

## **LTTE pressured us to give false reports of civilian casualties - Northern doctors**

It was under the pressure of the LTTE that we were giving exaggerated and contradictory figures about the civilian casualties. There were civilian casualties and deaths in the final stages of the battle. But not the exaggerated numbers of civilian deaths and casualties we were forced to give under pressure of the LTTE, said five doctors who were serving in the No Fire Zone on the final days of the military operation to free Tamil civilians.

“Many civilians were killed and wounded as LTTE opened fire at them when they tried to flee from the Tiger grip. And also they were got caught in the crossfire between the LTTE and the Security Forces once the civilians tried to escape from the LTTE during those dark hours.

Even at the last stages of the battle there were civilian deaths due to the explosion of shell loaded trucks of the LTTE. We saw the dead bodies of the civilians due to these explosions but not due to the shelling by the Security Forces. There was no room for the civilians to escape”, they added.

Dr. Sivapalan who was attached to the Ponnambalam Memorial Hospital in Puthukudiyiruppu and to the Medical Wing of the LTTE, Dr. Weerakuttipullai Shanmugaraja, Director, General Hospital Mullaitivu, Dr. Thurairaja Vartharaja, Regional Director Health Services, Mullaitvu, Dr. Thangamuttu Sathyamoorthy, Acting Medical Superintendent, General Hospital Kilinochchi and Dr. Kathirvel Ilancheliyan Vallavan, MOH Mullaitivu who are now under CID custody, said so attending to a press conference at the Media Centre for National Security in Colombo, yesterday, July 08.

They also regretted their errors in dispatching false and exaggerated figures to certain media organizations about civilian casualties, due to pressure exerted by the LTTE. “We were forced to stay in the LTTE controlled areas by the LTTE and were not allowed to enter into Government controlled areas”, they further said.

The five doctors also said that they would have to admit that there is severe shortage of medicine in Government run hospitals because the LTTE wanted the medical supplies the Government was sending for their use. “The Government was sending us medical supplies until May 08, a week before we were able to escape from Mullaivaikkal area”, said Dr. Sathyamoorthy.

Dr. Shanmugaraja and Dr. Thurairaja said there was no shortage of food in the No Fire Zone if not for the LTTE taking charge of the food stocks and releasing only a small quantity for the civilians. “There was not a single death due to starvation in the No Fire Zone”, said Dr. Thurairaja.

The doctors also denied the LTTE propaganda about destruction caused to Government hospitals due to Security Forces shelling saying it was a stage managed drama by the LTTE.

(Source: Policy Research & Information Unit of the Presidential Secretariat)