



Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation

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Re: TRO responds to media reports

It is with regret and concern that TRO must respond to the recent articles in the local and international media. The false allegations, complete fabrications, and twisting of facts reported in the articles are a weak attempt to malign the largest and most efficient NGO in the NorthEast. It appears that there is a coordinated malicious campaign by pro-government, anti-Tamil forces to malign TRO and the work that it performs. It is also disturbing that the increased levels of propaganda correspond to the diminished levels of peace discourse in Sri Lanka. TRO is seeking legal advice from its lawyers on this matter and will vigorously pursue their recommendations despite our reluctance to be distracted from our core objectives humanitarian activities.

TRO is a registered, tax exempt charitable organization in the USA and is a registered charity with the government of Sri Lanka. TRO's effectiveness in the NorthEast has been recognized by the local and international media, international NGOs (iNGOs), visiting dignitaries (President Clinton, Kofi Annan), foreign governments, the UN, and even by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL). Former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga recognized TRO's work in the post-tsunami construction of Temporary Shelters on 22 August, 2005 at a tea ceremony during which she presented the organization with a plaque.

Currently, the people of the NorthEast face one of the most difficult times in their history. The NorthEast is still reeling from the devastating impact of the tsunami and from 20 years of war. This, combined with a deteriorating political situation, makes the delivery of aid, relief, development and reconstruction difficult and at times almost impossible.

It is well documented by the GoSL, iNGOs, the media and other independent sources that although the NorthEast sustained 70% of the tsunami deaths and destruction in Sri Lanka, the NorthEast has not, for a variety of political and environmental reasons, received 70% of the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

TRO has stepped in to fill the gap left by the lack of support from the GoSL and the international community. In the absence of a structure, such as the scrapped PTOMs, to channel funds to the NorthEast, TRO has made use of the resources of the one million strong Tamil Diaspora, international NGOs, foreign governments and thousands of concerned individuals to address the vast need for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The NorthEast trails far behind the rest of the country in all indicators of health, poverty, development and education and has done so for decades.

TRO has always held itself to the highest standards of transparency and accountability despite continuously having to respond to emergency situations throughout the NorthEast: war, tsunami, floods, etc. In fact, TRO was one of the few NGOs to publish audited financial statements for the first 6 months post-tsunami. TRO has been attacked and slandered in the Sri Lankan media based on rumors and innuendo. Never has any proof been shown of any wrong doing or illegal activity. In fact the reality is quite the opposite; TRO is investigated and scrutinized by the authorities and the media on a regular basis to a level not experienced by any other NGO or entity. All of these investigations have all resulted in no wrong doing being proven at any level.

TRO has not commented on these allegations in the past in order to avoid becoming embroiled in the politically motivated mudslinging that takes place in the media. TRO's focus is on the humanitarian work and, as such, the organization takes no position on political matters and refuses to be drawn into the politicization of aid that many other agencies and NGOs have entered into. TRO is focused on the delivery of humanitarian aid, relief, reconstruction, rehabilitation and facilitating access to allow others to participate in these sectors throughout the NorthEast. We shall continue to provide this service as long as there is a need.

TRO wishes to take this opportunity to thank the well-wishers, partner organizations and others who have sent us messages of support and encouragement. TRO assures all stakeholders that it is very much encouraged by these positive gestures and would like everyone to know that these types of incidents bond and commit us more to working harder towards our objectives.