
Tamil doctors recant their claims on war casualties in Sri Lanka battle

Thursday, 09 July 2009

Last Updated Thursday, 09 July 2009

July 08, Colombo: Five Sri Lankan Tamil doctors who provided civilian casualty figures during the military offensive in the North recanted their stories today during a media conference held at the Media Center for National Security. Sri Lankan ethnic Tamil doctors, V. Shanmugarajah, Thurairaja Varatharajah, Thangamuttu Sathyamurthi, Sivapalan and Ilancheliyan Pallavan who escaped into the government controlled areas during the final days of war before the security forces took control of the entire North, said today that they were forced by the LTTE to provide inflated civilian casualty figures to the media.

Dr. Sivapalan has served in the LTTE medical corps and the other four doctors worked in the government hospitals in the war zone. They have been in police custody for nearly two months but no charges have been filed yet. Responding to media questions, Dr. Sathyamoorthy said they themselves requested the government to organize a media conference to reveal their experience. "We regret very much for providing false information to foreign media while we were working in LTTE control area due to intense pressure from the LTTE" Dr. Sivapalan said adding that he is cooperating with the investigators. Dr. Varatharajah revealed that the LTTE took the medicine sent by the government to treat the injured cadres. "Eight times government sent medical supplies but they didn't receive. The problem was that LTTE took medicine from us to treat their injured. They asked to tell media we don't have medicine, there was a shortage of medicine because LTTE took the whole stock," he said. Dr. Ilancheliyan said the LTTE grabbed major part of food brought in ICRC shipments for use of their cadres. He said they decided to stay in the uncleared area for the sake of their families and other civilians but later when the conflict intensified realized that they no longer were able to help the civilians. "We covered every field not only treating the injured but also maternity and pediatric fields," said Dr. Ilancheliyan. During the last phase of the war when the LTTE was cornered in the no-fire zone in Mullaitivu coast along with nearly 75,000 civilians the doctors gave daily civilian casualty figures over the telephone to Associated Press, Al Jazeera, BBC and other Western media organizations. Human rights organizations used those casualty figures to convince Western governments to mount pressure on the Sri Lankan government to call a ceasefire with the LTTE.

Courtesy: colombopage.com