

Sri Lanka: Police inaction on attack by thugs

Tuesday 12 April 2011, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 3 April 2011).

The group that was identified as the Rights Dialogue came into existence with the attack on my self and others on December 7, 2010. On that day I returned from London and there was a substantial crowd to greet me. Suddenly we were attacked by an organized group of thugs, while the security forces were watching. After this, they attacked my vehicle, on the way to Colombo.

This is an old story, well publicized by all media, in particular by LakhimaNews. Rights dialogue group which formed to subsequent to this event undertook to keep a campaign going until the culprits are brought to books. The organizations and persons who belong to the above group, which met on the 16th March 2011 to review the situation, decided to send a petition to the IGP for not instituting any legal proceedings against the assailants who attacked us. Signatures to a petition were collected, both locally and internationally.

This petition said "01. Complaints were made to the Police Stations in Katunayake, Peliyagoda and Kandana on the attempts to assault Dr. Vickramabahu Karunarathne, General Secretary of the Nava Sama Samaja Party and the others who were victims of this event at the Bandaranaike International Airport.

"02. On his arrival from London on the 7th December 2010, Dr. Vickramabahu Karunarathne was attacked by a son of a Dy.Minister and his gang. The most notable characters among them were the organisers of the Airport Taxi Service.

Complaints were made

" 03. Dr.Vickramabahu's colleagues rallied round him and sent him out of the Airport in a vehicle.

"04. When some of his colleagues, V.Thirunavukarasu and Shantha Wejeysuriya were traveling out of the airport, a gang followed them, attacked them and damaged the vehicle(vehicle no 258-7286) belonging to Dr. Vickramabahu.

"05. Complaints were made also to the Slave Island and Kandana Police Stations. Though complaints were made to these above - mentioned Police Stations, no legal action has been instituted so far. We, the undersigned verily believe that there is sufficient evidence to institute proceedings against those identified assailants on several charges based on unlawful assembly and if any legal action has not been contemplated, we would like to know the reason for its delay."

As planned, on the 24th March 2011, those who supported the petition assembled opposite the fort railway station around 2.00 pm. Though the crowd assembled was around hundred there was a huge deployment of police and security forces led by a DIG. According to some of the police officers they wanted to protect the demonstration from chauvinist hooligans! However the DIG and the senior police officers wanted us not to walk up to the police headquarters, as it could be dangerous. In fact they offered to take us to the IGP's office in police vehicles. We explained to them that we have every right to walk up to the police headquarters, and it is our need to make it a public event. Explaining such, we started to walk. Police gave protection as it should have been. Our delegation consisting of Fr Sakthivel, women's leader Sandiya Ekneligoda, senior lawyers SG Punchiheva, Srinath Perera, Former Provincial Council chairmen Abu Yusuf, and my self was received cordially by the IGP Dr Mahinda Balasooriya with DIG Anura Senanayaka and SSP McCarthy Perera, assisting

him. We explained that though we have complained to the relevant police stations about the assault and violence made by the organized pro government gang on 7 Dec 2010, and sent detailed letters by registered post to the IGP and DIG Gampaha, to best of our knowledge, no investigation has been conducted.

Serious incident

After explaining thus, we handed over the petition signed by the democratic assembly supported by large number of others. IGP Dr Balasooriya called for reports sent by the Negambo headquarters police, and after going through all documents admitted there was a lapse in the investigations and also admitted that the assault was a serious incident with severe damage to a vehicle travelling with passengers. He took immediate action to withdraw the investigation from the Gampaha region and entrusted it to SSP Eric Perera, Director Special investigation unit-SIU. Also he directed the SSP SIU to discuss immediately the details of coordination with witnesses and to proceed with the investigation. Furthermore we were promised that since it is now directly under the IGP in the Colombo headquarters, investigation will be free of any undue influence.

Subsequently we had a discussion with the SSP SIU where we exchanged relevant information. We came out and had a press conference outside the police head quarters and thanked all those who participated in the demonstration. We hope IGP Dr Balasooriya, a chemistry graduate that did research into narcotics, will keep the promise.

P.S.

* LAKBIMANEWS, 3 april column.