



தமிழர் புனர்வாழ்வுக் கழகம் Tamils Rehabilitation Organization

கண்டி வீதி, கிளிநொச்சி, இலங்கை

Jaffna Road, Kilinochchi, Sri

25 March 2007

Funeral Held for TRO aid worker killed by Sri Lanka Army

The funeral of Mr Muthurasu Aruleswaran, a humanitarian aid worker from TRO's Disaster Management Unit (DMU), who was killed in a claymore mine attack by the Sri Lanka Army's "Deep Penetration Unit" (DPU), was held Sunday 25 March 2007 at the TRO Headquarters in Kilinochchi. Over 1,000 people paid their last respects to Mr Aruleswaran.

Mr. Aruleswaran was driving a **clearly marked TRO** Toyota Land Cruiser (License plate number: MU 7404) that was involved in humanitarian relief work with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Mannar District. These IDPs were displaced due to an offensive launched by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) on 22 & 23 March in the Pandivirichchan area.



The **clearly marked TRO vehicle** was destroyed when the Sri Lanka Army DPU detonated a claymore mine as the TRO vehicle drove by and then spayed the vehicle with automatic weapons fire before returning to Government controlled territory.



The attack occurred two kilometres from Periyamadu as the TRO vehicle travelled towards Iluppaikkadavai.

Mr Muthurasah Aruleswaran sustained serious injuries in the attack and died on the way to the hospital. The others in the vehicle were: Mr Vadivel Ravichchandran, the assistant Executive Director of TRO, Planning Director for Overseas TROs Mr Seenithamby Parameswaran, Mr Selvaratnam Nixon, the Director of Development Organisation for Akkarayan area and Mr Thevasakayampillai Mathews. All four received serious injuries and are being treated in the intensive care unit at Kilinochchi General Hospital.

The injured Mr Ravichchandran, TRO's Assistant Executive Director, made the following statement from his hospital bed:

"People from Pandivirichchan and Madhu areas fled, leaving their homes and belongings as the offensive by the Sri Lanka armed forces started. They were running for their lives through paddy fields and forests under the cover of darkness. As soon as we received the message our DMU immediately went into action. Food was cooked and rushed to the scene with drinking water which was followed by tent materials and other urgent necessities. People were in great panic. Some were concerned that some of their friends



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Registered Social Services & NGO No.: L50706
Company Registered Number in Sri Lanka: N(PBG) 92



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and relatives were still missing. People were given shelter in schools, temples, community halls and even under trees. Despite the threat posed by the constant shelling by the Sri Lanka armed forces, TRO's DMU was doing everything within its means to give relief to the displaced. The shelling only heightened our determination to do the needful for our people. We were monitoring the relief work in our vehicle. When we were about two kilometres from Periyamadu our vehicle was attacked and thrown several yards off the road."

"We fully realise that if not for the TRO, there would be nobody to look after our people at a time of need like this. Our sincerity of purpose has been proven on several occasions in the past. However, TRO faces a big challenge due to the severe restrictions enforced by the Government of Sri Lanka on medicine, food items and other essential commodities being allowed into the Vanni area."

The other three injured TRO humanitarian aid workers are still in serious condition and were not able to make any statements.

TRO calls on the International Community to ensure that the Government of Sri Lanka:

1. Respect the status of humanitarian relief workers
2. Ensure that the media and humanitarian relief agencies have unrestricted access to the IDPs
3. Ensure that food, medicine and humanitarian relief are not used as "weapons of war"

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