

Trinco killing: Witness drops bombshell on Govt.

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By Poornima Weerasekera and Easwaran Rutnam

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The public inquiry into the killing of five youth in Trincomalee in 2006 took a new twist yesterday with a key witness claiming that a cabinet Minister had contacted him and offered him a house in Colombo after accepting the security forces may have made a mistake.

The witness Dr. Kasippillai Manoharan also gave evidence expressing his concern that the incident was pre-planned. However when contacted a government minister who wished to remain anonymous denied any assumption that the gesture to offer a house in Colombo to Dr. Manoharan and his family was a form of intimidation to remain silent over the issue but instead asserted it was offered to ensure their security.

Giving evidence via video conferencing at a public inquiry held by the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (CoI) on Thursday Dr. Manoharan, the father of Manoharan Ragihar, who was among those killed, said a cabinet Minister had contacted him over the phone in April 2006.

When asked by President's Counsel Ranjith Abeysuriya to repeat the statement made in paragraph 42 of the written testimony made by the witness, Dr. Manoharan said: The Minister said, you must release yourself from this trauma as you have other children also. It may be that the forces may have mistaken these children as the [LTTE](#) and shot them.

We are attempting to give you some sort of compensation from the government. If you consider that in Trincomalee there is no security for you we can provide you with a house in Colombo and we can make arrangements for the education of your children.

He asked me not to create a big issue over this and wanted me to get out of this trauma and return to my normal life. I said I didn't want anything and asked whether they could give my son back., a tearing Dr. Manoharan said.

When PC Abeysuriya asked how sure are you that it was the minister himself who called you? Dr. Manoharan justified his claim saying he had followed speeches made by the Minister.

I have a strong interest in human rights issues. I know his voice as I have listened to speeches on human rights issues in Parliament and on public platforms. I am very familiar with the voice of the minister.

I have also mentioned the telephone number on which he asked me to call him back. I gave this number to a Sinhala gentleman, who is a family friend. He confirmed that it was the Minister's number, he said.

I have no confidence and trust that I will get justice from the government of Sri Lanka. There are several reasons for this. The minister who spoke to me said `you are trying to approach international human rights organisations and create an issue and trying to tarnish the name of the country.` Even this commission could be dissolved before the proceedings come to a proper conclusion, he said.

A government minister however said while security was offered to the family of the victim at no instance was there an attempt to pressurize the victim into being silence over the incident. He asserted that the government was keen to ensure the witnesses came out and gave evidence without fear.

Dr. Manoharan also said he believed the incident was pre-planned because a family friend working for a state bank in Trincomalee had come and warned his wife at about 6.30 p.m. saying she had heard rumours that an incident was to take place.

He also said a trusted Police officer had told him that an hour before the incident, a Police sergeant (who is retired now) had been ordered to go back to the barracks by a high official in the Police saying there was an issue in the beach front.

He also said at least 13 STF personnel who were arrested in connection with the incident were subsequently released.

The five students were killed on January 2, 2006. Initially the police and the government claimed that the students were in-fact LTTE cadres killed in a premature detonation of a grenade that they were about to throw towards government troops.

The government claims were contradicted by the post mortem reports, which stated that the deaths were caused by gun shot wound in execution style.

The University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR) accused a local police superintendent as the mastermind of the operation behind the killings.

The only witness who came forward was Dr. Manoharan who later claimed he was threatened by some elements of the Sri Lankan security forces.

According to RSF a journalist who took pictures of the slain students proved that they died of gun shot injuries and not by an explosion of a grenade as claimed by local

military authorities was shot dead by unknown gun men suspected to be paramilitary

men.