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NORTH EAST SECRETARIAT ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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nj h.Ng., y 021 2285986

KARADIPPOKU JUNCTION
KILINCHCHI
SRI LANKA
e-mail : nesohr2006@yahoo.com
www.nesohr.org

4 January 2007

The Secretary General
United Nations Organization

Your Excellency,

Killing of civilians in SL Air Force bombing – Iluppaikkadavai, Mannar

Sixteen innocent refugee civilians including children and pregnant women were killed and over forty seriously injured in the sleeping village of Kappalthurai in Iluppaikkadavai, Mannar in an air raid by the Sri Lankan Air Force at 0930 on 2 January 2007.

North East Secretariat on Human Rights (NESoHR) visited the spot, a location that was all too familiar to the Chairperson by virtue of the position as a Catholic Priest who had been the Parish priest of Navanthurai in Jaffna from where these unfortunate victims fled to safety from military atrocities in the mid nineties. This location served as an ad hoc sheltering hamlet for the refugee fishing families and the Chairperson of NESoHR visits this hamlet frequently to take care of the livelihood needs and matters relating to human rights. As a priest and a Human Rights Activist, the Chairperson of NESoHR attended the funeral of these victims and participated in the Requiem Mass held at Nachchikudah yesterday, 3 January 2007.

NESoHR strongly condemns this act of brutality perpetrated by the Sri Lankan Air Force on a location inhabited by refugee civilians for over a decade. The enclave is crowded with about 35 small huts housing the refugee fisher folk and does not in anyway indicate any signs that would confuse the area for a military complex as alleged by the government. The cruelty is aggravated by the blatant stance of the government that the victims are not civilians and that the SLAF did not make any mistakes in identifying the target as an LTTE military complex.

NESoHR views this cruel act as one in a series of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Government of Sri Lanka of vantage parts of the Tamil homeland to bring them under the occupying military. It is not our intention to enter into any political discussion on the on-going conflict. Rather, it is the human suffering and the misery that innocent civilians are put into that NESoHR is concerned about.

We therefore seek Your Excellency's immediate intervention in this matter and take necessary steps to initiate an inquiry that would examine all aspects of this tragedy and similar tragedies that have taken place hitherto. These poor folks need to be reassured that UN never fails to raise its voice when the downtrodden are affected. We also wish to call upon the international community in general, to act without delay in matters pertaining to the punitive measures and arrangements relating to compensation to the victims.

Thanking Your Excellency,

We remain,
Yours sincerely,

Rev.Fr.M.X.Karunaratnam
Chairperson NESoHR