



# Tamil Information Centre

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Committed to Human Rights and Community Development

PRESS RELEASE

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## **TIC mourns the death of Rev. Fr. M X Karunaratnam**

The Tamil Information Centre (TIC) is shocked and deeply distressed at the tragic death of Catholic priest Rev. Fr. M X Karunaratnam, the chair and founder member of the North East Secretariat on Human Rights (NESOHR). He was killed in a Claymore mine blast at Vannivilankulam in Mullaitivu District on 20 April 2008 while travelling to attend the remembrance event of Tamil National Alliance's Jaffna parliamentarian Kiddinan Sivanesan who was also killed by a Claymore mine on 6 March 2008.

Fr. Karunaratnam was a courageous person worthy of honour. He was a passionate peacemaker and sought to promote peaceful efforts at solving the Sri Lankan national conflict. He understood the different problems of the various communities in Sri Lanka, and interacted enthusiastically with peace teams from southern Sri Lanka and assisted them in every way he could in the promotion of peace. He spiritedly espoused the human rights cause of the Tamil people. He was appointed as the head of the NESOHR in July 2004 and in his own way contributed in a large measure to the recording and publicizing of human rights violations. He urged other human rights and humanitarian agencies in Sri Lanka to take a more proactive role in the human rights field and extend their activities to the north-east region. He also travelled to other countries, campaigning for the recognition of the rights of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka.

Fr Karunaratnam was very much concerned about the welfare of the people and it pained him that the people of the north-east suffered from deprivation, neglect and the consequences of war. He actively involved himself in providing psychological counselling to people affected by the war and the tsunami.

In a country where death is ubiquitous, killing a habit, and war a constant companion for an entire generation, measurement of the pain and impact of this loss on the Tamil people is extremely difficult. His death, however, has caused widespread anger and dismay. Their anger stems from the fact that in Sri Lanka there is no protection for the ordinary people against such attacks, the right to life is violated with impunity every day and the authorities have willfully neglected or failed to take preventive measures.

Fr. Karunaratnam will be fondly remembered not only in Sri Lanka but also in other countries by those who take keen interest in the Tamil cause.

The death of Fr. Karunaratnam underscores again the urgent need for a human rights monitoring mechanism in Sri Lanka. The lack of human rights monitoring is endangering people's lives and is adversely affecting the international community's efforts to resolve the ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka. While mourning the loss of Fr Karunaratnam, the TIC calls for urgent action to establish a monitoring mechanism which effectively contributes to the prevention of such killings and other human rights violations.

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