

# PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE

THE JOURNAL OF THE COMMITTEE FOR DEMOCRACY  
AND JUSTICE IN SRI LANKA.

## EDITORIAL STATEMENT

THE CDJ WELCOMES YOU THE READER TO READ ALL THE ARTICLES CONTAINED IN THIS ISSUE . HOWEVER ALL ARTICLES THAT DO NOT BEAR THE C.D.J HEADING ARE THE PERSONAL OPINION OF THE WRITER . WE INVITE ALL CONCERNED TO FEEL FREE TO SUBMIT ARTICLES ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES , POLITICAL OPINIONS AND OTHER RELEVANT ISSUES THAT CAN HELP US TO RECREATE THE POSSIBILITY OF DEMOCRATIC DEBATE NOT JUST IN OUR OWN COUNTRY BUT THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.WE WOULD ALSO ESPECIALLY APPRECIATE INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS FROM OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE REST OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD OF ASIA, ARFICA,BLACK AND LATIN AMERICA .WE FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO LIVE IN RELATIVE COMFORT AND FREEDOM TO FIGHT FOR THE BASIC RIGHTS OF THOSE WHO CANNOT .

IN THE COMING YEARS WE NEED YOUR HELP, ADVICE AND PARTICIPATION .AS THE SAYING GOES ,IF YOU ARE NOT PART OF THE SOLUTION YOU ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM .SRI LANKA IS ABOVE ALL A NATURALLY BEAUTIFULL LAND WITH AN INTERESTING MIX OF PEOPLE AND A RICH HISTORY . THE CDJ IS SEEKING TO VIEW OUR PEOPLE REGARDLES OF RACE , RELIGION OR REGION AS NOT JUST PATHETIC VICTIMS BUT AS THOSE WHO ARE CAPABLE OF FIGHTING INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION WITHOUT FURTHER PERPETUATING THE SPIRAL OF VIOLENCE. AS THE PHILOSOPHER HERBERT MARCUSE HAS WARNED ONE DIMENSIONAL MAN (OR WOMEN FOR THAT MATTER)WILL PRODUCE A SHALLOW DEMOCRATIC TRADITON. OUR FOCUS WILL THEREFORE INCLUDE ECONOMIC,SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES AS WE SEEK TO BUILD A THREE DIMENSIONAL DEMOCRACY BY FIGHTING FOR PEACE ,EQUALITY AND JUSTICE .

*Ramesh Perinperarajin .*

# *Committee for Democracy and Justice in Sri Lanka*

28.10.1996

We, the *Committee for Democracy and Justice in Sri Lanka (London)* express our deep concern at continuing violations of human rights in Sri Lanka.

Political violence is once more a feature of our society in the south despite the firm expectations of the people that the *Peoples Alliance* would break the cycle of intimidation, harassment, attacks and killings based on party political affiliations that was prevalent under the previous government.

Attacks on members and supporters of the opposition *United National Party* have been reported in Negombo, Kalawana, Ratnapura and many other places. We condemn these acts of political thuggery and deplore the trend towards the re-institutionalisation of political violence in the body politic of Sri Lanka. As our recent history reminds us, attacks of these nature though initially selective soon become generalised towards all members of society.

We call upon the Government to send a clear message to its supporters and the security forces that these acts are unacceptable and intolerable and to desist from them. We urge the authorities to launch transparent and impartial investigations into these incidents and to promptly punish those responsible.

In the North-East where our people undergo tremendous suffering and harsh conditions as the war drags on, there have been many reports of arbitrary arrests, torture, rape, 'disappearances' and extra-judicial killings committed by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. These incidents have been difficult to verify and investigate in the context of media censorship (only recently lifted) and in the absence of an office of the Human Rights Task Force (HRTF).

It is with deep regret and grief that we learn of the discovery of the bodies of the Kumarasamy family and that of their neighbour, K. Sithamparam near the Kaithady army camp in Jaffna. They had been reported missing since September 7th when they had last been seen at an army sentry point between Chundikkuli and Kaithady making enquiries about the arrest of their daughter. We demand an immediate and impartial inquiry into these killings and the swift punishment of those responsible, as well as fair compensation to the affected families.

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The Government through the media claims that the conduct of the Armed Forces has improved and that it will not tolerate or sanction abuses as previous administrations have. We wait for soothing words to be matched by deeds and state action.

We urge an end to the practice of arbitrary arrest and the immediate release of those detained without charge. We believe that the presence of an HRTF office and staff - with the authority and powers to visit detention centres, investigate alleged human rights violations and introduce measures to prevent their recurrence - would be an initial step in reassuring Tamil people and constraining members of the Armed Forces.

A massacre of eleven passengers on a bus in Arantalawa in Amparai district took place on September 11th. It appears that the passengers all of whom were Sinhalese or Muslim were deliberately targeted because of their ethnicity. It is believed that the *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)* are responsible. The *C.D.J.* condemn and abhor brutal and callous attacks on innocent civilians. We note that the *LTTE* has in the past been implicated in similar atrocities and call upon the *LTTE* leadership to stop its cadres from perpetrating them in future.

We appeal to the Government that it should not use provocation's and outrages by the *LTTE* as an excuse for similar conduct against Tamil civilians and for being tolerant of systematic human rights violations by the Armed Forces.

Just over two years ago, the Sri Lankan people gave three decisive electoral mandates to the *Peoples Alliance* to reverse the spiral of violence that our country had plunged into. They hoped and believed that the new Government would end state repression, stop the war and protect human rights and democratic freedoms.

The ***Committee for Democracy and Justice*** join with like minded organisations and individuals in Sri Lanka in our commitment towards the realisation of these important objectives.

## Overview of the People's Alliance(PA) Rule

### Background

In 1994 the People's Alliance (PA) came to power, replacing a regime steeped in human rights violations. A change of government "generated a wave of optimism all over Sri Lanka that an end (was) in sight to the bitter eleven-year civil war with the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil *Eelam* (LTTE). The cost of the war had been devastating, especially for the island's 3.5 million minority Tamil community."<sup>1</sup>

When it came to power the PA promised legal reform and other measures to end censorship. "People throughout Sri Lanka and the international community looked to the PA government to break the cycle of the past, but the result has been deeply disappointing. Emergency powers have been invoked to censor news of the war, criminal defamation charges have been brought against editors and journalists for criticising the President or other ministers and the government has so far failed to implement recommendations for media and legal reform made by committees it appointed after winning office".<sup>2</sup> Despite the PA's wavering commitment to reform however it recently achieved victory in the local government elections.<sup>3</sup>

### Local Government Elections

Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake was quick to announce that the votes cast in favour of the PA, at the March 21st local government elections, were an expression of people's continued confidence in government.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless the local polls themselves were marred by unprecedented clashes between rival contestants. Police said that more than 1,600 complaints linked to campaigning had been lodged with them in the past five weeks.<sup>5</sup> The killing in February 1997 of Nalanda Ellawala MP and his bodyguard in the run-up to local government elections was a potent reminder of the urgent need for political violence and thuggery to be eradicated in all parties if democratic institutions are to flourish in Sri Lanka. As a first step towards tackling political thuggery, CDJ welcomes the move on the part of the government to offer an amnesty for the surrender of illegally held weapons.

<sup>1</sup> *focus*, Bulletin of the NGO Forum on Sri Lanka, No.2 September 1994, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Frances D' Souza, *Article 19's* Executive Director, Press release 19th March, 1997, p1.

<sup>3</sup> In the elections to Municipal and Urban Councils and *Pradeshiya Sabhas* the PA got 48.97% of the votes whilst the UNP got 41.25%. *Daily News*, 24/03/1997, p1. Despite its victory the PA lost support in urban areas.

<sup>4</sup> Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake is the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) Secretary and PA's Vice President. His views were quoted in *Daily News*, 24/03/97, Political News section.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily News*, 19/03/97, Political News.

## **Militarism**

Today, the Sri Lankan state is under tremendous pressure due to the continuing conflict in the North and East. The PA uses the military effort to excuse delays to its reform programme by citing the need to focus on a military solution to the "ethnic" conflict. A huge recruitment drive is currently underway to provide soldiers for the war in the North. Some of these advertisements have heightened "ethnic" consciousness. References to the "lineage of Dutugemunu" are aimed at a Sinhala-only audience<sup>6</sup>. Other advertisements play on the machismo image of war "where men are separated from boys".<sup>7</sup> This trend towards militarism should be avoided if the government is interested in a political not merely a military solution to the conflict.

## **Rapes and Disappearances**

We welcome the indictment of nine army and two police officers in connection with the brutal killing of Krishanti Kumaraswamy.<sup>8</sup> However there is an increase in reports of rapes and disappearances from Jaffna and other military controlled areas.<sup>9</sup> We call for justice for all the victims and their families. We hope that these incidents are not indicative of a return to human rights violations by the State and demand the accountability of the security forces.

## **Commissions**

When it came to power the PA government recognised the urgent need to investigate all human rights violations. It established four commissions on a regional basis. Two commissions of inquiry into "disappearances" and related human rights were asked to finalize their work by the end of June 1996 despite having heard no evidence in relation to more than half the 20,000 or so complaints reportedly put before them. Amid widespread protest, they were given an extension until the end of September 1996. So far, no public information has been released relating to these commissions. Given the fact that the Commissions were, in part, a response to popular mobilisation, it is urgent that the perpetrators of injustice be called to account and that there is public dissemination of the evidence collected by all commissions.

## **Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and Emergency Regulations (ER)**

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<sup>6</sup> See *Lankadeepa* advertisement of 18/08/96. *Tamil Times* carried an article written by *Women for Peace* on "racist advertisements" on 15/10/96.

<sup>7</sup> Recruitment strategies of the Sri Lankan Navy and Army have been notoriously machismo.

<sup>8</sup> Krishanti Kumaraswamy was an eighteen year old A level student who was abducted, gang raped and killed on September 7th, 1996 in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Her mother, brother and neighbour subsequently disappeared.

<sup>9</sup> In Urgent Action UA 82/97, *Amnesty International* notes that less prominent cases of rape and deaths, such as several cases from Batticaloa District in early 1997 have not resulted in any legal action.

In the context of renewed conflict the government reneged on its commitment to abolish the executive presidency. The latter allows for the centralisation and concentration of all executive power in the hands of one person, the President. The President, Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandaranaike, has extended the emergency regulations and refused to amend the PTA. The latter give widely formulated powers to arrest and detain to the security forces. In the light of violations in military controlled areas it is urgent that these powers be circumscribed to allow for investigation into arrests and torture in custody.

### **Devolution**

Despite rhetoric concerning the need for devolution, actual steps towards implementation remain to be taken. The PA decided to put aside the controversial issue of devolution until the local elections were finished. We call on the PA to campaign for a two-thirds majority in parliament which would then allow for the devolution issue to be laid before the people of Sri Lanka at a referendum. It is urgent to keep open debate about a political solution in the context of military conflict in order to build up trust with the Tamil community.

### **"Capitalism with a human face"**

When the PA came to power it promised "capitalism with a human face". Whilst a stable economic environment may be important for development, economic advancement should not be pushed at the cost of democracy. In a worrying statement to the Press recently, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunge Bandaranaike, noted that authoritarian regimes in South East Asia have a good economic record. The Prscident noted "we have had democratic traditions for centuries...while we should never despise democracy, the time has come for us to seriously consider and decide on how we should enjoy the freedom that it confers on us without impeding progress."<sup>10</sup> We call on the PA to remember its manifesto pledges including freedom of association for workers. Economic development requires an advanced political and social structure - one that is committed to progress for all.

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<sup>10</sup> From a speech quoted in *Daily News*, 1/04/97.

## **Is there any contradiction in being a Tamil and a democrat?**

The current race war is being played out against a background of ignorance and fear. The lack of democratic debate in Sri Lanka in general has been well documented and discussed elsewhere in this issue. What has often been ignored, especially by Tamils in the U.K and the rest of the world, is the decrease of democratic debate even amongst ourselves. This is all the more sad given the fact that many of the initial Tamils who left our naturally beautiful land to live in the cold did so for the excuse that the west had a better standard of education. Both my mother and aunt were teachers who would often tell me about great English literary figures such as somebody called William Shakespeare. While my father reminded me that this country once had a radical past that produced intelligent commentaries such as Milton and his book "Paradise Lost". Education was the key reason given by most professional Tamils for immigrating here. But today our community is not sufficiently concerned with the use of our minds for the pursuit of alternatives to the current obsession with the ethnic dimension to the war. I say this because even within the chattering classes there is the idea that the LTTE is to be given total and uncritical support. There is often the added idea that to even criticise the tactics of the LTTE for those who do support them on a minor level is a betrayal. People who try to suggest a debate of both the strategy and tactics of such groups are labelled "Traitors" and seen as less Tamil or Sinhala. I do have faith in the ordinary people of our island simply because I have met many Sri Lankans across the globe who have genuine sympathy for whoever is the underdog.

I firmly believe that those who lead comfortable lives and ignore the great achievements of our people of all races must appreciate the strength, endurance and dynamism that more recent arrivals in Europe demonstrate. If you visit Ealing Road in Wembley you may notice the dominant Gujarati Indian culture especially in the colourfulness and noise. But at least 12 new Tamil shops have opened on this road mostly in the last 3 years. The owners are often those who have never engaged in trade back in Jaffna etc, they have gained experience working for a pittance at a petrol station for 3.00 per hour! Similarly many Sinhalese have started from scratch in Italy. Their achievement has also been made against the background of not having a substantial established community of better educated, prosperous professionals. They have picked up basic Italian within one year to work in cities such as Venice, Milan and Rome.

### **THE TAMILS DO HAVE A DEMOCRATIC TRADITION.**

These kind of achievements should not be ignored by expatriates who are capable of looking beyond simple race politics. We need to reawaken our minds to the wider issues such as to how we rebuild the lives of the refugees. The Sinhala -Buddhist identity was used to fight our common enemy of British colonialism by such people as A. Dharmapala from 1915 but a great ignorance surrounds us of the Tamils in winning our justified freedom from European domination. A majority of the founder executive members of the Ceylon National Congress were of our race. Today to eradicate post independence racism we need to go beyond the idea of a eye for an eye. As M.K. Gandhi declared it can make the whole world blind. I believe that organisations such as the CDJ can help non-Tamils believe that we deserve greater freedom. At the same time we need to look within ourselves how we can prepare for life after the war. The Tamils need to be preserved in mind and body, this war has cost over 90,000 lives. The

excuse that I have often been given by seemingly educated Tamils is that we must only worry about our freedom from Government murder. The way that we fight back is not seen as important , this is dangerous when we expect our youth in the west to obtain O,A levels and degrees but we expect those at home to die for the cause. This I believe is a complete hypocrisy if not illogical as we are persuading our youth in the west to follow lucrative careers while the C.V of those in Jaffna etc may end with their ultimate job as a suicide bomber .

#### CAN WE CLOSE OUR MINDS TO PROTECT OUR BODIES?

As a Tamil by blood I believe that our 6,000 years plus of history will ever die. One of our greatest achievements was to build over 100 cities in what is now Pakistan such as Mohenjo Daro and Harrapa at least 3800 years old which had great feats of engineering and agriculture. It is also a great sadness and irony that our ancestors destroyed similar great achievements of our Singhalese co-habitees in Anuradhapura. We should create a consistent hatred not for each other but to those who seek to kill not just our bodies but our minds. This I think can be done by Tamils opposition to human rights abuses across the board. The government especially under the UNP was clearly the main perpetrator of violence against Tamils but the message has to go out that those who kill any unarmed Tamil (or any other citizen of Sri Lanka for that matter) are wrong. Human rights are neither pro- or anti-LTTE. They are the inalienable rights of all our people throughout our island and must be defended. If we believe that it is correct to ignore the murder of Tamil minds because we are only moved by the murder of Tamil bodies we are creating the lack of democracy that make even mild criticism possible. Upper class Singhalas of our land have been given a mandate for ending the bloodshed by the wider ,mostly Singhala public in 1995.

While in the UK middle class Tamils often discourage educated debate on the tactics of our alleged saviours because they are seen as doing something. But where is the consistency between coming to the west to be educated precisely by debate, self criticism and making comparisons with other people. We did not hate the English on a daily basis despite our tax money spent by the previous Tory government on the SAS to train the Sri Lankan army to kill our people of all races. Can we not also decide to look at the mistakes of our own people now rather than when it is too late. From the time of SJV Chelvanaygam we talked about the needs of the Tamils with notable exceptions of those who did not fit the then definition of relevant Tamil i.e. the plantation workers.

#### HOW TAMIL DOES A PERSON HAVE TO BE ?

Today Muslims are excluded from such category because they are less Tamil than Christian and Hindus ! Many of the 90,000 Muslims kicked out of Jaffna in October 1990 are Tamil by language, blood and residence but not enough for the LTTE! As one of my friends at SOAS has pointed out with typical Sri Lankan humour ,for Eelam to work it has to be Ellaam.(the state has to include all )

If we remove external oppression there more than enough internal sources of repression to create new horrors. My chief fear is the lack of the basic right to speak your mind. If people think that here in London it is not a problem,they are wrong. At a meeting in Harrow recently when I was trying to gain support for our human rights petition I was told to shut up, photographed and kindly offered to be beaten up by pro-LTTE individuals. I was even called a traitor and a Singhala bastard.!But I will



never give in to stupidity or intimidation. Pretending to give a blank cheque to those who wish to murder democracy ,justice and our people is wrong. The logic of the bully must not be encouraged by our ignorance or their arrogance.

**WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR ENDING THIS CONFLICT !**

All those parties to the conflict are guilty of exercising force to exercise their point of view against defenceless people. The EPDP has sunk so low as to take upto 50 % of the meagre wages earned by refugees in camps near Colombo who have a part time job. While other pro government tamil fighters sometimes blackmail our people into paying them protection money with the regular armys collusion. The LTTE is not capable of protecting the vast majority of Tamils who are defenceless civilians . It is upto all our people to rally around and send humanitarian aid as done by SCOT -the standing committee of Tamils etc. We need to leave no stone unturned in trying to end this war and whether we have 2 or even 4 countries as in the 1500 s we need to rebuild our island. By ignoring wider social issues in the south such as foreign multinational penetration we may allow our island to be dominated by a new wave of western money and influence. By arguing over what belongs to the Tamils ,Muslims or Singhalas we may fail to see this creeping invasion . This should be especially relevant as we celebrate 50 years of independance next year. In the south mulinationals such as GAP , C&A, Marks and Spencer employ singhala women in factories not as a part of greater gender equality but as a way of discouraging Trade Unions and paying workers lower wages.

**CAN WE FIGHT BACK AGAINST NEW FORMS OF DOMINATION ?**

Since we live in their countries unlike before we should be using our Tamil business accumen and intelligence to point to ways that we can reconstuct all of the island without being anybodies toy. The days of Sri Lankans being considered small are over partly because we have impressed people abroad but also because our 1996 cricket world cup victory cleary show that when singhala and tamil fight as one we can surmont many obstacles. Furthermore conversations amongst expatriates clearly demonstate the need for a non racist future to be created within the Tamil diaspora. To most muslims and sinhalas Muthiah Muralitharan is a good Sri Lankan Tamil but to many Tamils he is still of recent indian descent! When white australians accused him of ball tampering , the team as a whole fought back by winning . When asked why they managed to do so Aravinda De Silva answered back that they did it for Murali. We must always seek justice especially for those falsely accused and not get bogged down in thuggery. Singhala dominated racism and hatred brought us to this current conflict but Tamil stubbornness and covert racism must not allow it to continue . We have to take a stand now while we still can use our voices . We owe it to our island to reverse the 500 years of western domination by taking the best that we find here back home since we have earned it, especially from Britain. After all as Sivanandan has said we came here because they came there. We should see this as part of our duty as tamils even if not as sri lankans. You can begin by signing the petition and circulating at work , school or home to show that democracy ,justice and peace are still important to us tamils and that nobody has the right to kill our people.

**BY RAMESH PERINPARAJA --PERSONAL CAPACITY.**

PETITION

Dear President Chandrika Kumaratunga,

WE, the undersigned are friends of the Sri Lankan people and supporters of human rights and democratic freedoms for all. We remind you of the heinous abduction and gang rape of an A-Level student, *Krishanti Kumarasamy*, aged 18, on September 7th 1996 in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. We further condemn the subsequent killing of her mother, brother and neighbour who had made enquiries after her. We note that nine Sri Lankan army personnel have been arrested in connection with these crimes. We are also concerned that these acts are part of a wider trend of disappearances, torture and extra-judicial killing of Tamil people in army occupied areas in the North-East of the country. The Government backed Human Rights Task Force has compiled a list of over 500 named 'disappeared'. We call for justice for the victims and their families and for the swift and appropriate punishment of those responsible. We demand an end to these atrocities. We believe that the Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim communities should be free of harassment and human rights abuses from both the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

NAME

ADDRESS

SIGNATURE

# Displacement of Muslims in Perspective

## 1 Introduction to Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is about 35 kilometres from the Southern tip of India is 65,610 square kilometres in area(see map overleaf). The population is about 18.4 million of whom 74 % are Sinhalese, of which 69% are Buddhist, and 6% Christian; about 18% are Tamils, most of them Hindus and the rest Christian; about 7% Moors and Malays who are Muslim; and the rest including Burghers, descendants of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English who are Christian. The languages spoken are Sinhala, Tamil and English. The Sinhalese are predominant in the South, south-west and Central highlands and the Tamils in the northern and eastern regions. Many Muslims live in Tamil speaking areas while others like the Burghers are scattered throughout the country resulting in a diverse ethnic mix.

The Sinhalese and Tamils have been inhabiting the island for over 2500 years. The legendary arrival of Prince Vijaya from northern India, with 700 followers is the starting point of the Sinhalese race. There exists evidence that for some periods before the arrival of the Sinhalese, the Tamil community predated them by 500 years in the North (Nithiyathan 1984). This was due to their close proximity to South India. In any case following the Chola invasion from 980 AD Tamils established a separate kingdom in Jaffna covering the region up to Vavuniya, the western region up to Puttalam and the east upto Batticaloa by 1400. From 1506 to 1948 the Portuguese, Dutch and British imperialists have held power introducing Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity.

## 2 The Trajectory of Tamil Separatism and the Ethnic Conflict

Feelings of Sinhala-Buddhist marginalization under the British were codified by Dharmapala by 1915 (Sivanandan 1997) due to the enhanced status of the Christian and Tamil educated elites. After independence in 1948 S.W.R.D Bandaranaike encouraged the passing of the Sinhala only language act in 1956. By making English less important as a national language, it did give greater self-respect to the emerging agrarian middle classes of the south. However it compromised the effectiveness of the Sri lankan state to give a positive role to minorities such as the Tamils and the Burgers, who'd normally used English under the previous administration as the lingua franca. Although this did not immediately create a refugee crisis, comparable to similar ideas of africanisation by Idi Amin in east Africa in the 1970s (Zolberg et.al. 1989). It alienated the Tamils while the Burgers migrated to Australia. From the initial moderate calls for federalism came by 1972 outright calls for a separate state<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Tamil political attitudes hardened with the promulgation of the new republican Constitution in 1972 abolishing minority safeguards and enshrining Buddhism as a state religion and Sinhala as the national language. The formation of a Tamil United Front (TULF) of political parties was followed by the formation of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the Vaddukoddai Declaration in 1976 calling for a separate Tamil State. In parallel came the formation of "youth wings". many of which

On 23 July 1983, after Tamil Guerrillas killed 13 Sri Lankan soldiers in a landmine ambush in Jaffna there was a week of anti-Tamil violence by the UNP government with the help of Sinhala mobs throughout the island which killed an estimated 3,000 Tamils and over 18,000 Tamil homes were destroyed. Eyewitness reported that, during the first few days, attacks on Tamil people and property were made in the presence of security forces who simply stood by. By 1st August 125,000 Tamils were internally displaced in refugee camps and over 85,000 displaced in Colombo. By late August another 50,000 had fled with government assistance to Tamil dominated areas in the north and east and thousands were on the move.

Out of the violence emerged two defining features of the years of conflict to follow. Armed separatism took control of Tamil politics and for the first time Tamils began to flee our country in large numbers. By 1988 a full-scale civil war was underway between the government and the LTTE who had emerged as the leading guerrilla insurgent force after decimating their rivals including the moderate M P s of the T.U.L.F (UTHRJ 1994).

Where at first the conflict involved small groups of armed militants associated with the state, it has escalated over the years to deeply affect the civilians of all communities, living in the north and east. The north has suffered extensive bombing and shelling with little discrimination between civilian and military targets. In the east, Sinhalese and Muslims have been attacked and killed by Tamil militants; and Tamil civilians have been attacked and killed by the security forces and civilian home guards. Also the nature of the LTTE's rule over the areas they control includes the torture and killing of those Tamils who oppose or even criticise it (Thirangama 1989).

According to some estimates 80,000 lives have been lost, and unto 1.7 million have become refugees leading lives of great emotional, physical and economic insecurity. Others have sought political asylum overseas. The conflict has also altered the ethnic balance of certain areas of the island through displacement.

### 3 Muslims of Sri Lanka

Muslims form, according to the 1981 census, 7.8 % of the population of Sri Lanka. Their settlement in the country can be traced to the heyday of Arab maritime activities. When they first visited in the first century AD they were so impressed by our island's natural beauty that they gave it the name "serendib" - island of paradise. This word has even passed into the English Language as a synonym for pleasure - "serendipitous/serendipity". They returned in greater numbers to settle in the 8th Century and were confined initially to the coastal localities, where they managed to

evolved into militant groups. Ethnic tensions then deteriorated after post election violence in 1977 which killed 500 Tamils and injured another 10,000. Close to 100,000 Tamils fled the south and hill country areas and over 15,000 were transported directly to the Jaffna, in the north, by government chartered ships. The recommendations of a Presidential Commission of Enquiry were ignored and this led to growing Tamil insurgency. This in turn led to the prevention of Terrorism Act in 1979 and a State of Emergency in Tamil dominated Areas. Three months of violence in these Tamil areas in 1981 further polarised the situation.

engage in trade.<sup>2</sup> Over time they intermarried with both Sinhala and Tamil Villagers. By the time off Portuguese colonialisation their position was undermined and so the Kandyan Sinhalese encouraged the resettlement of Muslims especially around Batticaloa. This position was not sufficiently countermanded by the British or the Dutch. Furthermore it was the Tamil community and Sinhala Christian converts that were given a greater role as the pillars of the British Raj. In effect the Muslim role was marginalised. Both communities since independence in 1948 have sought to regard the Muslims as at best allies and as at worst, subordinates<sup>3</sup>.

Their involvement depends on the adjustment to the existing power structures. They follow Koran and Sahira Law in social set up, but have not gained any liberal influences by adapting to existing social structures.

#### **4 Identity separation**

With around 1 million people they are the 2nd biggest minority (Wagner 1990). A third finds itself in Tamil-speaking areas in the north and east and two-thirds in Siinhalese-speaking areas of the west and south. A big categorisation problem therefore has been in deciding whether to place the Muslim community within the umbrella of the two larger communities due to use of Tamil or Sinhala. This issue has been part of the general south Asian dilemma conflict of interests and identity. (Manor 1996).

After all the only non indigenous language used by this community is a limited use of Arabic in the conduct of prayers, religious activities and general greetings.

#### **5 The Tamil -Sinhala Ethnic Conflict and the Muslims**

The Sinhala-Tamil ethnic conflict has gone on for several decades. Traditionally, Muslims have largely kept out of this. They maintained a low profile in political issues. However in the North, due to their Tamil mother-tongue, they were also harassed, intimidated and subjugated alongside other Tamil speakers. This was specifically the case during the occupation of the Indian army in 1987-88.

<sup>2</sup>Their subsequent spread to various parts of the country appears to have been directed largely by the nature of their relationships with the different centres of political power in the country and by the course of development of local trade and commerce. By the 12 Century Muslim traders had been given special trade concessions by the inland Kings of the Uda Rata and Kandy Kingdoms.

<sup>3</sup>The political unity of Sri Lanka, that dates from the British Colonisation from 1815, changed the structures of society from the bottom up. The unified administration, the building up of a raw material, plantation sector, the work of Christian missionaries and a new western oriented school and education system remain as relicts of that era. Tamils and Sinhalese who are partly geographically locally segregated, at times in conflicting warring parties and partly friendly coexistence shaped their separate identities under the British that today stand against each other due to the historical background!

However in the late 1980s the Tamil-Muslim relations deteriorated particularly in the Eastern Province. The emergence of a new political party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, during this period was considered as a challenge to the Tamil demand for Eelaam(homeland), a separate state for Tamils in the north and east. Consequently, by October 1990, the LTTE had sought to redefine its concept of Tamils as those who had a greater degree of racial purity. As a result it could include Hindus and Christians but not Muslims. But the "official reason" given was that the latter was a security threat due to individual acts of collaboration with the government. Many independent observers have also pointed out that another strategic reasons could have been the greater incidence of Muslims joining rival Tamil organisation such as PLOTE and EPRLF.

As a result, tension increased in 1990, culminating, in two unfortunate incidents where 280 Muslims were massacred in the Batticaloa, Eastern Province. These events soured relations between the Tamils and Muslims.

## 6 Expulsion of Muslims from the North- the root causes of flight

In the Northern Province, in comparison to the east, the Tamils- Muslim relationship was fairly good during this troubled period. However during the latter part of October 1990, the entire Muslim population of the Northern Province (estimated at 90,000 persons- UTHRJ 1995) was forcibly chased away at gun point from their traditional villages and towns. The LTTE was responsible for this act of violence against the Muslims<sup>4</sup>.

The Muslims lost all hope of preventing their forcible displacement and LTTE cadres, in large numbers, increased their pressure through intimidation on the Muslims. In order to save their lives, Muslims fled from their homes in large numbers. They were unable to take with them hard-earned items such as fridges and fans. They were only allowed to take 5 travel bags, a sovereign of gold and a small sum of 2,000 Rupees(approx. US\$ 40.00-UNTHRJ 1995). After obtaining permission and clearance at the local office they proceeded south to Government held territories. On they way south many fleeing Muslims were subject brutal and humiliating treatment by LTTE cadres manning check points. These arbitrarily took the last remaining valuables from the refugees, often leaving them with nothing at all.

<sup>4</sup>On the 22 nd October 1990, quite unexpectedly, the LTTE announced over loudspeakers in the streets of Muslim Settlements, in the Northern Province that the Muslims must leave their homes, villages and towns leaving all their valuable behind or face death. The ultimatum set, was that Muslims should leave the region within 48 hours. In Jaffna town itself, only two hours time was given to leave. This quite unexpected order was a shock to all the Muslims who had always maintained excellent relationships with the Tamil population in the north. The Muslims as did their Tamil neighbours pleaded with the LTTE to reconsider their decision but the LTTE refused to do so. Muslim houses were looted and cash, jewellery and other valuables were taken forcibly at gun point by the LTTE cadres. Among the items taken were items held in storage for Tamils neighbours afraid of looting by the army when it arrived. The same thing happened to the commercial and industrial establishments owned by Muslims.

## Committee for Democracy and Justice in Sri Lanka

The Committee for Democracy and Justice was formed in 1989 to Campaign for  
Democratic Rights and against State sponsored repression.

CDJ is neither affiliated nor supports any political party

CDJ campaigns against the repression of democratic rights by the state as well as by other organisations,  
including opposition parties and groups.

CDJ demands justice for the families of the disappeared

CDJ stands for the resolution of the ethnic conflict through political and not military means.

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The work of the CDJ over the years has been expanding gradually. In 1993 we organised an International Conference which was well attended. The conference documents and speeches have been edited and published in book form. " In Place of the Spiral of Violence " Price £5 /.

Our AGM & Dinner held on 11.6.95 at the Red Rose was well attended and was a great success. On 27.9.95 a public meeting was held at University of London Students Hall to discuss the Governments Devolution package. Rev. Yohan Devananda of Devasarana, Ibbagamuwa explained the package and a discussion followed. Our AGM & Social in 1996 was held at the residence of Bavans house on 5.5.96. Our AGM & Dinner & Social for 1997 is being held on 27.4.97 at the Red Rose. We are planning more such ventures for the future. More than ever we need your help and co-operation. We desire your attending our monthly meetings and help by bringing more members.

Our Subscription for the year is £5 /. The Treasurer's job is a thankless job. We would appreciate if you could send your subscription for two years in advance. This makes the work of the Treasurer easy. Cheques in the name of the CDJ.

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## Committee For Democracy and Justice in Sri Lanka

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