

27th October 2006

Annual commemoration for the Disappeared

Families of the Disappeared Background



D.G.Jayanthi, when working in the Free Trade Zone Katunayaka, lost her fiancée, Ranjith, who was also a worker in the zone on October 27th 1989. He was abducted shot dead and burnt with his legal representative, Mr. Lional when returning from a disciplinary inquiry held against Ranjith, in his factory. During this period about 60,000 (official figure about 30,000) were killed or made disappeared in the south due to the uprising of the Youth. When Jayanthi tried to complain and took interest to know what happened to the fiancée her life was also threatened by various unidentified groups... She went underground and decided to work on behalf of the disappeared and the FTZ women workers. During the period 1989 to 1992 it was very natural to see dead bodies exhibited along the main roads, floating bodies. It was a public secret that the government was behind these disappearances.

Jayanthi lost her two brothers also during this period.

She started KALAPE API (We in the Zone) on October 27th of 1993 officially, the same date, same venue when and where her fiancée Ranjith and his legal representative, Lional were killed, demanding justice for the disappeared and for the young women workers in the FTZ..

After this period the family members started campaigns with the opposition political parties and human rights organizations demanding justice, simply to know what happened to their loved ones and why they were made disappeared.. Prayer meetings, marches, public hearings and many campaigns were organized. It became one of the ever biggest campaigns in Sri Lanka. This campaign was one of the main factors to topple the then government who was mainly responsible for the disappearances after 17 years in power.

When the new government came into power (its leader Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranayaka Kumarathunga who also lost her husband during that period) Promised as an election promise to do what ever the government could to make justice for this. She formed a presidential commission to inquire into these

and their report came up with lot of recommendations. The government issued the death certificates to the families with little compensation. (Adult Us\$ 500, young one Us\$ 250 and Us\$ 150 for a student) .The families main demand was not compensation but to know what happened to their loved ones and why? As the government did not take any action against the responsible people mainly in the forces as recommended by the commission because the government wanted use this same forces against the Tamil youth uprising in the North as a open war against the government. The ever strong movement started to become weaker. The issue is there but the campaign is disappearing.

Now, on the issue of disappearances We work as FOD and the FTZ work is being handled by Right to life.

The Activities of FOD



- Starting the first commemoration for the disappeared on 27th of October 1991. Continuing the commemoration annually up to now.
- Looking after the welfare of the families up to some extent.
- Building up a monument “ Monument for the disappeared “ in 2000
- Putting up about 800 photographs of the disappeared in the monument and continuing it.
- Winning the 4th Kwangju human rights award in 2003 for the work done on behalf of the disappeared.
- Organizing the family members into FOD mainly in Gampha , Kandy and up to some extent in Kalutara and Galle districts.
- Starting a computer training programme for the children and the family members of the disappeared.
- Organizing the families
 - To demand justice for their loved ones
 - To implement the recommendation of the presidential commission
 - To introduce new laws to make disappearances a crime.
 - To make it not happen again. Organizing work

What we want to do

- To help the families in their social and economical problems.
- To help the families to overcome their mental (Trauma) effects.
- To organize the other districts.
- To join the North - East and the south.
- To organize a coalition on this.
- To pressure the government nationally and internationally to do justice for the disappeared
To work closely with the other organizations in defending human rights

Organizing work

- Hold monthly meetings in 4 districts.
- Hold the national committee once in three months.
- Conduct street campaigns with the photographs of the victims.
- Conducting various religious ceremonies in front of the monument.
- Publish publications on this issue.
- Conducting annual contests among school children and the public about the human rights in drawing and poetry.

October 27th Annual Commemoration



Our annual event generally consisted of religious ceremonies, Alms giving to Buddhist monks, prize giving to the winners of the contests about the human rights and a public meeting.

But this year we have decided to change our programme.

We will be organizing a seminar between the representatives of the family members and the human rights organizations and other academic persons who involves in the activities of human rights. Our main aim is to understand the present actual situation of the disappeared issue and to decide on the way forward to it.

We will be focusing on,

- Building up a trust as recommended by the presidential commission with the interested parties on our own, pressuring the government to take the major responsibility.
- To understand the problems in introducing new laws making disappearances a crime and to draw out a campaign for it.
- To build up a coalition to work on the issue of disappearances.

The participants

- representatives of the families of the disappeared.	300
- Clergy representatives from the religious groups.	15,
- Human rights organizations and others	50
- Academic representatives	20
- Foreign missions in SriLanka	20

Media, representatives from the government and the opposition parties will also be invited.

The programme

26th October

1630 – Offering flowers to the monument

1700 – Conference. = Presentations = The background and the present situation of the disappeared.
 = Where does the leagel reforms stand now and our responsibilities.
 = The need of a Trust
 = Discussion and contributions
 = Listening to the family members

2200 = Official end.

As we are planning to keep the family members at the same area for the night with the lodging facilities, the representatives could use this opportunity to listen and discuss with the individuals also after the official programme.
 Tea and dinner will be served.

27th October

0930- Religious ceremony
 1000- Address of the chief guest
 1100 = Dana (Alms giving) to 25 Buddhist monks
 1300 – Lunch for the participants.

- Some international organizations have agreed to participate.

What We Request from You

- If you are interested please contact Us
- Tell us what you could do to continue with our work until justice is being done.
- See weather you could help us financially for the event October 27th or other work what we are doing on this issue.