

**SRI LANKA**



**SLAUGHTER OF  
TAMIL CIVILIANS** *JULY 1995*





Wami

## The slaughter of Tamils began in 1958!

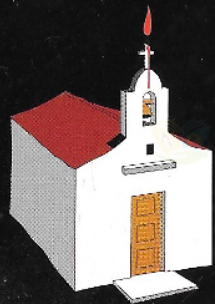
With the departure of the British rulers from the shores of Ceylon in 1948, the Sinhalese government of the time chose as its insignia and flag centrepiece a ferocious-looking lion with a sword on its paw! Meant to symbolise the mythical origin of the Sinhalese as the "Lion Race", the minority Tamils were the ones often put to the sword since then.

Many of those who believe the Sri Lankan government's version that "Operation Leap Forward" was purely a military offensive against the LTTE, not calculated to cause civilian destruction, must go back to the black chapters of the island's history since "independence". Calculated killings of Tamils began in 1956, with the first major island-wide riots against Tamils occurring in 1958, with hundreds of Tamils hacked to death and burnt alive (It would be interesting to note that LTTE leader Velupillai Pirabakaran was barely four years old when that first mass slaughter of Tamils took place!)

Killings of Tamil civilians continued thereafter at spasmodic intervals, unknown to the world until July 1983, when a major pogrom startled world opinion. State terrorism and the war that followed have now accounted for over 50,000 lives.

The Sri Lanka government's "Operation Leap Forward" is therefore the latest of Sri Lanka's black record sustained over a period of over 35 years; the first occurring during the Prime Ministerial regime of President Kumaratunga's father, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike.

This have now caused 257 civilian deaths, caused injuries including loss of limbs to 1414 others and has resulted in nearly 370,000 persons out of a population of over 800,000 (in the Jaffna peninsula) displaced from their homes.



## ***SRI LANKA:*** **DISPLACED** **CIVILIANS KILLED** **IN AIR STRIKE**

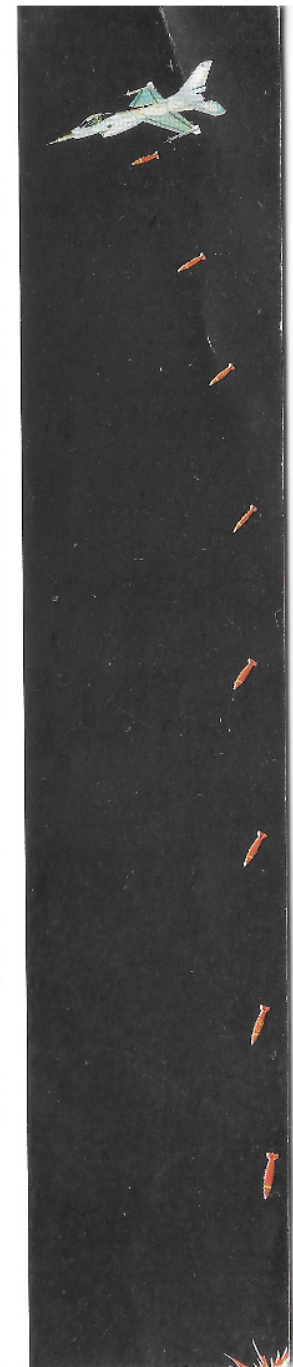
**G**eneva (ICRC) - On 9 July the Sri Lankan armed forces launched a large-scale military offensive against the positions of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) north of the city of Jaffna. The operation, involving intensive artillery shelling and air strikes, immediately forced tens of thousands of civilians to leave the area. Many of the displaced sought shelter in churches and temples, including several hundred people who took refuge in the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Navaly.



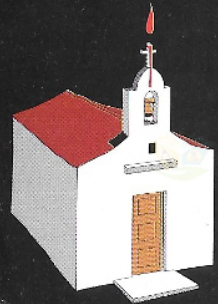
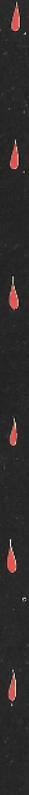
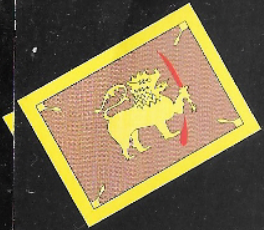
According to eye-witness accounts, this church and several adjacent buildings were hit by further air force strikes at 4.30 p.m. the same day. During the attack 65 people were killed and 150 wounded, including women and children. That evening and into the night Sri Lanka Red Cross staff evacuated most of the wounded by ambulance to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) present the next morning at the scene of the attack noted the widespread damage and measured the extent of the tragedy: many of the bodies had not yet been removed from the rubble. (The total deaths rose up to around 120.)

Deeply concerned by the series of violent acts that have claimed innocent victims, the ICRC calls on the parties involved to respect civilian lives, property and places of refuge. It also urges them to respect the protected zone around the Jaffna Teaching Hospital and to refrain from attacking any other medical facilities.

*ICRC Communication to the press No. 95/30 (11 July 1995)*





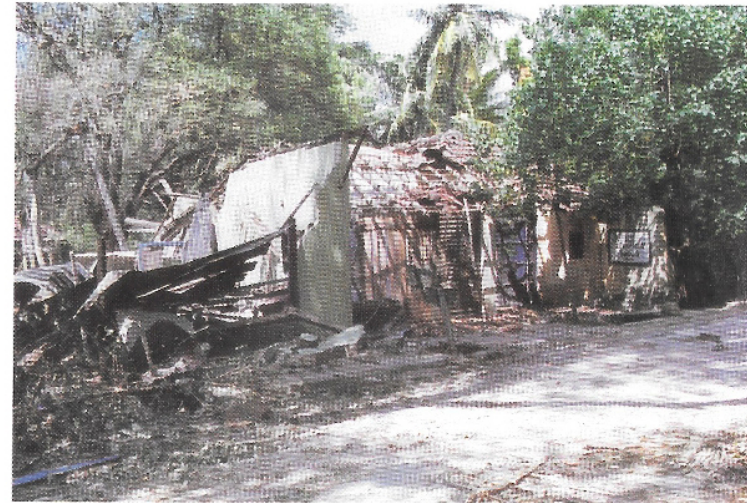


The church was full of displaced families who had sought refuge in the church on the armed forces' advice so as to avoid air raids, the bishop of the Jaffna diocese of the Protestant Church of South India said. He said 121 people were killed.

- Reuter, 17 July 1995.

The Catholic bishop of the northern Jaffna peninsula is urging President Chandrika Kumaratunga to order a halt to bombing of civilian zones during a military drive against Tamil rebels. The appeal follows an attack on a catholic church near Jaffna city on Sunday. In his letter, Bishop Thomas Savundranayagam says he has concluded the attack was deliberate because the military had urged civilians to take refuge in churches, schools and temples.

- Voice of America, 12 July 1995.







“Amnesty International is concerned about continuing reports of arbitrary arrests, torture including rape, disappearances and extra-judicial executions being reported in the northeast.”

- Amnesty report quoted by Reuters July 20

“We particularly call on the Sri Lankan Government forces to stop shelling and aerial bombing. Long distance shelling and bombing from high-flying planes will mean further indiscriminate killing of civilians in the densely populated Jaffna peninsula, as the church massacre demonstrates.”

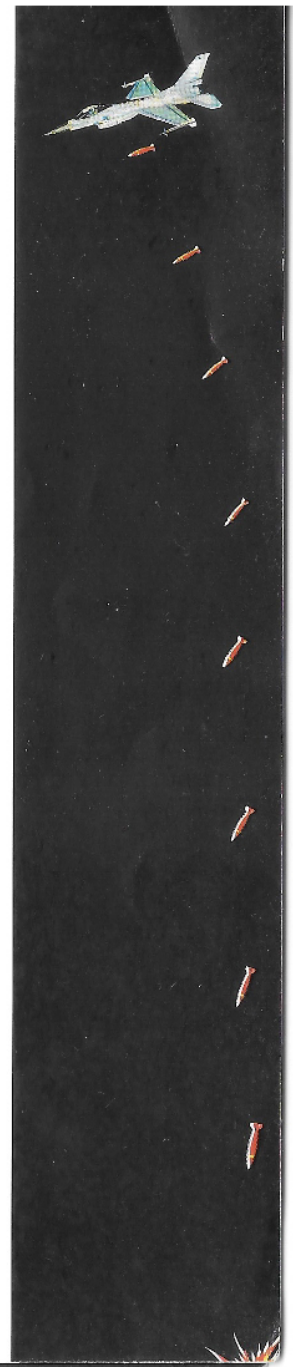
“We hold grave fears for the people of Jaffna. The Sri Lankan forces are moving fast towards Jaffna and there are reports of shortages of food and medical supplies.”

“The Australian Government should protest in the strongest terms to Sri Lanka against the killing of civilians and the destruction of property in the north and east of the island and again urge Sri Lanka and the LTTE to negotiate a peace settlement.”

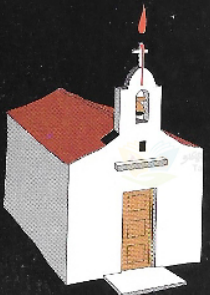
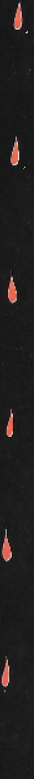
“Australia should also urge the UN, and particularly the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Jose Ayala Lasso, to activate his rapid response mechanisms and intervene in the conflict to prevent further abuses of human rights.”



- Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA)







“I want to express my deep-felt sharing in the suffering of so many people involved in the ethnic conflict that is tearing Sri Lanka apart. I share the grief of those who lost their loved ones in the bombing of the church and school of Navali.”

*- Pope John Paul in Vatican city 12 July.*





“We are concerned at reports of the bombing on 9 July of a church in Navali, near Jaffna... The Australian High Commissioner in Colombo, Mr. Bill Tweddell, has sought clarification of the circumstances of the incident and expressed Australia's concerns to the Sri Lankan Government about the reported loss of life and injury of civilians.

- Bob McMullan, Acting Foreign Minister, Australia in a Media Release on 14, July 1995.

“It was with dismay, horror and sadness I read of the bombing over the Jaffna peninsula.....such indiscriminate killings and hostilities cannot be tolerated by people who care for peace in our world. Do stop the suffering and bloodshed. The world community is shocked at this barbarity.”

- Jean Augustine, M.P. and Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Canada in a letter to President Kumaratunga.

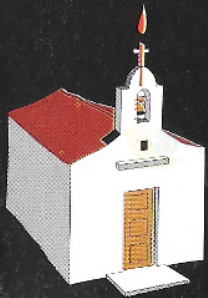






“We have received reports regarding "Operation Leap Forward", and the continued loss of life in Sri Lanka. There have been a number of tragic incidents since the conflict was engaged anew on April 19, 1995. These include the bombing of the St. Peter and Paul church and school at Navali, resulting in the deaths and injuries of many civilians including children. Attacks on civilians can in no way be condoned, and we are most concerned about this situation.”

- Bryan E. Burton, Coordinator for South Asia Division, Foreign Affairs Department, Canada, 11 July 1995.





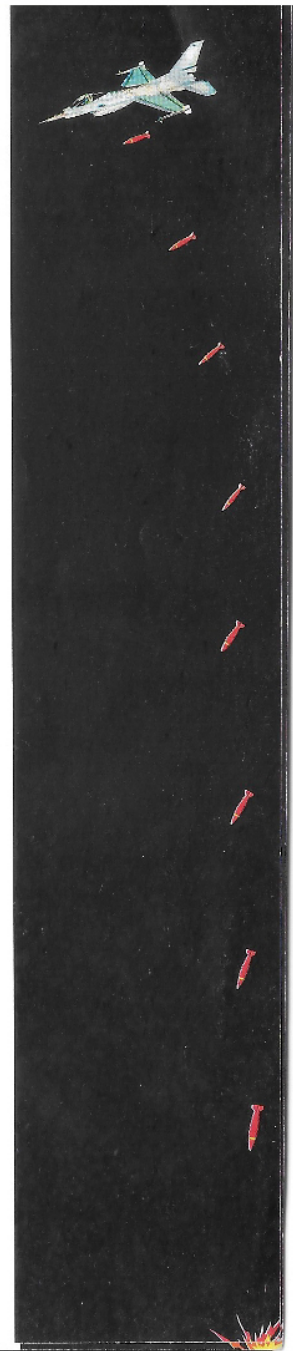


“The conduct of the war by the Sri Lanka government falls well short of accepted norms of behaviour.”

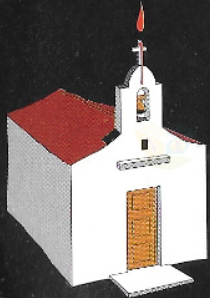
- Julian Filochowski, Director CAFOD

“Civilians are dying, not the LTTE. The people who have suffered the most are currently being bombed and shelled.”

- Poster by American missionary Kenneth Mulder, for which he was sent out of the country.







“At your earliest convenience I would appreciate hearing what actions your government has taken to .....ensure that a full, independent investigation into the air attack on the church of St.Peter and Paul is conducted and appropriate actions taken to ensure that such an attack against civilians does not happen in the future.....”

“The ongoing Operation Leap Forward by the government of Sri Lanka against the LTTE in Jaffna has resulted in enormous suffering for the civilian population with over 290 people reported killed and an estimated 400,000 people being dislocated.....”

- Archbishop Michael Peers of the Anglican Church of Canada in a letter addressed to President Kumaratunga



International Educational Development is gravely concerned at the genocidal onslaught launched by the Sri Lanka armed forces on the Tamil civilian population in the North of the island of Sri Lanka.

The intensive aerial bombardment and indiscriminate shelling of Tamil civil population centres in the Jaffna peninsula commenced on 9 July. Sri Lanka bombers have targeted temples



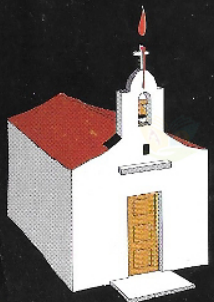
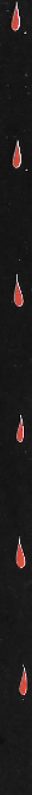
and refugee camps. During the following 36 hours, over 210 Tamil civilians, including over 60 women and children were killed and more than 350 injured. St.Peter's church in Navali and the adjoining St.Peter's school where hundreds had sought shelter were badly gutted. 56 bodies were retrieved from the debris, many of whom were women and children. The final death toll in Navali was about 120. Rescue workers have reported that torn limbs and pieces of human flesh were strewn over the area. Bombing by high flying supersonic jets continue to cause considerable civilian casualties.

.....We condemn the actions of the Sri Lanka government as a gross violation of humanitarian law, intended to terrorise the Tamil people into submission. We call upon President Chandrika Kumaratunga and the Sri Lanka government to stop committing these crimes against humanity.

- Press Release by Humanitarian Law Project, International Educational Development, Inc. on 12 July 1995.







“There is serious danger of the spirit of the mandate for peace given by the people of this country being reduced to a caricature and the war to restore peace deteriorating into a war to perpetuate war.”

- Campaign for Peace with Democracy,  
Colombo, Reuter report July 20.





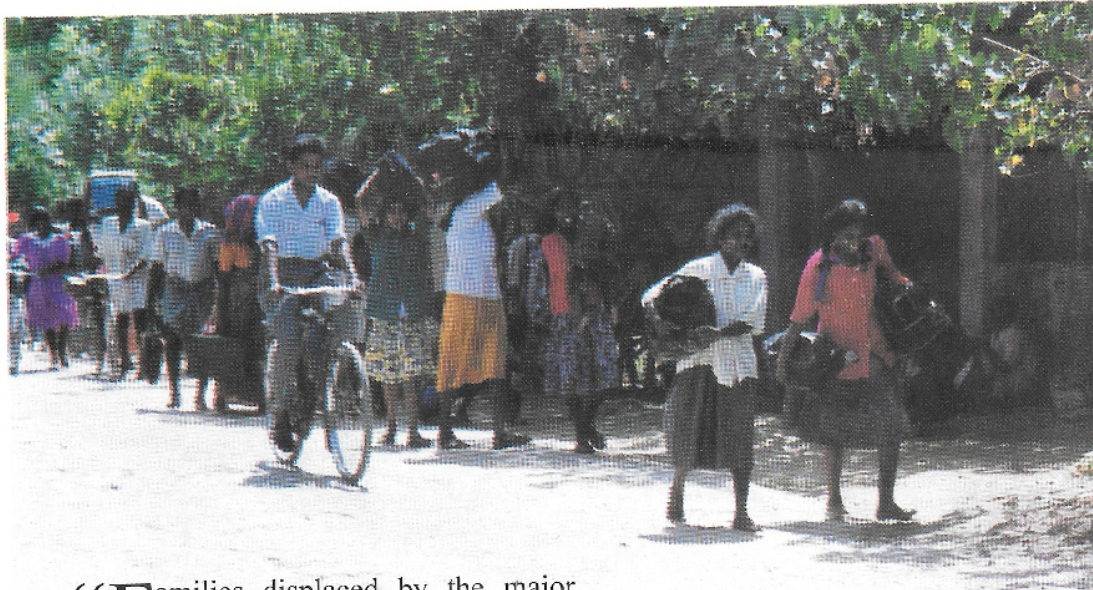
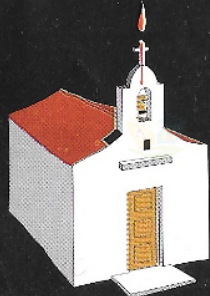
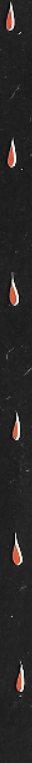


“The current assault and the continuing economic blockade is clearly a gross violation of humanitarian law. We condemn and call upon you to put a stop to these crimes against humanity”

*- 26 members of the Academic and Professional community in the U.S. in an open letter to President Kumaratunga, 18 July.*







“Families displaced by the major army offensive in the northern rebel stronghold of Jaffna were roaming the streets by night with their children with no food or shelter.”

- Reuter report quoting Campaign for Peace with Democracy, 20 July.

“The Sri Lankan government persecutes Tamils on account of their ethnicity and their political opinions.....The ongoing violence was the product of decades of Sinhalese majority efforts to reduce the Tamils to a state of second class citizenship”

- District Judge Hon. Dickinson Debevoise of the U.S. in the course of a judgement.



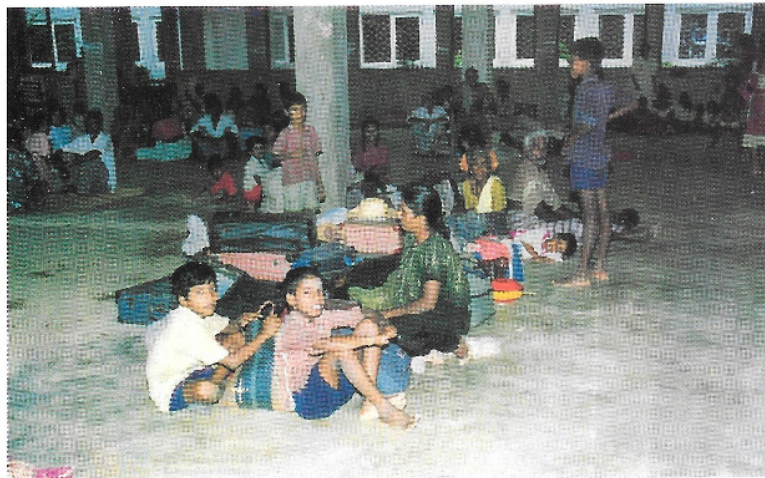


“There was fighting three kilometres northwest of Navali, so it was unlikely any action by the security forces would have affected the church or its environs”

*- President Kumaratunga in phone conversation with Archbishop of Colombo Nicholas Marcus Fernando on 11<sup>th</sup> of July, 1995.*

Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar "expressed his displeasure" to the head of the ICRC delegation in Sri Lanka, Marco Alther, at the ICRC accusation, the ministry said in a statement.

*- Reuter 17 July 1995.*

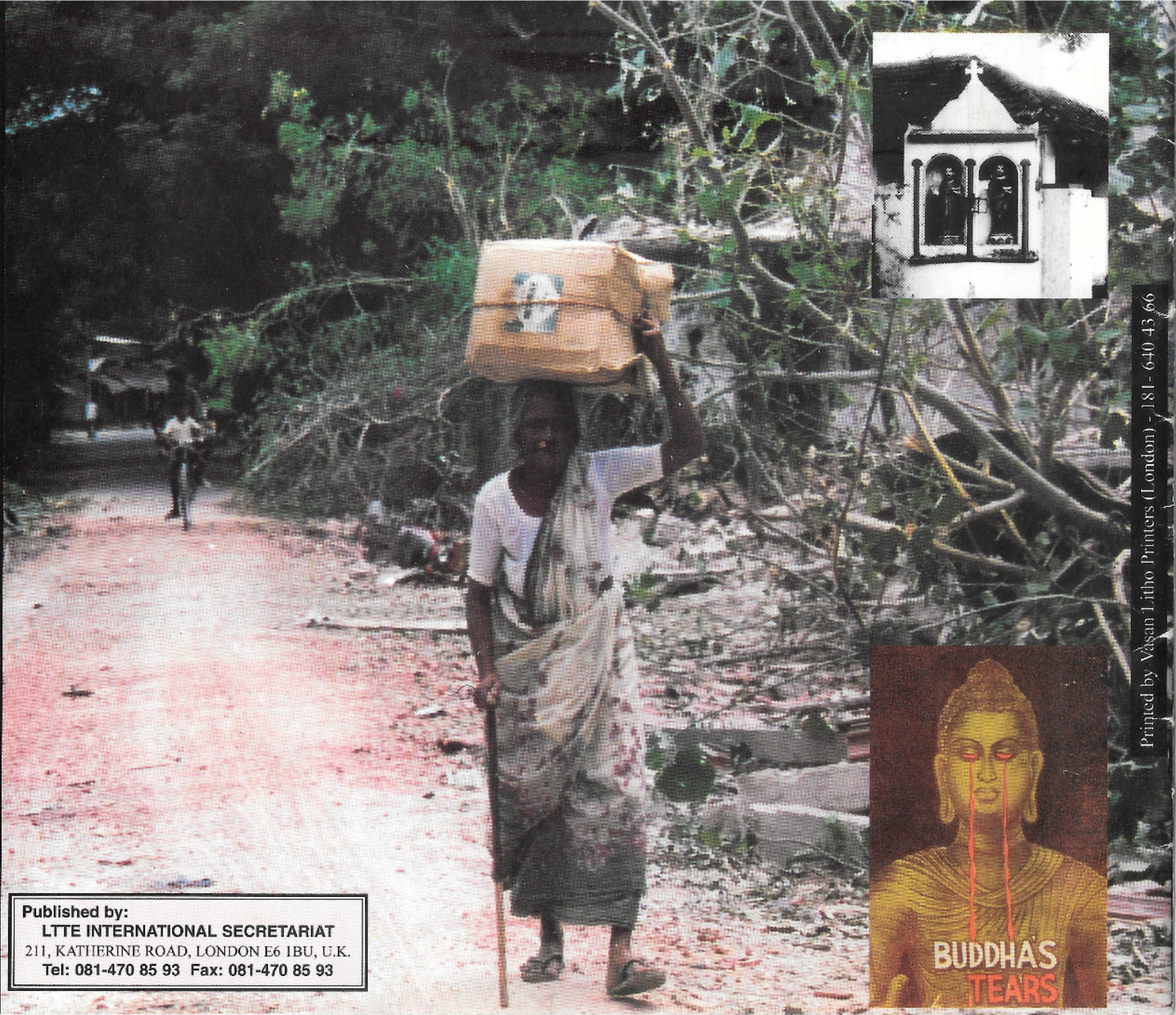
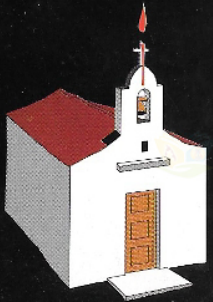


President Kumaratunga said it was probably the work of the LTTE who were firing mortar shells in that direction. "The ICRC says all kinds of things," she said.

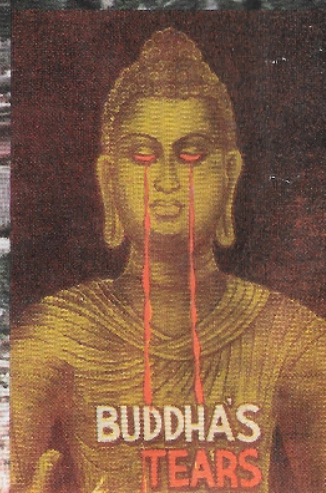
*- Reuter 4 August, 1995.*







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