

## Statement On the Recent Incidents at Navanthurai, Jaffna.

by the

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### **Grease Devils Playing Hell!**

What follows is not an account of the incidents, which is now widely known. This is an attempt to analyze the underlying tendencies at work and to map the consequences. The recent incidents at the village of Navanthurai in Jaffna involving 'grease devils' is shocking and deplorable, and should be condemned by all decent human beings. The facts of the case are widely known. An entire village and those who attended court, including lawyers, and those who have been actively following the case, including the Asian Human Rights Commission, have accumulated such clear evidence as to the facts of the case. As reported in the press, the incidents revolve around 'grease devils'. 'Grease devils' have been identified as impersonating terrorists who apply grease on their faces and who violate and terrorize the masses- particularly women. In brief, it is reported that villagers at Navanthurai had seen five such 'grease devils' and taken up swords, knives and clubs and given chase. These five 'grease devils' had fled into the nearby Army Camp. When the villagers had demanded that these five persons be produced, the army officers had denied that they were inside. A little later, many villagers had seen these five men being transported in a military vehicle, clothed in military uniform. The villagers had stoned the vehicle and created a commotion, when they had been dispersed by the army. In the dead of night, some one hundred army personnel had attacked the villagers brutally with rifle butts and iron rods- men, women and children-, and engaged in destruction of property and looting. Male villagers had been dragged on the streets, beaten and then handed over to the police. All arrested had been remanded. The injured were admitted to hospital only after the Magistrate had ordered as such.

### **Complicity of the State:**

The state has consistently denied the existence of these 'grease devils' as rumors. Or tried to lay the blame on the Opposition, or even on the Tamil Diaspora, as a conspiracy to embarrass the government. This very denial produces anger among the masses who share the fear of these impersonating terrorists who have attacked innocent, helpless victims violently, and then fled. The masses have a widespread perception that the police and the army are not doing anything to apprehend these predators, but are seen to be complicit in this vile project, while the government is trying to cover up the whole phenomenon.

### **The Logic of Existence of 'Grease Devils'.**

Some political analysts suggest that the 'grease devil' phenomenon is manufactured by the state in order to keep the masses in a state of terror, and that it serves to further militarize the whole of society. This necessity, they argue, is because this is the only way to invade the public mind and hold it hostage by instilling the fear of the devil itself. Creating a climate of unknown terror and fear is one way to manage and control public behavior. This is needed given that the organic crisis of the failing system is bound to reach volcanic dislocations and unleash mass upheaval and struggle on a hitherto unknown scale and consequence. This is once the spiral of debt, parasitism, corruption, nepotism and waste climb to unbearable limits and the system begins to crack under the strain. However, terrorizing society and keeping the masses hostage is a thin line to draw and a dangerous gamble to take. As it is the halo around the regime, the supreme triumvirate and around the throne of the emperor is vaporizing, even as daily life becomes intolerable for the masses. If the masses begin to realize that the state is no longer their protector and benefactor, but an agency of violent suppression and repression, then the masses will lose faith and confidence in the state, or at least in the regime. Once the masses begin to experience the 'naked terrorist dictatorship of the ruling classes' enforced by the Capitalist State- as Lenin defined it-, they will learn to rebel and revolt against the system.

### **Underlying Trends:**

The Navanthurai episode highlights certain trends and has crucial significance for the following reasons: This is not an isolated incident. Such events involving 'grease devils' have been reported from various areas of the country for some time, particularly in the North. The fact that the State has opted to dismiss the reality of these terror campaigns as rumors conjured up by the Opposition to embarrass the State gives reason for these 'grease devils' to act with impunity. Not a single such 'devil' has yet been apprehended. Everywhere the people had intervened to apprehend the 'grease devils', *they have been declared the offenders* and intimidated by the State- as in Puttalam, Killinochi and Navanthurai. Now, the State has begun to identify these villagers, or anyone else who acts in their own armed defense against these merchants of terror and their accomplices as *terrorists*. This is even in instances where the police and the army have acted to forcefully suppress the initiatives of the masses to capture the marauding terrorists and defend themselves, when the armed forces themselves have miserably failed to do so. The phenomenon of the 'grease devils' has had the effect of striking terror across the Land. This gives a further justification for militarization of society, for the spread of armed surveillance and control to the villages and remote corners of the island, and in the consolidation of a quasi-military police state. Finally, the attack on the villagers at Navanthurai by the army, and its blatant legitimization by the state serves to reinforce the widening gap between the Tamil nation and the State, and will refuel and reignite the aspiration for a separate state. Incidents such as at Navanthurai calls into question the commitment towards reconciliation and to a political solution as pledged by the State. Every effort should be taken to heal the wounds of war, as opposed to treating the people as enemies of the State. The claim that there were terrorists among the villagers will not bite. In that case, they should be legally apprehended, not hounded like dogs.

### **Accountability and Rule of Law:**

We believe that the State is responsible for the attack on the village of Navanthurai and should be held accountable. The State is responsible for upholding the rule of law in every instance, without fear or favor. Is that not the justification for the existence of the State, as bourgeois academic pundits teach us? If the armed forces and the police act in an arbitrary and criminal manner, then these agencies should be penalized and brought under the rule of Law- as opposed to attacking defenseless civilians as the enemies of the State. In order to restore some degree of good faith, we propose that the military administration of the North should be dismantled and civilian administration established, along with the immediate institution of an enforceable and accountable regime of human and democratic rights, such that the people in the North would live with dignity, security and democratic freedom. This is so they may organize themselves to decide, plan and act on their future as free and equal partners of the State, as they wish. "Grease devils" should be apprehended and sent to hell, along with their puppeteers, where they all belong. All citizens have a responsibility in opposing such gross and systemic violations of democracy, human rights and the sovereignty of the people, and demand accountability.

Submitted by:

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