

Commemorating Sri Lanka's disappeared

[Double page spread, pic of banner (4) in the middle, other pics and quotes surrounding it (start clockwise from left). Basil's poem on the far right]

October 27 is Sri Lanka's national day for the commemoration of the disappeared, when persons gather at the Monument for the Disappeared at Raddoluwa Seeduwa. The monument was erected near Negombo in 2000 as a symbol of the disappearances which have plagued Sri Lanka since the 1970s.

This year, 2012, Tamils and Sinhalese commemorated the day together by paying respects to their loved ones who have been lost and discussing issues of accountability relating to these disappearances, as seen in the following photographs.

She goes looking for you

Basil Fernando

(A poem for Somchai Neelaphaijit)

We go
Looking for you
To be accurate,
She goes
Looking for you
To be accurate,
She goes looking
For your bones
Or for something that is yours:
A hair or a piece of cloth

We are just the sub-committee
Helping her
To find you
We go to an abandoned house,
In an abandoned field
And the area opposite
We have forensics
Helping the sub-committee
Everyone is looking
For a piece of you

Forensics find near
The rubbish burning spot
Two piles of bones
We think
We found you
Forensics say
Its human bones
We think
We found you

The journey is yet long,
Spread through fields
Through many more bones,
Through laboratories,
Through jurists,
Through judges,
Who must finally believe
That it is you
She will go on that journey
We wish to be with her also
Till she finds you
Monument for the Disappeared [pic1]

Plaques in all three languages (Sinhala, Tamil and English) [pic2]

“Government keeps on stamping people who work for democracy and rights,”
Chandraguptha Thenuwara, artist who made the Monument for the Disappeared
[pic12]

Mother of two sons who have gone missing kisses and weeps at the Monument for the Disappeared [pic3]

“Who has abducted my two sons?” Paththirakaali Suyampunaadar (63) from Mannar, whose two sons were abducted in Mattakkuli in 2007. [pic7]

“Tell me, what happened to my husband?” Sandya Eknaligoda, wife of missing cartoonist Prageeth Eknaligoda. [pic6]

“Where is democracy in Sri Lanka?” Bandiwewe Diyasena Thero [pic11]

“People in North and East are prevented from mourning for their loved ones killed in war. People in North and East should be allowed to mourn for their loved ones who were killed in war. People in other parts of the country think that the war is over and Tamils in North and East are living happily and peacefully. But it is incorrect! There is a silent war going on in North and East of Sri Lanka. Government rapidly closed down the Menik Farm before the upcoming UPR (Universal Periodic Review)! Media needs to highlight the ‘hidden issues’ in the North and East,” Reverend Fr Jeyabalan Cross [pic10]

“In North and South our children go missing” Banner in Sinhala and Tamil [pic4]

Mothers and wives of the disappeared persons from the North and East of Sri Lanka participating at the commemoration event [pic8]

Tamil fathers whose sons have been disappeared over the past few years [pic9]

Reverend Fr M Sathivel paying floral tribute to the disappeared [pic5]

Families and friends of the disappeared picketing after paying floral tribute [pic13]

Photographs and captions courtesy of Dushiyanthini Kanagasabapathipillai.