

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

1. Where in Sri Lanka is Kalmunai?
2. Is it in an area where both the Karuna and Prabhakaran groups have/had presence during the period May/June 2004 to mid 2005?
3. Is it correct that Karuna's rebellion was over by 14 April 2004?
4. Or was the group still exerting pressure/influence after April 2004?
5. Is there any information that the Karuna group forced civilians to work for them during the period May/June 2004 to about April 2005?
6. Does the Karuna group still have any profile in Sri Lanka?

RESPONSE

1. Where in Sri Lanka is Kalmunai?

There are two places called Kalmunai in Sri Lanka, one along the east side of the island at Latitude 7° 24' N and Longitude 81° 49' E, and the other along west side at Latitude 8° 03' N and Longitude 79° 43'E. A map of each place is attached (*Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas - 'Kalmunai' 2000*, (CDROM) - Attachment 1; *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas - 'Kalmunai' 2000* (CDROM) - Attachment 2). The first one along the east coast appears to be the one in question as it Kalmunai is in the area where the two districts, Batticaloa and Ampara(i) meet, and where the Karuna group and LTTE are reported engaged in killing each other (see below).

2. Is it in an area where both the Karuna and Prabhakaran groups have/had presence during the period May/June 2004 to mid 2005?

Kalmunai is in the Ampara district but not far from the border with the Batticaloa district along the Bay of Bengal ('Road Map of Sri Lanka' (undated), Survey Department Attachment 4, 'Sri Lanka' District Map (undated), Sri Lanka government <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/misc/slmap.pdf> - Accessed 10 March 2006 - Attachment 5; 'Sri

Lanka District Map - Sri Lanka Has 25 Administrative Districts by Year 2004' (undated), Government of Sri Lanka Official Web Portal <http://www.srilankareference.org/srilankanature/geography/districtmap.htm> - Accessed 7 March 2006 - Attachment 6). Several reports indicate that the both groups were active/present in the districts during May 2004 – mid 2005 (See for instance entries for 10, 20 and 28 February, 5 and 26 March, 6 and 21 April, 5 and 8 June and 6 July 2005 of the timeline at 'Sri Lanka Timeline - Year 2005' 2006, *South Asia Terrorism Portal* - Attachment 7; See entry for 20 and 6 July 2005 of the timeline at 'Incidents involving Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)' 2006, *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, - http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/terroristoutfits/LTTE_tl.htm - Accessed 6 March 2006 - Attachment 8) although no report has been located that they were in the town of Kalmunai at the same time during the period. (Given the secretive nature of the insurgents' activities, no report does necessarily mean that they were not there at the same time.) However, a few reports speak of the main LTTE (Prabhakaran) group active in Kalmunai during the period (See for instance entries for 6 April and 6 July 2005 of the timeline at 'Sri Lanka Timeline - Year 2005' 2006, *South Asia Terrorism Portal* - Attachment 7).

3. Is it correct that Karuna's rebellion was over by 14 April 2004?

4. Or was the group still exerting pressure/influence after April 2004?

6. Does the Karuna group still have any profile in Sri Lanka?

The Karuna group still has some profile/influence in Sri Lanka today. Although Karuna disbanded his cadres and went into hiding after four days of fighting in April 2004, the remaining elements of his group have continually ambushed and attacked the LTTE and those affiliated with it. In the wake of the December 2004 Tsunami and subsequent organization of relief work, the LTTE and the Karuna faction sought to strengthen their control in the East (Amnesty USA 2005, *Sri Lanka: A climate of fear in the East*. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/document.do?id=ENGASA370012006> - Accessed 9 March 2006 – Attachment 9).

The LTTE claims that the Sri Lankan Army is supporting the Karuna group, and that appears possible according to the Amnesty USA. The Karuna group is one of the most active among the Tamil armed groups. The LTTE, concerned by the many attacks on its cadres by the Karuna group, has closed many of its political offices in the east. (Amnesty USA 2005, *Sri Lanka: A climate of fear in the East*. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/document.do?id=ENGASA370012006> - Accessed 9 March 2006 – Attachment 9).

The above-mentioned timeline lists further incidents of conflict between the LTTE and the Karuna group outside the time frame mentioned in Question 2 (See for instance the entries for 2, 4 and 6 September of the timeline at 'Sri Lanka Timeline - Year 2005' 2006, *South Asia Terrorism Portal* - Attachment 7).

The Karuna group continues their activities into 2006. Another timeline compiled by the *South Asia Terrorism Portal* comments that "at least 10 LTTE cadres are killed and an unspecified number are injured when the 'Colonel' Karuna faction cadres attacked a vehicle carrying LTTE cadres in the Vadamunai area of Batticaloa district. The attack followed the killing of a senior LTTE cadre, identified as 'Major' Kavilan, in the same area" on 26 January 2006 ('Sri Lanka Timeline – Year 2006' 2006, *South Asia Terrorism Portal*,

<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/timeline/index.html> - Accessed 6 March 2006 – Attachment 10).

The same report states that “‘Colonel’ Karuna has welcomed the proposed cease-fire talks to be held in Geneva and said on 29 January 2006 that his group would unilaterally stop all “self-defence military campaigns” to give an opportunity to President Mahinda Rajapakse to continue with his peace effort”. On the same day, SLMM (Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission) spokesperson, Helen Olafsdottir, in an interview with an Indian magazine stated that ceasefire monitors had no evidence that the Sri Lanka Army was supporting the LTTE’s breakaway faction led by ‘Colonel’ Karuna (‘Sri Lanka Timeline – Year 2006’ 2006, *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/timeline/index.html> - Accessed 6 March 2006 – Attachment 10).

It appears that the Karuna group’s profile has been raised when the LTTE demanded that the group be disarmed at the truce talks held last February between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE in Switzerland. A *Reuter* report comments that:

The Tigers accuse the military of helping paramilitaries to mount attacks within their territory mainly in the island's east, and singled out Karuna's group at talks in Switzerland last week as one that they want disarmed if the truce is to keep holding (Gardner, Simon 2006, ‘INTERVIEW - Renegade Sri Lanka rebels refuse to give up arms’, *Reuters*, 26 February <http://www.tamilnewsweb.com/Refuse%20-Karuna%2026-02-06.htm> - Accessed 9 March 2006 – Attachment 11).

Furthermore, Karuna has launched a political group, Tamileela Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP), and plans eventually to join the political mainstream. But for now, his group is focused on keeping the Tigers in check and will only disarm when they do (Gardner, Simon 2006, ‘INTERVIEW - Renegade Sri Lanka rebels refuse to give up arms’, *Reuters*, 26 February <http://www.tamilnewsweb.com/Refuse%20-Karuna%2026-02-06.htm> - Accessed 9 March 2006 – Attachment 11).

5. Is there any information that the Karuna group forced civilians to work for them during the period May/June 2004 to about April 2005?

A few pro-LTTE media carry reports that the Karuna group has recently forced a few young people to work for them through abduction or offer of money in cooperation with the Sri Lankan Army.

A report from the official website of the Peace Secretariat of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam refers to an interview where the Sri Lankan Army/Karuna group were said to have lured and abducted three youths to work for them (‘SLA paramilitary group cons youth into joining armed forces; youth seek refuge at LTTE camps’ 2005, Peace Secretariat of LTTE website, 8 November <http://www.ltteps.org/?view=962&folder=2> - Accessed 9 March 2006 – Attachment 12). Another report from *Tamil Guardian* also comments on the incidents in addition to other abductions (‘Money and guns fuel paramilitary war’ 2005, *Tamil Guardian*, 9 November http://www.tamilguardian.com/beta/news_details.asp?newsid=335 - Accessed 9 March 2006 – Attachment 13). A third report from the pro-LTTE *TamilNet* refers to a similar interview by a 15 year old boy forcefully recruited by the Karuna group (‘Underage paramilitary recruit attests to SLA-Karuna link’ 2006, *TamilNet*, 3 February <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=17088> - Accessed 9 March 2006 – Attachment 14; ‘Sri Lankan rebel factions clash’ 2004, *BBC*, 9 April

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3613181.stm - Accessed 9 March 2006 - Attachment 15).

However, no report has been located in a search through the sources consulted that the Karuna group forced people out of a village or an area to work for them during the period May/June 2004 to about April 2005. A few reports refer to Karuna or the leaders of his group ordering the people from the North to leave Batticaloa when he ordered most of his units to disperse in April 2004 in the face of the attack from the main LTTE faction ('Karuna Group orders Jaffna Tamils to leave Batticaloa' 2004, *TamilNet*, 30 March

<http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=11618> - Accessed 10 March 2006 - Attachment 16; Ratnayake, K 2004, 'Continued killings in eastern Sri Lanka threaten to undermine ceasefire', *World Socialist Web Site*, 1 June

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2004/jun2004/sril-j01.shtml> - Accessed 10 March 2006 - Attachment 17; 'Refugees return as Sri Lanka considers asylum to renegade leader' 2004, *AFP*, 13 April http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/79909/1/.html - Accessed 10 March 2006 - Attachment 18).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

UNHCR *REFWORLD* UNHCR Refugee Information Online

Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty USA, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas* - 'Kalmunai' 2000. (CDROM)
2. *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas* - 'Kalmunai' 2000. (CDROM)
3. Attachment deleted.
4. 'Road Map of Sri Lanka' (undated), Survey Department. (MRT/RRT Library)
5. 'Sri Lanka' District Map (undated), Sri Lanka government.
(<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/misc/slmap.pdf> - Accessed 10 March 2006)
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7. 'Sri Lanka Timeline - Year 2005' 2006, *South Asia Terrorism Portal* - Accessed 7 March 2006.
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(http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/terroristoutfits/LTTE_tl.htm - Accessed 6 March 2006)
 9. Amnesty International (USA) 2005, *Sri Lanka: A climate of fear in the East*.
(<http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/document.do?id=ENGASA370012006> - Accessed 9 March 2006)
 10. 'Sri Lanka Timeline – Year 2006' 2006, *South Asia Terrorism Portal*,
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 11. Gardner, Simon 2006, 'INTERVIEW - Renegade Sri Lanka rebels refuse to give up arms', *Reuters*, 26 February. (<http://www.tamilnewsweb.com/Refuse%20-Karuna%2026-02-06.htm> - Accessed 9 March 2006)
 12. 'SLA paramilitary group cons youth into joining armed forces; youth seek refuge at LTTE camps' 2005, Peace Secretariat of LTTE website, 8 November.
(<http://www.ltteps.org/?view=962&folder=2> - Accessed 9 March 2006)
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(http://www.tamilguardian.com/beta/news_details.asp?newsid=335 - Accessed 9 March 2006)
 14. 'Underage paramilitary recruit attests to SLA-Karuna link' 2006, *TamilNet*, 3 February. (<http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=17088> - Accessed 9 March 2006)
 15. 'Sri Lankan rebel factions clash' 2004, *BBC*, 9 April.
(http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3613181.stm - Accessed 9 March 2006)
 16. 'Karuna Group orders Jaffna Tamils to leave Batticaloa' 2004, *TamilNet*, 30 March.
(<http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=11618> - Accessed 10 March 2006)
 17. Ratnayake, K 2004, 'Continued killings in eastern Sri Lanka threaten to undermine ceasefire', *World Socialist Web Site*, 1 June.
(<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2004/jun2004/sril-j01.shtml> - Accessed 10 March 2006)
 18. 'Refugees return as Sri Lanka considers asylum to renegade leader' 2004, *AFP*, 13 April. (http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/79909/1.html - Accessed 10 March 2006)