

Will IPKF be named in commission's interim report? (1999, May 9). *The Island*.

Probe into alleged disappearances of persons in Jaffna in '80s

Will IPKF be named in commission's interim report?

The interim report of the Presidential Commission appointed to probe disappearances in the Jaffna peninsula in late 80s will deal with the alleged involvement of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in some of the cases. The report comes at a time Sri Lanka is seeking further Indian co-operation to combat the LTTE, well informed sources said.

A senior spokesman for the three member Presidential Commission of Inquiry Into Involuntary Removal and Disappearances which had gathered information with regard to some disappearances involving IPKF personnel during their deployment in Jaffna will hand over an interim report on the findings in month's time to President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

The Commission held sittings in Jaffna, Point Pedro and Kayts for 11 days beginning March 14 and recorded statements from persons who were aware of the involvement of some IPKF personnel in disappearances, the sources added. "We have detailed accounts of IPKF involvement," the source said.

The Commission is headed by Attorney-at-Law Ms. Manouri Muttetuwegama probed approximately 160 cases of disappearances in the north. At least seven of these disappearances had involved Indian troops, deployed under the July 87 Indo-Lanka agreement.

Hundreds died and many disappeared in bloody fighting between the IPKF and the LTTE after the latter declined to accept the controversial accord.

Asked whether the Commission has evi-

dence involving the IPKF in disappearances, the sources said that there was evidence.

The Commission will report whether the disappearances had in fact taken place; if so who was responsible for the disappearances; what legal action could be taken against such persons; what changes in the law are needed to prevent the recurrence of such incidents and recommend relief measures for the victims.

Several persons who were aware of the events at that time, representatives of 18 NGOs including one foreign entity and people from Organisations of Parents and Guardians of Disappeared Persons gave evidence.

The Commission received a good response from the people, the sources said adding that 87% of the complainants gave evidence. A

large number of people had come forward to give details of more disappearances, the sources said. However, the Commission has pointed out that it will not be able to investigate new cases. But forms have been given to people who wanted to make complaints, the sources said.

The Commission comprises, Ms. Manouri Muttetuwegama, retired High Court Judge P. Balavadivel and retired Commissioner General of Prisons H. G. Dharmadasa.

Ms. Muttetuwegama's Commission has been authorised to inquire into 10,136 cases of disappearances in the country. Of this number, the Commission had already inquired into approximately 3000 cases.

The sources said that many disappearances that took place in areas previously controlled

by the LTTE had not been reported to the three Zonal Commissions. At that time people were scared to come forward and mainly there was no way the people of Jaffna and others living in LTTE controlled areas could get in touch with the three Commissions. However, after the peninsula and several other areas were brought under government control, the people were able to come forward. Quoting persons and organisations based in the North-East region, the sources revealed that people have indicated their willingness to make over 3000 complaints regarding disappearances that have taken place between 1985-1995. But the Commission has no authority to inquire into fresh cases. These 3,000 disappearance cases had taken place in the Batticaloa and the Jaffna districts. [SF]