



Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation

Head of field office, Mullivaikal, Mullaitivu Sri Lanka

ort.hq@live.com

The latest Situation Report – by Lawrence Christy

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Shell attacks: Immediately after the announcement of the Government that it would not use heavy weapons, tanks and bomber aircrafts it intensified their attacks by using artillery, cannons and bomber aircrafts. Aerial attacks took place immediately after the announcement. Government has suspended aerial attacks as they were observed by satellites. No one knows when this will be resumed. But attacks using artillery, multi barrel guns, cluster bombs, cannons and tanks from land and sea were stepped up. The deaths and maiming increased dramatically. For the last 2 days – since 30th night to 2nd evening the death toll is 221 and injured are 402.

In one incident a shell fell in the midst of a crowd in the road. 8 people died on the spot. The shell has blasted 2 persons into small pieces. The pieces have to be swept with a broom stick. Some pieces have got stuck on the body part of a vehicle parked on the roadside. They have to be removed with sticks. A corpse was without a head. The head was found at a distance. All – the dead bodies and pieces were collected and taken in a tractor by TRO team for burial.

The shells are directed from Mullaitivu, Puthukudiyiruppu, Oddusuddan and sea. A shell fell on the Manjolai hospital at Mullivaikal on 29th of April. It went through the tiled roof of the hospital and fell into a room filled with injured persons who were subjected to surgery earlier. It killed 9 people on the spot. Several people injured already were affected severely.

On 2nd of May on two occasions, several shells fell in and around the vicinity of Manjolai hospital at Mullivaikal. The shells had hit the hospital crowded by injured patients. In this attack 64 people were killed and over 80 injured. A huge smoke and dust erupted and covered the hospital. We thought that the whole school building which was turned into a makeshift hospital has collapsed. When TRO staff rushed to the hospital, they saw severely wounded patients lying there. They could not move to anywhere. The parents threw their children into pits in the hospital compound and ran for safety. Scores of patients who didn't have severe injuries were crawling in all directions. Some of them who crawled outside were also killed by shells fell subsequently in the vicinity. Blood splashed everywhere on the ground and on the tarpaulin sheets inside the hospital. Many bodies were mangled beyond recognition. Body parts and pieces of flesh were strewn all over the hospital compound. TRO staff helped in doing first aid to the injured people, removing the dead for burial and cleaning the hospital. One NGO official told me that ICRC is interested in evacuating the wounded by ship to Trincomalee but they are not interested in stopping the killing and wounding of civilians by the government forces.

Food Scarcity: Food is a critical problem. For the whole month (of April) 30 MT food items came by a ship. Then on 30th April another 30 MT food items came. It was announced that about 1100 MT food items were being loaded to a ship in Trincomalee. But it didn't come. This is on the assumption and announcement by the government that in Vanni only 15,000 people are living now. But according to District Secretariat about 165,000 are in Vanni. For this number of population District Secretariat needs about 2500 MT monthly. But we got now was 60 MT for a whole month as we got since 2nd of April. This is enough for emaciation and death of the population. World Food Programme. WFP says that they can send by ship to Vanni what is only allowed by the Government claiming that the Vanni population now is around 50,000. "Cheers to WFP" for going along with the Genocidal Agenda of the Government. Food is used as a weapon of war apparently. Everyone knows about it. But no one is ready to stop this genocidal intent.

Long queues are waiting under blazing sun to get ½ kilo rice, 100 gram dhal and little sugar if one has a child below 5 years. This ½ kilo rice for a person can hold out for how many days? This is barely enough for a day as there are no other food items available in the shops. About 40,000 families are living in this area. 24,000 kilo rice arrived by ship on 30th April. This is distributed among them. People have been condemned to survive with this for a whole month!

No food items are available in the shops or in road side stalls. Essential food items such as rice, flour and sugar can not be found in the shops. Even if you have money you have to go hunger as you can't buy them. Even at Rs. 1,500 you can't buy a coconut. An old lady wanted to buy a coconut urgently to prepare a curry for her daughter who gave birth to a child recently. It's called "gjj;par; rhg;ghL". It's prepared by using Kothamalli – coriander, spices which are not hot and coconut scraps. When she heard the price of it she could not afford it. She came



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back with a video deck – in return she got a coconut which was sold earlier – before the displacement at Rs.20/= . In another case to buy 2 coconuts a man had to give a TV and a deck.

The children are more affected by the scarcity of food. The children are asking mothers crying for food, "Amma, Amma – grp – we are hungry." My friend told me that he and his friend were having rotti with cooked dhal for breakfast at about 9 AM two days back. They were surrounded by 7 or 8 small children. The boys seemed to be coming from Somalia. Darkened by hot sun, they were with big bellies and bony figures. My colleagues were also having very limited – tiny breakfast. Each of them was given one rotti with little dhal curry. The boys were asking at least one rotti to be divided among them. My friends gave half rotti each making a full rotti to the boys. How that small piece would have lessened the burning hunger of those small children who have not eaten properly for several days? That piece of rotti is not enough even for one swallow.

Another friend narrated a famine related story. He saw a crowd of people queuing to get gruel at a centre organized by TRO. All age groups and status of people were there. Small children, young girls and boys, men and women and old people were in the queue. At a certain point of time the gruel has finished. Organizers have stopped the distribution for that day saying they had already distributed many times and didn't have rice to make gruel any more. But the crowd was insisting that they should be provided gruel as that was the only food for them. It seemed that many in the queue have not eaten in their shelters for several days. They depended heavily on the gruel centres. Finally the organizers had to give in. The long queue waited patiently for the gruel to be prepared which has no calorie value. The gruel is made of rice, water and salt.

I saw on two occasions wealthy business people coming to our office and begging for one kilo of rice. They were telling that they had money but they can't buy rice or flour at the shops. They were in miserable mood. TRO had to concede to their requests too by taking out food packages meant for the selected most vulnerable people. If this well to do people can't manage this famine, what about the marginalized others who are in hundreds of thousands.

Over hundred people have died of famine to my knowledge. Everyday people are dying. This will increase radically in the coming days as the food situation worsens. A section of a people with great heritage is dying by famine and shell attacks while the world is watching this numbly.

Displacement Again: Most of the people in Mullivaikal have been displaced over 20 times. Now they have to move within Mullivaikal. They have been pushed into a corner. Where ever there is a relative safety – that too at a short distance – within one or 2 kilo metres people start moving taking their shelter materials – tarpaulin sheets and timber or iron poles and other household goods. When heavy shelling starts near frontlines people start moving - distancing themselves from those areas. Near the frontline areas – in the civilian settlements there are barrages by multi barrel guns and artillery pieces making people to evacuate. Cluster and burning phosphorous bombs are used extensively. In other areas too - in the so called safety zone shells are directed sporadically killing and injuring several people.

Traffic Jam: When thousands of people start moving quickly at the same time in vehicles and on foot through narrow roads traffic jam occurs. They move in panic. When they hear the sound of artillery fire nearby they get scared. They look all around in trying to determine the direction and distance where the shell fell. When a shell fell too close to them all fall on the ground. They have no choice. They can't move one foot forward or backward. The traffic jam is too knotty – to untie the knot it takes more than an hour – within that time one or two shells may fall amidst them. This has happened several times before killing and maiming hundreds of people.

Laurence Christy
Head of TRO Field Office
"Safe Zone"
Mullivaikkal, Mullaitivu District