

The people of Batticaloa are in the grip of two contending terrorist forces. The clash for supremacy between the mainstream Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Batticaloa - Amparai dissident faction led by Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan alias "Col" Karuna has led to a situation where lives are being snuffed out without restraint. People are afraid to talk freely as they do not know who supports Pirapaharan and who supports Karuna.

The latest killing in Batticaloa is that of journalist Aiyathurai Nadesan writing under the byline G. Nadesan. He was shot dead by assassins belonging to the Karuna faction. The LTTE is now trying to capitalise on this death. The Tigers have organised a worldwide campaign condemning and mourning Nadesan's death to obtain political mileage.

The LTTE hypocrisy in this is terrible. The LTTE has killed politicians, journalists, academics, civil servants etc, with impunity in the past. They have destroyed newspapers, taken over newspapers, shut down newspapers, etc. They have terrorised journalists.

The LTTE reached an all time low in Batticaloa when they dug up the body of Rajan Sathiyamoorthy who they had shot dead and half-burnt the body. The Tigers who defiled a corpse are now honouring Nadesan in a manner that is despicably revolting.

A team of Tigers led by Senathi went to the funeral house and wrapped a Tiger flag around the body. Nadesan's sister objected. The flag was removed. Later Nadesan's body was taken to the north for cremation at the Aalankatti cemetery in Vathiri.

The LTTE trying to gain political mileage out of the killing took over the funeral arrangements. Homage ceremonies were organised in Vavuniya, Kilinochchi, Jaffna and Karaveddy. Nadesan's body, now wrapped in a Tiger flag lay in state for people to pay their respects. The LTTE orchestrated large crowds of mourners.

Leading LTTE figures spoke at the various ceremonies as well as the funeral itself. The LTTE organised a massive demonstration and hartal in the northeast to condemn the killing. Almost all the Tiger media are lamenting Nadesan's loss *ad nauseam*. Tiger media organs are devoting much time and space to Nadesan. In typical Tiger fashion fund raising in his memory has commenced overseas. Fund raising to the LTTE is like a fire hydrant to a mongrel.

The LTTE Leader Pirapaharan has conferred upon Nadesan the posthumous title "*Naatruppattralar*" (Patriot). This is an second class honour bestowed upon people who have supported or assisted the LTTE. First class honour is the "*Maamaniathan*" (great human) title. By this action the LTTE is trying to show the world that Nadesan was one of theirs.

All these efforts help to reinforce the impression that Nadesan was a Tiger scribe. The truth however is different. This typical LTTE deception only helps to reinforce the Karuna group charge that Nadesan was a Tiger associate.

Political mileage

The LTTE has damaged Nadesan after his death by trying to "coopt" his image for their benefit. By doing so the LTTE has distorted and diluted the widespread condemnation that should have arisen because an independent journalist was assassinated. Instead Nadesan is being depicted as a Tiger in journalist garb. If the Karuna faction has taken Nadesan's life, the LTTE is destroying his reputation.

When Nadesan was killed the Karuna faction accused him of being a pro-LTTE scribe. They called him a "*Wannippulip pathirigaiaalar*." (Wanni Tiger journalist). The harsh reality however is that the Karuna faction suspected him of being one. The bad blood between the Karuna faction and Nadesan started due to the *Tamil Alai* (Tamil wave) newspaper.

When Karuna started the *Tamil Alai* newspaper Nadesan too wrote for it regularly under pseudonyms. But Nadesan stopped writing for it after the Karuna rebellion. If one examines his columns for *Virakesari* during the Karuna revolt period between March 3 to April 12 one detects a soft-peddling tone. Nadesan became more critical of Karuna after he went into hiding. His reports to the pro-LTTE radio IBC in London too were hard hitting.

There is an eastern school of thought which believes Nadesan was killed due to the last article he wrote for the *Virakesari* of May 30. He wrote about the growing pattern of violence in Batticaloa in recent times. He was critical of Karuna and skeptical about the recent appointment of Gen. Shantha Kottegoda as overall operations commander for the east. Nadesan counted the number of killings in recent times and expressed concern over the future. Tragically, Nadesan himself became the next casualty.

The Karuna faction's '*neruppu*' website outlines the reason for Nadesan's execution. It says that Nadesan went to Kokkatticholai on the Western shore and met with LTTE Eastern Political Commissar, Kaushalyan. It says that Kaushalyan asked for Nadesan's cooperation in building up the mainstream LTTE in Batticaloa and that Nadesan agreed with the rider that Karuna should be removed. This alleged meeting is given as the reason for Nadesan's killing.

The last time I spoke to Nades was in early May. So I am not aware of such a meeting. Family members however say Nadesan never went to "*paduvaankara*" (Western shore) on May 30. From my personal knowledge of Nadesan I do not think he would have ever agreed to support the Tigers in that manner.

He was neither a complete believer nor a naïve fool to have done so. My own suspicion is that Nadesan was marked for death after the killing of Eastern University Economics Professor Kumaravelu Thambiah.

The Thambiah factor

The Tiger mouthpiece Tamil Net and other LTTE media have projected an impression that Prof. Thambiah was killed by Karuna's men. TamilNet stated that Thambiah went to the north after Karuna's rebellion and returned only after Karuna went away.

The truth however is different. Thambiah though from Aasikulam in Vavuniya was married in Batticaloa and was for all practical purposes an eastern Tamil. He hated Jaffna hegemonism and was in the forefront of the pro-eastern school of thought at the Batticaloa University.

Thambiah never went to the north after Karuna's rebellion in March. He stayed put in Batticaloa as he had nothing to fear from Karuna. Thambiah fled to Colombo and then to Vavuniya only in April when Karuna left Batticaloa and the pro - Pirapaharan LTTE men took over. He feared death at their hands because of his Karuna leanings.

Distortion

He later got "clearance" from the new Eastern Tiger Leader, Ramesh and returned to Batticaloa. The pro-Tiger media succeeded in distorting reality and projected a picture that Thambiah had been killed by Karuna's men.

Thambiah was killed by Pottu Amman's operatives despite the clearance given by Ramesh. The LTTE after shooting Prof. Thiruchelvam and government agent Mounaguriswamy issued statements condemning the attacks. In the same way the Tigers raised a big fuss over Thambiah's shooting too. Kaushalyan wanted an inquiry. The ever obliging peace monitors were ready.

Most Batticaloa people however know that Thambiah was killed by the Tigers. The contrasting manner in which the LTTE dealt with Nadesan's killing and Thambiah's killing demonstrates who killed whom. Thus my feeling is that Karuna's men killed Nadesan in revenge for Thambiah. Both were northerners who had married and settled down in Batticaloa.

Though the Tigers are now beating their breasts over Nadesan's killing there is no doubt that they too would have killed him if he had taken an openly pro-Karuna line. Though most Tamil journalists take a pro - Tiger line for purposes of survival, the Nadesan killing shows that pro-Tiger scribes too now face danger in Batticaloa.

The killing of Nadesan by Karuna's henchmen has to be condemned severely. At the same time the LTTE's hypocrisy in trying to project Nadesan as a Tiger scribe should also be condemned. The false impression created by the LTTE in showing Nadesan to be a Tiger can only help strengthen Karuna's accusation that Nadesan was a 'Tiger scribe.'

One faction has taken Nadesan's life while the other faction is destroying his reputation and in the process justifying the reason for a killing. Irrespective of the views he espoused, Nadesan's killing has to be condemned forthrightly.

— D.B.S. Jeyaraj
