

Land of torture, death

By RUTH TEICHROEB
Staff Reporter

It was once called the magical kingdom of Serendip, but Tamil refugees say their home now is a land of torture and death.

"My parents sent me away because they feared for my life," Kasinathan Ravendrakumar told *The Province* yesterday.

The 24-year-old student, who arrived in Vancouver 10 days ago, said his older brother was tortured by the Sri Lankan military.

"My brother was stripped naked,

needles were stuck into his vulnerable parts and chili was rubbed into his eyes," he said.

Ravendrakumar said his parents urged him to leave after the army hauled them in for questioning and made death threats. "Young men between 16 and 40 aren't safe — everyone's suspect."

Fellow Tamil Rohan Sandrasagra said his nephew was tortured, and his family pleaded with him to flee.

"Things were just getting worse," said the 34-year-old Catholic who

left his wife of two years behind.

"They were afraid I'd be stopped by the military and killed."

Sandrasagra said his 17-year-old nephew was arrested and tortured for four days.

"My sister went with a priest to the military and pleaded for his release," he said.

Both Ravendrakumar and Sandrasagra had legitimate Sri Lankan passports when they arrived at Vancouver airport Sept. 18 with a group of six other Tamils.