

When Truth is replaced by Silence, the Silence is a Lie"

Rape and Murder of a Young Mother in Mannar



Ida Camelita, Kantharasa Jeyamalar, Bahiya Ummah, Ehambaram Nanthakumar Wijakala, Sinnathamby Sivamani and now Mary Madeleine share something awful in common. They were all allegedly raped and tortured (four of them were brutally murdered) in Mannar by the Sri Lankan armed forces. On June 8th 2006, a young mother, Mary Madeline, her husband, Moorthy Martin, son Dilakshan and daughter Lakshika were brutally tortured and murdered in their home in Vankalai, Mannar. Neighbors saw three Sri Lanka military personnel near their house around the time of murder but, while the soldiers have acknowledged that they were there carrying out a routine check up, the Mannar army commanding officer has ruled out any possibility of his men being involved in the murders. This suggests that the military authorities won't help with any investigation of the alleged perpetrators. There will, of course, be a protest or two and a few petitions of this nature. The Sri Lanka military, despite the eyewitnesses, will

continue to blame it on the LTTE or on paramilitary groups. The LTTE, while denying allegations of its involvement, will continue to point its fingers at the Sri Lanka military. The international community and Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission will issue a statement condemning the evil act. By the end of this month Mary Madeleine's case will rest without peace in some archive.

In this context, we would like to highlight similar previous incidents in Mannar, including the rapes of Ehambaram Nanthakumar Wijakala and Sinnathamby Sivamani, allegedly by members of the Mannar police's Counter-Subversive Unit, on 19th March 2001. Wijakala was pregnant at the time of the rape and Sivamani, mother of three children, had her younger son witnessing the cruel sexual assault committed on her while she was under police custody. Despite threats to their lives, both these courageous women filed fundamental rights cases for unlawful arrest and detention and custodial rape. They identified three police

officers and nine navy personnel as the perpetrators of these crimes. The accused, who were transferred from Mannar after the incidents, filed a petition requesting the transfer of their cases to Anuradhapura due to alleged threats against their lives. Since then both victims and their family members underwent continuous harassment at the hand of the military and repeatedly received death threats. The case dragged on for over four years, in the course of which Wijakala has gone missing and Sivamani received many threats to the effect that she will be killed if she comes to Anuradhapura for the court hearings. The case was listed to be heard in Anuradhapura High Court on September 21, 2005 but both the victims did not turn up.

There are many women like Wijakala and Sivamani who suffer and bear the scars of such brutal crimes while their violators enjoy amnesty and continue to commit such malicious war crimes against minority women. We are fully aware of the fact that sexual harassment and assault, torture, mutilation, rape and murder are not mere misfortunes of armed conflict, but strategic weapons of war that have been used against us for the dreadful purpose of spreading terror, destabilizing societies and breaking resistance.

We wish to highlight here that rape is amongst the gravest of all human rights violations and, under international law, has been deemed a crime against humanity and a war crime. It was alleged that Mary Madeleine (27) was raped and stabbed in her chest and her daughter Lakshika (9) was stabbed in her vaginal area. Madeleine and her family had



fled Sri Lanka and lived as refugees in India for many years. They returned last year when there was some hope for peace and settled down in Vankalai only to be killed in this despicable manner.

We, Mannar women, are calling on the Sri Lankan government to immediately launch a thorough, independent, and impartial investigation into the killing of Mary Madeleine and her family. We demand that such an investigation be conducted with the participation of members of independent human rights organizations.

We also call upon the President

make sure that all reported cases of murder, torture and sexual violence committed by the armed forces against women are investigated properly and prosecuted where necessary.

We further call on international donors to provide special support to help protect survivors of state sponsored sexual violence and increase the victims' access to the justice system locally and, if necessary, internationally as well.

Lastly, while strongly condemning all attacks on civilians Tamils, Muslims or Sinhalese, we call upon all the warring parties in Sri Lanka to immediately stop hostilities and resume peace talks with a genuine commitment to finding a lasting political solution to the conflict.

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Art of Living seeks to bring peace in Sri Lanka

Tamilchelvam in Oslo and handed him a 10-minute video with Ravi Shankar's appeal for peace.

Swami Sadyojathah separately went to Sri Lanka's northern town of Kilinochchi where the LTTE has its political and administrative headquarters and presented a copy of the video.

On Monday, former Sri Lankan prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe flew to Bangalore and urged Ravi Shankar to play "a decisive role" to prevent a war from breaking out in the island nation.

Ravi Shankar's involvement with Sri Lanka began after the December 2004 tsunami that killed about 30,000 people in the island, mostly in the troubled northeast.

"I went with Guruji in January 2005. It was his first visit to Sri Lanka. Suddenly he told me: 'Why don't you go to Jaffna and see how we can help people there.'

"From then I have spent time in Jaffna. We have Art of Living teachers from Tamil Nadu in Jaffna. Nothing there happens without the support of LTTE. We are doing work with help from TRO (Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation, a pro-LTTE NGO).

"I personally conducted a few classes with some of the leaders associated basically with the LTTE. In Jaffna town, Nelliady, such places. Technically the army controls the areas but the LTTE calls the shots. They became a big success.

"People who come to our classes are mainly LTTE sympathisers. They would tell us: 'If the LTTE was not there, it would be difficult for us to live in Sri Lanka.' Those in the group are coming for breathing lessons. I have visited Kilinochchi a few times to meet their education department to introduce the courses there.

"A few (pro-LTTE) Tamil MPs have done the course. They also had a very good opinion.

"The Guruji has also meet Buddhist monks in Kandy. Also (former prime minister) Ranil Wickremesinghe and President Mahinda Rajapakse. The Norwegian ambassador in Colombo is also in touch with us.

"The ambassador said: 'Whatever we are doing, it is only at the technical level, arranging meetings. But the mindset can change only through spirituality.'

"Rajapakse also wants Guruji to come to Sri Lanka as often as possible. Let us hope for the best."