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Lest We Forget - Volume II

Introduction

This is an early version of Volume II of NESoHR publication, 'Lest We Forget'. Volume I, published in 2007, covered the large scale massacres of Tamil civilians by the Sri Lanka military from 1970's to 2001. This volume covers the period from 2002 until publication in August 2008. Neither the coverage in Volume I nor the coverage in this volume is complete. In both volumes, the incidents where NESoHR was able to collect at least some information are covered.

Together with this volume, NESoHR is also publishing an EXCEL file, "Victims of Violence-post CFA". This EXCEL file lists the names of victims killed and disappeared during the coverage period. The names of victims of the massacres described in this volume can also be found in the EXCEL file.

The EXCEL file also lists, the 15 cases selected for the special Presidential Commission of Inquiry of 2007. This inquiry was to be observed by the eleven member IIGEP (Independent International Group of Eminent Persons) headed by an Indian Justice P N Bhagwati. Some of these 15 cases are also described in this volume. The ill fate of this Presidential Commission of Inquiry and the IIGEP leaving their role in frustration are now history and it stands as proof to the longstanding culture of impunity in this island.

During the first few years of the coverage period, that is prior to August 2006, the names of victims could be obtained by contacting the families of the victims either directly or through phone. After August 2006, that is after the heightened level of violence, people living in GoSL controlled areas became too fearful of even contacting NESoHR staff working from LTTE controlled Vanni area. Therefore most of the name lists of victims after this time was obtained through various other channels. Some dared to contact NESoHR by mail. Some were obtained through other human rights groups working in the GoSL controlled areas. Further names were obtained from Assistant Government Agent Divisions who usually collate such data within their divisions. In some cases media is the only source of data.

A collation of civilian casualties, killed and disappeared, goes some way towards exposing the violence and the immense cost paid by the civilians in the conflict. However, this is only part of the picture. The sum total of the loss of property, loss of livelihood, loss of education, loss of child nutrition and loss of physical and mental health amounts to a far greater loss which are harder to codify and present and not as easily digested as the numbers of killed and disappeared.

NESoHR hopes this collation of data of a specific kind will assist in the more accurate understanding of the civilian casualties of this conflict.

1. Pesalai housing scheme massacre – 23 December 2005

- NESOHR report of January 2006



On Friday December 23rd, a Sri Lankan Navy vehicle was hit by a claymore mine in the “Hundred House Scheme” area in Pesalai. As has been the long practice of the Sri Lankan Armed forces the Navy began their retaliation against the civilians living in the housing scheme.

The first step of this retaliation was to indiscriminately spray bullets into the housing scheme. Panicky occupants began fleeing in all directions. The teenage children of one old couple, the Cruz couple, were not at home. They had gone to a friend’s house to watch television. As a result the parents worried about their children did not flee like the rest of the residents of the housing scheme. Another family of four, the Fernando family was fleeing like the rest. However, the mother, being an asthmatic patient could not continue running with their three year old boy in her hand. She saw the Cruz couple standing at

the door of their home and told her husband to keep running with their five year old child and she ran into the Cruz home with her younger child. Fernando and the five year old ran on and stopped about five houses further down and stayed there.

Navy men arrived at the Cruz house and burnt the four people alive and removed their bodies. A burnt arm of the three year and some items from his mother’s handbag were later found among the ashes.

2. Trincomalee students massacre – 2 January 2006



The Gandhi statue at the junction in the Dockeyard Road near the sea in Trincomalee is a popular spot for young men to gather in the evening for socializing. On 2 January 2006, many young men were gathered there. Some men who arrived in a three-wheeler threw a grenade at the gathering of the young men and then went towards the Fort.

One St Joseph school student, Yoharasa Poonkulalon, was injured in this grenade attack. As the other students were getting ready to take the injured student to the hospital, the Sri Lankan Navy that arrived at the spot began shooting at the students for 10 minutes.

The people at the seashore began fleeing in all direction. In the meantime, Sri Lankan Navy came towards the students, ordered them to lie on the ground and attacked them indiscriminately. Five students died in this attack. Another five students were seriously injured.

This massacre was one of the few of massacres selected by the Sri Lankan Government for special inquiry under the supervision of an international monitoring group of eminent person headed by an Indian judge. The eminent person left the island in disgust in 2008 after losing confident in the manner in which the investigations were conducted.

Sukirtharajan, a journalist with the Tamil daily Sudaroli wrote a full length investigative article about the killing of the five students identifying the Sri Lankan Army as the culprit. He was shot dead on 6 January 2006.

3. Manipay family massacre – 24 January 2006 - NESOHR report of Sept 2006



A white van group arrived at the door of the home of Nahendram Bojan in Manipay in Jaffna on 24 January 2006 just after midnight. The men knocked on the door and demanded that they are from the Sri Lanka Army and they needed to check the home.

When the door was opened by the second daughter of Bojan, the white van group started shooting.

Three people, the mother and two daughters were killed on the spot. The father and son were injured and admitted to hospital later. The husband of the first daughter, Thiageswaran escaped without injuries because he managed to hide in the dark and was alive to tell the story of the massacre.

The entire family of Nahendram Bojan was a very accomplished family. He was the Scout Commissioner for the KKS area in Jaffna for a long period and he was also the Northern Commissioner for the St John's Ambulance. One of his daughters was an actress and was reading for her degree. His other daughter a graduate was an English teacher. His son was also a mathematics teacher.

4. TRO employees disappearance –29 January 2006 - NESOHR report April 2006



On 29 January and 30 January 2006, ten Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) employees were abducted in two separate incidents in the Welikande area in the Polonaruwa district while they

were travelling from the TRO office in Batticaloa to the TRO office in Kilinochchi.

Two women were released in a few days. Another woman S Dosini was also released by the abductors. Seven TRO employees are still missing.

Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action appeal on 10 March 2006 for their release.

This massacre was one of the few of massacres selected by the Sri Lankan Government for special inquiry under the supervision of an international monitoring group of eminent person headed by an Indian judge. The eminent person left the island in disgust in 2008 after losing confidence in the manner in which the investigations were conducted.

5. Trincomalee riots – 12 April 2006 - NESOHR report May 2006



Trincomalee district has been the hotbed of violence against the Tamils since the 1980's. The violence was used to gradually evict the Tamils from the

district. This is clearly demonstrated by the demographic data collected by the Sri Lanka Government for the district over the years.

On 12 April, another Trincomalee riots erupted following a grenade explosion targeting the Sri Lankan Army. Fifteen people of whom ten are Tamils were killed in the riots and a further fifty people were seriously injured. More than one hundred Tamils sustained less serious injuries and a lot of property belonging to Tamils was set alight. This is the worst violence against Tamils in Trincomalee since those that occurred in 1983.

In the initial explosion one Sri Lankan soldier and five Sinhala civilians were killed. Tamils witnessed three truck loads of Sinhala thugs being brought to the Trincomalee town even prior to this explosion. These thugs began robbing the business premises belonging to the Tamils and then set them alight. A huge smoke arose from the town as a result of the burning buildings. Soon attacks on Tamils started. Guns and machetes were used in these attacks. Many Tamils who were in town to do their shopping for the April new year were killed in this fashion.

There were many police, Navy and Army personnel who stood by and watched as the violence was perpetrated.

6. Puthoor massacre – 18 April 2006 - NESOHR report April 2006



Puthoor is in the Jaffna district. Kannan was a three-wheel driver from Puthoor. He regularly drops a painter friend at his home after work. On 18 April, he was dropping

this painter friend at his home as usual. Also in the three-wheeler were three more friends going for a fun ride. People at shop they passed saw the five friends packed inside the small three-wheeler going to drop the painter friend and they also saw four of the friends, that is less the painter, returning. People at the shop also saw SLA persons on motorbikes coming from behind the three-wheeler, stopping it and turning it back. At this time another person came on a bicycle stopped at the shop, bought some sugar and was riding back to his home in the same direction as the three-wheeler.

When Kannan did not return home that night, his father came looking for his son and saw his body and the three-wheeler on the road. Initially SLA refused anyone to go further to look for the rest of the friends. Eventually people were allowed to search and the bodies of the five people, four friends and the shopper, were recovered from the fields on the side of the road.

7. Muthur bombing – 25 April 2006



The Sri Lankan, Navy, Army and the Air Force staged a combined attack on the Tamil civilian settlements in the village of Muthur East in Trincomalee district for more than four hours on 25 April 2006. Crushed bodies of twelve civilians were found at the end of the attack. Among the victims were three children aged 4, 15 and 16.

3000 families from Muthur east displaced after this attack and among those who displaced are 25 civilians injured by the combined attack by all three forces.

This was the first aerial bombing carried out by the Sri Lanka Air Force since the signing of the ceasefire agreement in 2002. SLMM and UNICEF

8. Uthayan Daily Press Office attack – 2 May 2006



The attack on the Uthayan Daily Press Office in Jaffna was part of the ongoing suppression of media in this island. During the post-CFA period scores of journalists were killed, imprisoned and threatened. So much so, international organizations like “Reporters Without Borders” have listed Sri Lanka as one of the worst countries for media freedom and safety of the journalists. The attack of the Uthayan press office was one of the most spectacular attacks on the media.

On 2 May 2006, the Uthayan press office was busy with its routine work for the next day issue of the daily. Around 7.30pm, armed Sri Lankan military and EPDP men entered the press office and opened fire on the employees. Two of the employees were killed and many were injured. The gunmen deliberately smashed the computers and other equipment at the press office.

Although the entire Tamil community knew who carried out the attack, and the media organizations condemned the attack, the perpetrators were unperturbed and continued their attacks on the media.

9. Nellyyadi massacre – 4 May 2006 - NESOHR report May 2006



Nellyyadi is a small town near the eastern coast of the Jaffna district. On 4 May 2006, seven young men were on their way to a friend’s party in a three-wheeler. They were in a jolly mood and were carrying alcohol with them for use in the party. Just before their three-wheeler neared the Nellyyadi junction army camp, a grenade was thrown into the camp. The military blindly opened revenge fire, killing all the seven friends.

10. Manthuvil Temple massacre – 6 May 2006



Manthuvil is a village near the Chavakachcheri town in the Jaffna district. Eight young men were spending the night on 6 May 2006 at the Manthuvil Kolathamman temple after a day's work in preparations for the "Kumpaboshekam". They had already taken permission from the Sri Lanka Army to spend the night at the temple.

While they were at the temple, the Sri Lankan military that drove past the temple at 7.00pm stopped at the temple and held an investigation and left. Another military unit came around at 11.00pm and conducted another investigation. Neighbors heard another jeep arriving at the temple at 12.00 midnight. Following this gun shots and wails were also heard by the neighbors.

People were too frightened to come out in the middle of the night. On day break people came out and started to look for the young men. People noticed blood marks that had been covered with sand.

Later some people said that the bodies of these men were to be found in the nearby forest. Sri Lankan military stopped the people from going to that area. A while later SLMM was allowed into the area to look for the bodies but the SLMM did not find the bodies.

The families of the eight young men believe that Sri Lankan military personnel killed them and disposed the bodies.

11. Allaipiddy massacre – 13 May 2006



Allaipiddy is one of the islets off the coast of the Jaffna peninsula and is located 15 kilometers south west of Jaffna town. During the period of the massacre, this and the other islets near it were under the full control of the Sri Lankan Navy. The EPDP paramilitary group was also working with the Sri Lankan Navy in this region. Even after the CFA agreement, people were allowed into this area only after checking their identity card and after putting the people through a body search.

The home of Sellathurai Amalathas is located near the PhilipNeri Catholic church in Allaipiddy. People in the neighborhood were gathering in this home to spend the night due to the prevailing fear of arbitrary killings and executions that had begun in Jaffna following the election of President Rajapakse. On 13 May 2006, people were gathered in this house as usual when the men from the EPDP paramilitary group arrived at the house and ordered the people in the house to switch off the lights.

This was followed by indiscriminate shooting of the residents in the house. Eight out of the eleven people who were sleeping in the house were killed. Four people from one family that included a baby and a four year old child were killed in this shooting. One of the injured died because the Sri Lankan Navy prevented the injured from being taken to the hospital. All of the eight people killed in this shooting are members of one extended family.

Some other Sri Lankan Navy men entered the home of Shanugalingam in the neighboring village of Puliyanakoodal and shot dead three people from that family. This was followed by the shooting of the tea shop owner Senthuran in his own home in the nearby village of Vankalavadi.

A total of 14 civilians were shot and killed that night in this area. Many more civilians were injured. Many shops and property were damaged.

See also: Amnsety report, ASA 37/014/2006, 16 May 2006

12. Vadamunai pressure mine – 7 June 2006

Vadamunai is a village near the border of the Batticaloa district on the Paduvankarai side of the Batticaloa lake. This is located 25 kilometers from Valaichenai.

On 7 June 2006, 20 people from this village were traveling in a tractor-trailer to purchase items for their homes. This is the practice of the people since the village is too remote and there is no regular bus service. Their tractor-trailer was targeted by a pressure mine attack carried out by the Deep Penetration Unit of the Sri Lanka military. Ten civilians were killed including a six months old baby. Another nine were injured.

This deliberate attack on poor Tamil families living in a remote village was viewed by the villagers as a planned action aimed at forcing the people to leave the area so that Sinhala people could be settled there. The eastern districts of the Tamil homeland have seen many such massacres that were aimed at forcing the people to leave the area so that Sinhala settlements could be created in the same area. Remote areas are convenient for such activities because these are hardly noticed by the international or the Colombo based human rights groups.

The Vadamunai people have faced many such atrocities in the past too. In 1990 the people of this village was evicted by the Sri Lankan military. They began resettling in 1995. After the CFA, larger number of the evicted Tamil people began resettling. Following the Vadamunai massacre people are fearful to live in the village.

13. Vankalai family massacre – 8 June 2006



Vankalai is a coastal village in the Nanaddan AGA Division in Mannar District. Most of the people of this village depend on fishing for their livelihood. A locality in this village is called Thomaspuri.

The family of Martin, the parents and their two children, lived in Thomaspuri. On 8 June 2006, the entire family was stabbed to death in their home as the family slept. Martin is a carpenter and his carpentry tools were used to murder the family. His wife was raped before she was murdered. The father and the two children were hung from the roof after they were murdered.

Although there are no eyewitnesses to this massacre, military boot marks were found all around the home. The villagers also say that there were more than usual military movements in the village on that day.

14. Kaithady mass grave – 6,7,8 June 2006



Kaithady is in the Jaffna district along the A9 road. It is 10 kilometers from Jaffna town.

During the month of June 2006, workers who were mining gravel from the area discovered a human corpse in the open space in Kaithady not far from the A9 road. They reported it to the Grama Sevakar (GS) Ratnaraj who coordinated the exhumation of the area with the police and the SLMM after obtaining orders from the Chavakachcheri judge.

Over three days of digging four bodies were discovered including that of a Hindu priest who went missing after he left his temple following a pooja. The items he had used for his pooja. Was also found with his body.

Ratnaraja, the GS, was later shot by persons on motorbike and he escaped with injuries.

15. Pesalai church massacre – 17 June 2006



On 17 June 2006 morning, Sri Lankan Navy (SLN), following its serious defeat at a sea clash in Pesalai seas, took revenge on Tamil civilians in Pesalai. Tamils had taken refuge in the Church of Lady of Victory. The defeated SLN cordoned the Pesalai area. The Navy personnel proceeded to Pesalai blindly firing. They came around the Church of Our Lady of Victory at Pesalai and took positions outside its walls and started hailing grenades inside the crowded church. One woman was killed.

They also began shooting blindly at the fishermen who were rushing to the shore when they heard the clashes in the sea. Five fishermen were later found dead inside their boats. The boats on shores were also burnt down by the SLN, 40 boats and 25 huts were damaged. Fishing nets worth of 10 million rupees were also burnt down.

16. Action Faim INGO staff massacre – 5 August 2006



Action Faim is an INGO based in France that was working to assist the tsunami affected people in Trincomalee. They had an office in Muthur located in the Trincomalee district.

Following widespread military clashes between the Sri Lankan Government and LTTE in August 2006, people were moving out the area. The staff of this INGO was ordered by their superiors to remain in their Muthur office.

The Sri Lankan military carried out a point blank execution of 17 employees of this INGO on 5 August 2006. The military had buried the bodies of the victims which were exhumed later for forensic examination. This massacre created an international outcry.

This massacre was one of the few of massacres selected by the Sri Lankan Government for special inquiry under the supervision of an international monitoring group of eminent person headed by an Indian judge. The eminent person left the island in disgust in 2008 after losing confidence in the manner in which the investigations were conducted.

Action Faim is demanding an international investigation into the massacre.

17. Nedunkerni ambulance claymore – 8 August 2006



Nedunkerni is located in the northern part of the Vavuniya district. Nedunkerni hospital provides the main medical services to the people for this region. This hospital is not well equipped and therefore any complicated cases are frequently transferred to the larger hospital in the Mullaithivu district.

On 8 August 2006, around 7.00pm, an ambulance delivered a pregnant mother at the Puthukkudiyiruppu hospital in the Mullaithivu district and was on its way back to Nedunkerni hospital around 10.00pm. This ambulance came under the claymore attack of the Sri Lankan military Deep Penetration Unit. Five people, a doctor, his wife, two nurses, and the ambulance driver, in the ambulance were killed in the attack.

The killed doctor, Dr Jeyabalina, was the only doctor at the Nedunkerni hospital.

18. Eastern bombing and shelling – August - December 2006



Over a period of six months the LTTE controlled parts of Trincomalee and the parts of Batticaloa adjacent to Trincomalee district were subjected to massive military onslaughts by the Sri Lanka military that did not spare the civilians. Indeed the area was cut off and as a result accurate recording has not been made to date of the events that resulted in more than 200 civilian deaths. This is a brief description of the events over this six months period. The number of people killed in each of these military assaults is sketchy. However, accurate data obtained from AGA divisional offices, where families registered the loss of family members gives away the picture.

The onslaught was started on the pretext of taking control of a sluice gate that let water to the rice fields from a water tank called the Mavilaru. Tamils in Muthur in Trincomalee where this water tank is located closed the sluice gate that let water to several acres of paddy fields as a protest for not giving them the same water supply facilities. Though this dispute was resolved with the mediation of the SLMM, the government went ahead with its onslaught.

The first onslaught from air and land over the Mavilaru issue was staged on 6 August. The villages that were affected on that day include, Eechilampattu, Nallur and Upparu.

Already, there were many displaced people in these villages who had displaced earlier due to previous assaults in Sampur nearby.

The displaced civilians had by now got pushed from Muthur East in Trincomalee by continuous onslaughts into Vaharai, a narrow strip of coastal belt joining Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts. The second largest assault took place on 19 August targeting Vaharai. Again land and air attack on the civilians resulted in more than 100 deaths. Families did not even have the chance to give decent burials for the dead.

Civilians who were still left behind in the Muthur East area north of Vaharai were now considered to be families of LTTE members and the Sri Lanka military brutally attacked these people on 28 August. When the SLA started its attack, the people tried to move out using the bridge at Ilankathurai-Muhathuvaram. The bridge was destroyed by the SLA preventing any escape of the people. In the ensuing attack at least 25 civilians were killed.

Having expelled the people by such attacks on Muthur East, the SLA began its onslaughts on Vaharai, where the displaced civilians were crowded. This area saw massive attacks during November and December months, causing hundreds of deaths.

While this was going on over a period of six months, the Government of Sri Lanka prevented, humanitarian agencies including the ICRC, and even the SLMM from visiting Vaharai. When the SLMM was finally permitted to go, people pleaded with the SLMM to give them protection from the bombing and shelling. For the six months the Government of Sri Lanka did not even allow food convoys to enter Vaharai. On more than two occasions, attempts made by ICRC to take food convoys were thwarted by the SLA.

Eventually, the SLA succeeded in its attempt to push all the people out of Vakarai as a way to expelling the LTTE from the area.

LTTE too was criticized internationally for preventing the fleeing civilians and not allowing the civilians to leave Vaharai sooner. Some of the civilians took to their feet and walked through forests to escape the attacks and hunger. Five civilians who took by boat were drowned when their boat capsized. Tamil people on the other hand were critical of the international community for failing to condemn the indiscriminate attack on civilians and for denying them humanitarian aid.

See also AI Index: ASA 37/033/2006 (Public), 8 November 2006

19. Allaipiddy shelling - 13 August 2006



Allaipiddy is one of the islets off the Jaffna coast. Following clashes between the Sri Lanka military and the LTTE near Allaipiddy, the military fired indiscriminately towards the PhilipNeri church where people had taken refuge.

The total death toll which many say was very high remains unrecorded to this date.

The Parish Priest of the PhilipNeri church, Fr Jim Brown, who witnessed the entire shelling incident, was later disappeared by the Sri Lanka military.

See also: PUBLIC AI Index: ASA 37/025/2006, 12 September 2006

One young girl who wishes to remain anonymous later wrote about her experience caught up in this shelling. Her writing is important because there are no other recording of the events of that night. According to her, they felt trapped as the shelling exploded all around them. They sought safety in the PhilipNeri church. Then the SLA persons came to the church and promised to escort the people to Jaffna. What the SLA did was to use the people as shields and then once they neared their own camp abandoned the people who had to dodge shells and find their way back to the church. The SLA repeated this a few times before people realized what they were actually doing. A few hours later shells came directly at the church. There was fire from the naval gunboats as well. Many people were by now dead. Children lost parents. After the carnage when Fr Jim Brown tried to recover the bodies but the Navy obstructed it.

To date the exact number of people killed has not been recorded.

This same PhilipNeri church was at the center of another large scale disappearance in the 1990 which is covered in Volume I of this book.

20. Senchcholai bombing – 14 August 2006 - NESOHR report September 2006



In the Senchcholai complex in Vallipunam in the Mullaithivu district hundreds of female students in the age group of 17-20 were gathered on 10 August 2006 for a weeklong training in leadership and first aid which was intended for preparing the students for leadership in their school and community during the impending war.

On 14 August 2006 around 7.30am, Sri Lankan Air Force carried out extensive bombing. 52 students and two staff were killed. 130 students were seriously injured. Many more received minor injuries. Three of the injured girls lost one leg and another girl lost an eye.

A further three of the injured girls were sent by the Mullaithivu hospital to Kandy for treatment. Sri Lankan Terrorism Investigation Department (TID) immediately put the three injured girls under arrest. The three girls were eventually cleared and were brought to Vavuniya hospital to return to their homes in Vanni when one of the injured girls died. The other two girls were immediately taken back Kandy hospital. Eventually the whereabouts of the two girls became mysterious except that their parents were permitted to meet the girls at prearranged locations. The parents of the girls remain at a loss as to the detention of the two girls without charges for almost two years.

21. Pottuvil massacre – 17 September 2006



Pothuvil, located in the Amparai district, has a water reservoir called Raththan. The bank of this reservoir is in the Muslim Pothuvil GS Division but was transferred to the Lapugala Sinhala GS Division. As a result, there were many land disputes between the Sinhala and Muslim communities. Tension prevailed between the two communities.

On 17 September 2006, Sri Lankan Special Task Force (STF) of the police killed ten Muslim men who went to the bank of the reservoir to repair the bank. One survivor was rescued by the people and was admitted to the hospital. Angry Muslims threw stones at the STF and demanded the STF out of their village.

22. PTK bombing - 16 October 2006



Sri Lankan aerial bombing on 16 October 2006, in Puthukkudiyiruppu in the Mullaithivu district, killed four people including a baby and a four year girl.

Large number of shrapnel also fell inside a children's home, Arivuchchulai Children's Home, nearby that was housing more than 200 boys. One boy in the children's home was also slightly injured.

Nine homes were damaged. One of the families was in their bunker with their one month old baby. The bomb exploded only 8 metres from the bunker. The baby went into a coma and was rushed to the hospital and the baby recovered.

One house that was damaged had 300 chickens kept in an enclosure. This has vanished without a trace. Another house in which a 12 year girl died and 6 members of the family were injured had two buses parked in its yard. These also completely disappeared.

22. Kilinochchi hospital precincts bombing – 2 November 2006



In the poorly resourced health service in the Vanni area the Kilinochchi district hospital is the only one with a few modern facilities. In 1998 it was bombed out and destroyed. The hospital was eventually rebuilt and opened in a new location in 2005.

Sri Lankan Air Force bombers bombed the precincts of the newly built Kilinochchi district hospital again on 2 November 2006. Sixteen bombs were dropped and fifteen of them exploded. One house behind the hospital was flattened. Five civilians inside the home, including two students of Kilinochchi Central College, were killed.

The Kilinochchi district hospital sustained damages. Three hospital employees and three patients also were injured. The roof ceiling of the hospital fell down. Shrapnel were strewn

inside many of the hospital wards including the maternity ward. The bombing forced the patients to run out of the hospital in panic in the middle of treatment. Three hundred inpatients and 700 outpatients scattered in fear. Among them were newborn infants and mothers who had just given birth to them.

Since it was school closing time school children also screamed and ran in panic. The SLMM and ICRC viewed the dead, injured and the damages to the hospital.

23. Vavuniya Agriculture School massacre – 18 November 2006

On 18 November 2006, the students of the Vavuniya Agriculture School in Thandikulam were taking part in a Shramadana activity of tidying up the yards of their school complex.

Following an attack on the Sri Lankan military nearby, the military entered the school complex and ordered the students to come near them and then they opened fire. The students fell down to the ground. The military pointed to one student, Achchuthan, and ordered him to come near them. When Achchuthan walked towards them with his hands raised, he was shot many times and he died on the spot.

The other students were then shot while they pleaded with the military to spare them. Four students died in this shooting and another eleven were injured.

24. Padahuthurai bombing – 2 January 2007



On 2 January 2007, a small fishing community in Padahuthurai in Mannar district was bombed by the Sri Lankan Air Force. 15 civilians from one extended family, including six children, were killed and another 35 civilians were injured. Many among the injured were permanently maimed.

The community is made up of about 40 tight knit extended families. Most are refugees displaced from Jaffna in 1995 who decided to make this location their home. The Padahuthurai location was ideal for small scale fishing which most of the men in the community did in small manual boats. A further number of families from Jaffna joined them in 2006 as the death squads began killing people who supported the LTTE in Jaffna.

On 1st January 2007, the New Year was celebrated by the community as most Christians in the island do. 2nd January was a relaxed day and the community awaited the arrival of one of its families who had gone away to celebrate new-year with other relatives 10 Kms away. For two hours, they heard the drone of the usual spy plane which concerned them but that was common. There was no noise of a bomber which would have send them scurrying for safety. At 9.35 am, the eagerly awaited Kuhan and his family arrived walking from the bus stand a bit further away. The entire clan, especially the children ran to greet, happy new-year. That was the last pleasant memory of the community.

Some of the men had taken to the sea early that morning and they saw their homes in fire. They knew immediately what has happened and rushed back. Sahayarasa tells what he did.

“I was at sea, I heard the Kfir. I heard the bomb explosion. I saw our homes on fire. I got off the boat into the water and started to walk towards home. I could not get back immediately because pieces were flying. I met my wife and two children near the shore all of them injured. I ran towards my home. Mother was in her seat her head resting forward on a tree. She was dead. I lifted her head. My baby was on her lap. His head was blown up. We had to put his body in sack. My sister was dead; her children were dead. All the bodies were bloodied”.

25. Silavathurai claymore attack – 2 September 2007



Due to offensives of the Sri Lankan military on Mannar in 2007, people from Silavathurai began fleeing their homes. One van carrying 13 fleeing civilians came under the claymore attack of the Sri Lankan military on 2 September.

Since the attack took place in the middle of military clashes the bodies of the victims were not removed for two days. The decomposing bodies were eventually removed by the ICRC and brought to Mannar hospital

Among the victims was a father, mother and their four-year-old son.

Just three weeks later, on 26 September, Father Nicholas Pillai Pakiaranjith, was killed in a similar claymore attack, near the same area while he was transporting food for the refugees who have swelled in numbers as the attacks intensified. His assistant was also killed.

26. Periyamadu shelling – 25 October 2007



Following shelling by Sri Lanka military from the start of August 2007, people from the Manthai West AGA Division started to displace and the IDPs had taken refuge in camps in the village of Periyamadu.

On 25 October 2007, Sri Lanka military from the Thallady camp started shelling the Periyamadu village. Three civilians from one family were killed. Among them was a full term pregnant woman. Nine people were injured.

One of the injured woman, Jepalasingam Thiraviyam, said from her hospital bed, *“After my first husband died of illness, I married Jeyabalasingam. We had five children. We displaced together with our relatives to Periyamadu just a month ago because our own village, Vannankulam, was coming under Sri Lankan Navy shelling. Now my husband and two of my daughters were killed by this shelling”.*

Parish priest of Periyamadu, Sebamalai said, *“I was in Madhu at the time of the shelling. I went to the location of shelling as soon as I heard about it. I could see human body parts all over the place. All the people affected in this incident were recently people displaced from Mullaithivu.”*

27. Tharmapuram bombing – 25 November 2007



On 25 November 2007, Sri Lankan Air Force dropped more than eight bombs over the Tharmapuram area in Kilinochchi district.

A child and her parents from one house were killed by the bombing. Another child from another house was also killed.

Six civilians, including a couple, were seriously injured. One of the injured died in the hospital a few days later. Another injured victim lost her leg.

Three houses were flattened in the bombing and another seven houses were damaged.

28. Iyankulam claymore attack – 27 November 2007



Iyankulam is a very poor village in the Mullaithivu district. The only school in the village is Iyankulam GTM School. The senior students in this village school are regularly given training in first aid and they also help the medical staff working in the nearby Alankulam hospital.

On 27 they were traveling in an ambulance with their trainers to provide first aid for the large crowds that would be gathering for the Heroes' Day celebrations in Vanni. Their ambulance came under the claymore attack of the Sri Lankan military's Deep Penetration Unit.

Six school students, two of their trainers and the driver were killed in the attack. Among the children who were killed are a sister and brother. One girl survived the attack to recount a description of the attackers.

29. Voice of Tigers Radio station bombing – 27 November 2007



The Voice of Tigers Radio (VOT) station located on the A9 road in Kilinochchi, the A9 road section in front of VOT, and civilian houses nearby were bombed by Sri Lanka Air Force on 27 November 2007 at 4.30pm.

Three VOT employees were killed. Seven more civilians in their houses and travelling on the A9 road were also killed. Ten more civilians were seriously injured.

The VOT building and equipment were destroyed and were made unusable. This attack on VOT media was condemned by UNESCO.

The bombing took place on the day when Tamils commemorate the war heroes and the VOT plays a crucial role in broadcasting the event to the Tamils.

30. Thadchanamadhu claymore attack-29 January 2008

– NESoHR report May 2008



On 29 January 2008, a bus carrying mainly school children and teachers came under a claymore attack by the Sri Lanka military Deep Penetration Unit, near the Madhu church complex in the Mannar district. Twenty people in the bus were killed and a further twenty one, seventeen of them seriously, were injured. ***Among those killed are thirteen school children and a school principal.*** All the 13 students who died were aged between 10 and 16.

On that fatal day, the children and others from the displaced community that had taken refuge in the Madhu church complex were returning home, most of them from the Mannar Sinapandivirichchan Government Tamil Mixed School (GTMS), which is 5 Kms away. Both the children and the public take the same bus that plies between Madhu and their school as there is no school bus service. Around 2.30pm as the bus was nearing the Madhu church the claymore exploded.

31. Kiranchi bombing – 22 February 2008



On 22 February 2008, Sri Lankan Air Force bombed the village of Kiranchi in Poonahari in the Kilinochchi district.

Eight civilians staying in three homes died on the spot. Among them were a mother, her baby and her four years old child. Twelve civilians were taken to hospital with serious injuries and one injured woman died of her injuries in the hospital.

32. Murukandy claymore attack – 23 May 2008 – NESoHR report May 2008



On 23 May 2008, a private van carrying nineteen members of an extended family including several children was travelling on the Murikandy-Akkarayan road in Kilinochchi when the van came under a claymore attack of the Sri Lanka military Deep Penetration Unit, near Murukandy. Sixteen civilians including five children were killed and the other three passengers were injured.

The extended family in the van was returning from Mulankavil where they had visited a relative who was a patient at the Mulankavil hospital. All the five children killed in this attack are not only from one extended family but they also attended the same school in Parathipuram.

33. Nahathambiran temple pilgrim claymore attack - 2nd June 2008 –

NESoHR report June 2008



On 2 June 2008, a car carrying three families of pilgrims returning from a temple festival of the locally famous Nahathambiran Hindu temple in the Vanni region came under the claymore attack of the Deep Penetration Unit (DPU) of the Sri Lanka military. Six people were killed and four more were injured.



During normalcy this temple festival would attract huge crowds. However, due to the frequent claymore attacks and aerial bombing, such temple festivals and other public functions did not attract huge crowd in the Vanni area during the period of this attack. This was also true for this temple festival. This particular car was, however, returning from the temple festival and was carrying ten people including women and children from three families. As the car was traveling on the Oddusuddan-Mankulam road around 8.00pm it came under a claymore attack eight kilometers from Mankulam in the village called Karippaddamurippu. All six of the victims were killed on the spot. The four injured people were transferred to Mullaithivu hospital after a long delay. The details of the victims and their relationships are as follows.

34. PTK bombing – 15 June 2008 – NESoHR report June 2008



A woman in despair at the loss of her home

Puthukkudiyiruppu (PTK) is the biggest and the busiest town in the Mullaithivu district. On 15 and 16 June 2008, Sri Lankan bombers conducted extensive aerial raid over this town. Four civilians were killed and a further 10 were injured in the attack on the 15th.

School, hospital, temple, market, commerce buildings and homes were damaged. PTK MV School, Zonal Education Office, PTK hospital and Sri Kanthasamy Murugan temple sustained damages. Seven homes were completely damaged and a further 25 homes sustained some damages.