1991 Voters	Total	Sinhala	Tamil	Muslim	Area sq. mls
Pottuvil - Former DRO's Division	16,080 – 100%	3,926 – 24.4%	3,608 – 22.4%	8,506 – 53.1%	472.1 – 100%
Pottuvil AGA Division	12,543 – 100%	778 – 6.2%	3,261 – 26.0%	8,467 – 67.7%	103.9 – 22%
Lahugala AGA Division	3,537 – 100%	3,148 – 89.0%	347 – 9.8%	39 – 1.2%	368.2 – 78%

The crime scene

For the past two months a group of men were involved in the reconstruction of an anicut at the Radella tank situated several kilometers inland from the Pottuvil-Panama main road. The Sastrawela STF camp is situated alongside the main road and is roughly 10 kilometers from the anicut by road and eight kilometers by foot.

The labourers mainly from the Pottuvil area, were in the habit of returning home each day after work. The relatives of the men were worried when they didn't return home on Sunday evening 17th September 2006. Since it was not the practice of these men to remain at the work site, a group of 10 people from Pottuvil traveled to the site and found no sign of their relatives but found their tractor left idling.

Next morning around 5.30 four people revisited the area in search of their loved ones. "There I saw a body lying few meters away from the construction site with the throat cut," says Shahab who went in search of his brother. The four immediately came to the Sastrawela STF camp and informed its OIC, Chief Inspector S.N Gunaratne of the incident. According to the relatives of the deceased the OIC had been reluctant to visit the site which prompted the relatives who had now gathered in numbers to venture to the site by themselves.

When the STF did arrive at the scene of the incident the Pottuvil residents had already recovered the bodies and were taking the lone survivor to the hospital.

Disputed land

The area of Radella has been a bone of contention between the Sinahal and the Muslim communities with both groups accusing each other of encroaching on state land. Radella was abandoned during the conflict and was reclaimed by mainly Muslim farmers who were in the habit of making temporary shelters during cultivation season and leaving the area once the crop has been harvested. Some farmers complained that CI Gunaratne was vehemently opposed to Muslims even carrying out cultivation in the Radella area. He is alleged to have threatened them on several occasions not to encroach into the region. The antagonistic history between the people of the Pottuvil region with STF's Chief Inspector Gunaratne and some of the statements he is alleged to have made regarding farming in the Radella area have led most people to be convinced that the STF officer and his men had something to do with the massacre which took place on Saturday the 16th September 2006.

Investigation

The investigation into the murders was handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department by the Inspector General of Police. The doctor at the Pottuvil Hospital who first received the injured man told that he spoke to the survivor, Meera Mohideen who was brought in with a severe cut in his throat. "The man only spoke a few words but he told me that the killers spoke fluent Tamil," says Dr. A.M.M. Issadeen who also carried out the post-mortems on the deceased. According to Dr. Issadeen, the killings had taken place between 11 and 12 midnight on Sunday, September 17. The

Police who later transferred the survivor to the Ampara Hospital citing security reasons had denied access to the man.

While there is yet to be any consensus on that matter the CID is carrying out its own investigation. Assistant Superintendent of Police Mewan Silva along with a CID team visited the scene of the crime on September 20. He was of the view that it was too early in the investigation to jump to any conclusions.

STF OIC Gunaratne denies

Asked about the charges, the STF – OIC Gunaratne denies these as an attempt by interested parties to get him out of the way in order to carry out their illegal activities without hindrance. The officer explains that on Monday after being informed of the incident he took his time to get to the site since he had to take all measures not to walk into a trap since he was well aware that LTTE members were in the area.

“We had intercepted some LTTE communications on the previous day which suggested there were some LTTE cadres in the region, and I’m positive they were being assisted by one or two people from Pottuvil”, Regarding his alleged discrimination against Muslims Gunaratne points out that he was involved in detecting several illicit timber racketeers from Panama.

Government and LTTE giving wrong signals to the Muslims!

The brutal killings have brought much anger, fury and raised tension among the people of Pottuvil and across the country. The suspicion in the minds of the people of the area, as to who perpetrated this cowardly and brutal killings is not on the LTTE but on the STF in the area. Mr. Rauff Hakeem, the leader of the SLMC has appraised the Inspector General of Police about this suspicion lurking in the minds of the people. The relations between both the STF and the members of the public in Pottuvil have not been at their best in recent times. Some attribute this to the high handed manner in which the STF stationed in the area acts, at times behaving not as protectors but as oppressors of the people.

Whoever the perpetrators of the crime may be the government and the defense authorities cannot shirk their responsibilities. The killings had taken place in an areas under the control of the armed forces.

A feeling is developing within the Muslim community that, they are devoid of any security and the government too is disinterested in utilizing its resource when it comes to safeguarding the Muslims. It is the Muslims who have been at the receiving end of atrocities committed by the Tamil Militants for having not extended them support for the disintegration of the country. Thus, if the country’s security forces too cause harm, harass and making their lives insecure one wonder to whom can the Muslims look up to for security.

Successive governments have bought over Muslim politicians offering cabinet portfolios and high positions. In the present government too, there are several Muslim Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Provincial Governors holding offices but the Muslims have been cast away, ignored, subjected to illtreatment and denied protection.

Who is going to protect the Muslims? This is the question paramount in the minds of the Muslims today. Hundreds of Muslims have been killed in the east and continued to be killed across the country. Over hundred thousand have been chased out from their homes in the

north and forced to live as refugees for the last sixteen years across the country. The Muslims have been caught between the Government and the LTTE.

The Muslims have now to confront two challenges, the challenge from the LTTE and the challenge from the Government forces. When an issue concerning the Tamils crops up there are interest groups across the world to raise their voice in support of them. When it concerns Muslims voices are rarely heard, locally or internationally.

Muslims are now wondering what is the signal that the government Armed Forces and the LTTE are sending out to them? Is it that, they want the Muslims to think on the lines of protecting themselves? Are the Muslims to believe that if they remain unarmed there would not be any respect or protection for them? Unless Muslims arm themselves protection of their lives and properties are not guaranteed?

What would be the consequences if the Muslims too place their faith on arms? It is time for everyone to realize the gravity of the situation. The Muslims can no longer be at the firing end losing more and more lives in the most brutal and horrendous manner for no fault of theirs.

The government should at least now wake up to the dangerous scenario ahead and take every steps, necessary to protect the Muslims in the country. Those who were involved in the brutal murders of Muslims in Panama - Pottuvil should be brought to book. The members of the armed forces should be made protectors of the people whichever community they may belong to. Should the government absolve itself of these responsibilities there will be anarchy in this country.

M.I.M. Mohideen

Secretary General

North East Muslim Peace Assembly – NEMPA

27th September 2006

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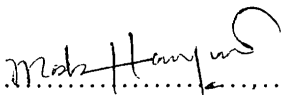
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