

# **Sri Lanka: Bring them before justice without undue delay**

Tuesday 23 March 2010, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 21 March 2010).

Human rights violations concerning General Sarath Fonseka have become a common issue for all opposition campaigns. Even the Tamil people, who suffered under this military leader, have shown sympathy for his wife Anoma who incidentally is crying for justice. The authorities have violated all norms of justice in the arrest and subsequently brought him before a military tribunal. If that is the way the Mahinda regime treats a war hero of the Sinhala nation, what better treatment can one expect for Tamil suspects? It is an irony of history that even, General Sarath Fonseka has to share the sufferings borne by the Tamil liberation prisoners.

The issue of political prisoners has been taken seriously by the Movement for the Release of Political Prisoners (MRPP) led by Chamil Jayanetti, a leading figure in the Left Liberation Front. Chamil has arranged visits to all prisons where political prisoners are generally kept. He says that only around 4000 prisoners are kept in regular prisons under the supervision of the police and judiciary. No specific details are given about other prisoners; though they are kept under military surveillance. There were around 25 so called Sinhala Koti; who are all released excepting for a few. Legal procedures are in place, for those who are kept in regular prisons. Some are already being released. In any case, the political prisoner has to suffer a lot of untold intimidation and corruption. General Fonseka and the others who were arrested with him had to undergo the same suffering.

## **Plight of political prisoners**

Several Tamil prisoners who were accused of engaging in the liberation struggle have come forward to contest in parliamentary elections. Even before General Fonseka engaged in politics, these Tamil prisoners wanted to participate in elections, merely to highlight Tamil liberation demands and the plight of political prisoners.

With the participation of General Fonseka in politics, the issue of political prisoners became a general problem affecting all nationalities. There are three important Tamil prisoners contesting in the Left Liberation Front election campaign. These prisoners were from the list of their own areas. However, when we contacted the prisons department we got a different story. The general in charge of the prisons department, Major General V R de Silva said that we can come with an attorney at law/ notary public and get the signature of the remand prisoner. However, the prison's superintendent said that he was unable to allow us, unless the prisoner gets the permission from the Supreme Court. Because the court order given to General Fonseka is not valid for other prisoners. There was no time for prisoners to go through these formalities; hence they opted to stand in the national list. The participants in the national list need not sign any papers.

On that basis, three Tamil suspects are included in the national list: Mahendran Puvitharan, prison No 4533, arrested in 1994 by Batticaloa police, magistrate court case no 6.; Kanagarajah Perapaharan, prison No J 32919, arrested on 25/ 11/1999, case No 208 /2005, appeal court No 107 Colombo; C.I.Ragupathy Sharma, 5749 arrested 9/2/2000, TID Colombo, case no 891/02, high court no 4, Colombo. All of them are kept in the G cell, H ward, New Magazine Prison in Colombo. They are remand prisoners kept under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

## **General amnesty**

The demand of the Movement for the Release of Political Prisoners is that there should be a general amnesty for all political prisoners.

Because the government claims that the law and order situation is very effective with a popular, stable government in power. On the other hand, the government should file action with proper charges and allow normal court procedure without resorting to the draconian PTA.

These prisoners claim that they are kept in prisons for long periods, without normal court action being taken. In a scenario where the great soldier of the Sinhala chauvinist regime is ill-treated in every possible way, we are happy that these Tamil prisoners are still alive!

---

**P.S.**

\* Lakkimanews column , March 21, 2010.