



# Saving Sunil

A study of dangerous  
speech around a Facebook  
page dedicated to Sgt.  
Sunil Rathnayake

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மாற்றுக் கொள்கைகளுக்கான நிலையம்

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) is an independent, non-partisan organisation that focuses primarily on issues of governance and conflict resolution. Formed in 1996 in the firm belief that the vital contribution of civil society to the public policy debate is in need of strengthening, CPA is committed to programmes of research and advocacy through which public policy is critiqued, alternatives identified and disseminated.

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## Introduction

This study continues a critical examination by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) into online discourse, particularly over social media, around dangerous and hate speech. The report 'Liking Violence: A Study of Hate Speech on Facebook in Sri Lanka'<sup>1</sup> published in September 2014 was the first publication looking at this issue.

With online communication now the norm amongst youth; Facebook, Twitter and instant messaging such as WhatsApp have birthed a culture where individuals who share interests, views and opinions are able to interact with others beyond borders and continents, *sans* any social restrictions, forming in some cases movements and even new identity groups. The power of such movements are not restricted to mere rhetoric and images displayed on a screen. These online expressions have the power to unite, organize and mobilize mass action as witnessed in Kenya and Egypt.

As is evident in many online fora (which today includes groups created on and exchanges over mobile chat app like WhatsApp, WeChat and Facebook Messenger), the metamorphosis of a 'just cause' to 'hate speech' can be subtle or dramatic, fed by any number of motives ranging from personal grudges to phobia to national politics.

The growth and impact of online hate speech in Sri Lanka was evident in the findings of the above mentioned 'Liking Violence' study. Given that context, this study will examine how potent or significant the saving Sunil Facebook group is as an example of online hate speech and its effect, if any, as a catalyst for social mobilization.

## Overview

On 25 June 2015, the High Court of Colombo found Staff Sergeant R. M. Sunil Rathnayake of the Sri Lanka Army guilty of murdering 8 civilians including a 5-year-old child in Mirusuvil, Jaffna on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2000. Sgt. Rathnayake along with fellow Army personnel R.W. Senaka Munasinghe, H.M. Jayaratne, S.A. Pushpakumara and Gamini Munasinghe were accused of 17 counts including unlawful assembly with common intent to cause injury and murder. Sgt. Rathnayake was found guilty on 15 counts, while the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> defendants were cleared of all charges by reason of insufficient proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Sgt. Rathnayake was sentenced to death by the High Court, but since Sri Lanka does not carry out the death penalty, the order of execution will not be carried out. He also has the option of appealing to a higher court against his conviction.

This paper aims to study the nature and extent of hate speech generated on the Facebook community page set up to save Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake.

The facts surrounding the incident, commonly referred to as the Mirusuvil massacre, are found in Addendum A.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cpalanka.org/liking-violence-a-study-of-hate-speech-on-Facebook-in-sri-lanka/>

## Methodology

This study focused primarily on the official Face Book page dedicated to saving Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake, [www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros)

Data gathering and analysis focused on a period of 4 weeks, beginning from the inception of the page on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015 to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

All the posts (31) during this period were documented and translated, as well as comments containing hate speech. The content of posts, images and comments were examined for hate speech content.

The guidelines applied in this study are based on definitions and variables of hate speech formulated by political scientist Prof. Susan Benesch<sup>2</sup> who is a primary thinker in countering online hate speech. While there exists other guidelines and frameworks developed by other researchers, we have retained Benesch's hypothesis as it was applied in CPA's previous study 'Liking Violence: A Study of Hate Speech on Facebook in Sri Lanka'<sup>3</sup>. Benesch is the founder of the Dangerous Speech Project which studies the spread of speech that incites people to violence – while protecting freedom of expression, teaches International Human Rights at the American University and also serves as the Everett Fellow in Genocide Prevention at the US holocaust Memorial Museum.

**NOTE:** Posts and comments which are offensive and amount to hate speech are reproduced in this report purely for research purposes and in no way meant to condone or publicize such views or to insult or cause pain of mind to victims of such attacks. Some comments contain extremely vulgar language and may be distressing.

This study is not to determine the innocence or guilt of Sgt. Rathnayake. However, in the process of identifying characteristics of hate speech found in posts and comments, it was necessary to evaluate the veracity of post and comment content.

## Scope of Study

The period of this study beginning 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015 to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2015 falls within the period of political campaigning for the General Election of 2015. President Sirisena dissolved Parliament on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and nominations took place between 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015. The coincidence of timing lends to heavy political content in the Saving Sunil page and must be viewed in this context; while examining the nature and extent of hate speech generated as an indicator of current social media discourses in Sri Lanka.

The conviction of a soldier by a civilian court 15 years after the fact created much hype, with diverse views expressed on the web in the form of posts and comments on the Sunil Rathnayake Facebook page<sup>4</sup> as well as comments posted on other online news sites where the verdict was reported.<sup>5</sup>

One view points out that the conviction conveniently coincides with the new President Maithripala Sirisena's efforts in deflecting international pressure to investigate alleged excesses and human

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.worldpolicy.org/sites/default/files/Dangerous%20Speech%20Guidelines%20Benesch%20January%202012.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cpalanka.org/liking-violence-a-study-of-hate-speech-on-facebook-in-sri-lanka/>

<sup>4</sup> [www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dailymirror.lk/77509/8-idps-murdered-in-jaffna-soldier-sentenced-to-death>  
<http://adaderana.lk/news/31381/army-soldier-sentenced-to-death-over-mirusuvil-massacre>

rights violations during the war. The conviction seems to support his promise of an alternative domestic mechanism.<sup>6</sup> While his stand contrasts with that of the previous President Mahinda Rajapakse who denied any civilian deaths and refused to initiate any investigation, it does raise questions; the most obvious being whether a process which took 15 years to meet out justice is in fact an efficient system to deal with issues of such importance.

Another view is that the court room drama was enacted for the benefit of the international community, where Sgt. Rathnayake played the convenient sacrificial lamb. Another is that the judgement amounts to 'too little, too late'. Yet another view questions the validity of charging soldiers for incidents during a period where terrorists masqueraded as civilians and government forces were compelled to engage in unconventional warfare. Some object to a soldier being tried in a civilian court as opposed to a military court, and others object to the perversity of dedicated soldiers being vilified by the very state they fought to protect and preserve. Yet others question a system of justice where Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake is brought to trial and condemned to death for killing 8 civilians while Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan<sup>7</sup> who is responsible for the massacre of more than 600 unarmed Police officers in the Eastern Province in 1990 is rewarded with a Ministerial portfolio. Certainly much to think about and debate, and much here that was taken up variously in social media as well as some mainstream media at the time of the study.

These issues and opinions form the back drop to this report.

While this study focuses on the content of a selected Facebook profile, comments expressed in other web based news sites where the subject was open to public discussion were also monitored, to compare content.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=30769>

<sup>7</sup> alias Col. Karuna Amman (formerly head of the LTTE in the Eastern Province)

# Targets and Producers of Hate Speech

## Producers

The lack of data is a huge disadvantage in profiling producers and distributors of hate speech on Facebook and other online sites. Since there is no way to ascertain the validity of Facebook profiles, they may not always indicate the true identity of a person. According to the Police, 20% of Sri Lanka's Facebook accounts out of a total of 1.2 million (in 2012), were fake<sup>8</sup>. It is safe to assume that the number is still higher now. However, a few broad assumptions can be made based on analysis of samples of profile pages and accessible data.

The key content producers on the Saving Sunil Facebook group appear to be almost entirely youth, between the ages of 20 – 35 years. Almost the entire group bears Sinhalese names, while there are occasional Muslim, Tamil and Burgher names. In fact, one member comments on the absence of Tamils or Muslims in the group. Education levels vary, as per the mention of schools and universities attended. Some profiles and comments indicate currently serving or former military personnel.

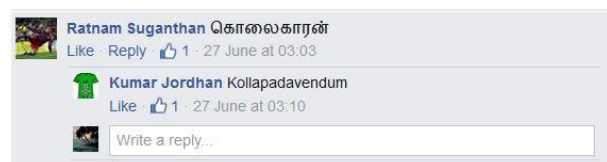
Unnecessary and unprovoked use of obscene and extremely offensive language is evident in comments. Members posting such comments seem indifferent to such outbursts being on a public online forum. While most users of profanity seem to be men (as per profile name used), a few female names are evident.

Though language used is primarily Sinhala, a majority of comments are written using the English alphabet, thus neatly bypassing measures to monitor and report content by Facebook for disseminating hate speech and offensive content that contravene the company's guidelines<sup>9</sup>.

There are occasional comments in Tamil language, opposing the cause of the group, which have interestingly not attracted any hate responses. The only replies to both posts (agreeing with the comment) are shown below. Considering the general trend to attack members posting comments with opposing views, the possible reason for ignoring these could be the language barrier where group members do not know and comprehend Tamil.

Example: Comment<sup>10</sup> translation;

Ratnam Suganthan 'Murderer'  
(1 Reply) Kumar Jordhan 'should be killed'.



<sup>8</sup> [www.facebook.com/SLtelecom/posts/366614890015926](https://www.facebook.com/SLtelecom/posts/366614890015926)

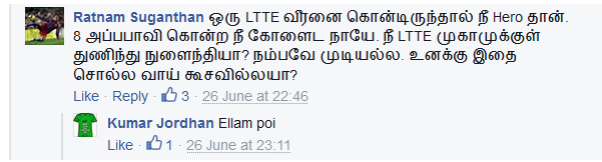
<sup>9</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards>

<sup>10</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925122375822.1073741825.1445924805709187/1445925129042488/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446279172340417&offset=50&total\\_comments=54&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925122375822.1073741825.1445924805709187/1445925129042488/?type=1&comment_id=1446279172340417&offset=50&total_comments=54&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22})

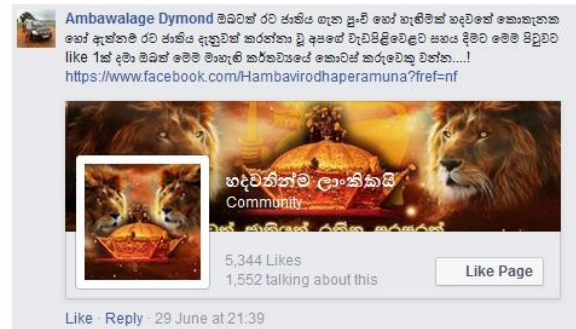
Another example; comment<sup>11</sup> translation;  
 Ratnam Suganthan *'If you killed an LTTE soldier, you are a hero. But you are a coward who killed eight civilians. We cannot believe that you had the guts to enter LTTE camps and attack'*  
 (1 Reply) Kumar Jordhan, *'All lies'*.



Interestingly, other Facebook groups which promote Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and Islamophobia share hate speech posts in the Facebook group under review. Some posts invite members to join or 'like' their page. While this is indicative of shared interests, it is not possible to measure the extent or number of member migrations or the number of saving Sunil Facebook group members who are also subscribe to the other jingoist groups.

For example, a group calling itself *'Sri Lankan from the heart community'* posts an invitation,<sup>12</sup>

Translation;  
 Ambawalage Dymond *'anyone who feels for the country and race, join us in our effort to educate the masses by Liking our page and become partners in this great effort'*.



The page address <http://www.Facebook.com/Hambavirodhiperamuna?fref=nf> indicates the group's identity as an 'Anti-Muslim Front' (*Hambavirodhiperamuna*). *Hamba* is a derogatory term for Muslims.

The Saving Sunil Facebook group also includes members who display their political affiliation – either by the visuals used as their profile page, or by the comments posted. The majority of such displays and severe comments are by pro-Mahinda Rajapakse supporters, with a lesser number of pro-UNP or pro-Sirisena government supporters posting moderate remarks.

## Targets

The primary target of hate speech expressed in the Saving Sunil group is the political leadership of the country led by President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe. The Tamil community, the gay community, the Muslim community and individuals expressing dissenting views are targeted to a lesser degree. Out of the approximately 31 posts by the administrator (posted during the period covered by this research), 17 posts were directly critical of or inciting hate against the political leadership, while only 11 posts were non-political and directly dealt with the cause of Sgt. Rathnayake. Of the 17 posts mentioned above, 12 were critical of the government of President Sirisena and his manifesto of *yahapalanaya* (good governance). 5 posts were directly critical of Prime

<sup>11</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1446089619026039.1073741829.1445924805709187/1446089609026040/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446276222340712&offset=0&total\\_comments=60&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1446089619026039.1073741829.1445924805709187/1446089609026040/?type=1&comment_id=1446276222340712&offset=0&total_comments=60&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22})

<sup>12</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925122375822.1073741825.1445924805709187/1445925129042488/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446947138940287&offset=50&total\\_comments=55&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R4%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925122375822.1073741825.1445924805709187/1445925129042488/?type=1&comment_id=1446947138940287&offset=50&total_comments=55&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R4%22})



Minister Wickremesinghe and the United National Party. While the posts themselves are not always directly amounting to hate speech, the comments posted in response include hate speech.

### Ethnic and religious communities

Hate speech targeting the Tamil community stereotypes and equates all Tamils to terrorists and therefore justifies the killings. Terms such as *demalu/ demalaa* (derogatory terms for Tamil) are also used to refer to the Tamil community.

For example, comment posted by Ruwan Kumara.<sup>13</sup>

Translation of the commentary to the graphic:  
*'A few innocent civilians who lived in Jaffna at that time...! Can you see how there had been innocent, little civilians too?'*



It is interesting to note that although the story of Sgt. Rathnayake does not in any way feature or involve the Muslim community, there are attempts to provoke hate speech against the Muslim community. Attempts by anti-Muslim groups to attract members to 'like' their group (as discussed above<sup>14</sup>) and also hate speech directed at Muslims. The term '*hambaya*' or '*thambiya*' (derogatory terms for Muslims) is used in comments.

Example: comment posted by a person bearing a Muslim name and hate responses to same.<sup>15</sup>

Translation of comments:

Mohamed Sharaaf: *'It was the government put together by Wimal Weerawansa that framed charges in 2000. President Mahinda's government continued this case for 15 years. Why didn't they withdraw it?'*

Duminda Mahesh: *'What do you know? Do you guys even have a race or religion? Don't give your arse to Ranil - this isn't Saudi Arabia. Don't talk tosh. We value our heroes more than you scum.'*

Menaka Yasendra: *All the Muslims give their arse to Ranil*

Rohan Ish Basnayake: *Mohamed you mother fucker, don't fuck around. Bloody son of a bitch. Just because you cut your dicks, our race does not do that. Bloody son of a whore.*

<sup>13</sup>

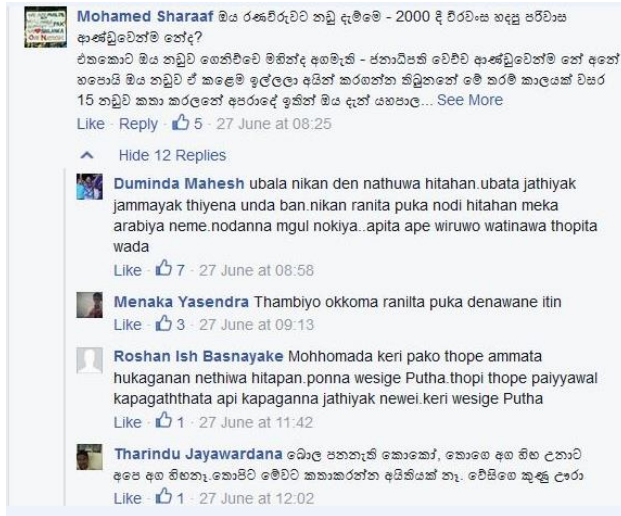
[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446328962335438/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446437138991287&offset=0&total\\_comments=22&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R1%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446328962335438/?type=1&comment_id=1446437138991287&offset=0&total_comments=22&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R1%22})

<sup>14</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925122375822.1073741825.1445924805709187/1445925129042488/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446947138940287&offset=50&total\\_comments=55&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R4%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925122375822.1073741825.1445924805709187/1445925129042488/?type=1&comment_id=1446947138940287&offset=50&total_comments=55&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R4%22})

<sup>15</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446310619003939/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446327049002296&offset=0&total\\_comments=27&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R2%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446310619003939/?type=1&comment_id=1446327049002296&offset=0&total_comments=27&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R2%22})



Tharindu Jayawardana: *Bloody effeminates! Just because you are missing parts doesn't mean we are. You have no right to speak here. Bloody fucking dirty pig.*

Notable excessive use of profanity targeting the individual who posted the comment and his perceived ethnic/religious group, rather than dealing with the comment content.

### Political leaders

The focus of the Facebook page rapidly shifts to blaming the incumbent government for giving in to minority interests and engaging in a witch hunt against war heroes. There is a clear segment of pro-Mahinda Rajapakse supporters posting comments. Considering, at the time the study was undertaken, the proximity of the General Election, it is clear that the page was being used as a platform for election propaganda. The process includes hate speech against the incumbent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, incumbent President Maithripala Sirisena and a few prominent Ministers as well as those who subscribe to political views of the Sirisena administration. The word 'yahapalanaya' meaning good governance, which is the manifesto on which President Sirisena was elected is often used to indicate the government in office at the time of the study or the President himself. The word 'yamapalanaya' (hell governance or governance from hell) is used, as a play on the word 'yahapalanaya'.

The attacks on the incumbent Prime Minister are particularly vicious and feature derogatory terms and language associated with homophobia.

Translation of post:<sup>16</sup>

*Yahapalana (good governance) leaders who imprisoned the war heroes who dedicated their lives to free our people from death, beware. Is this the change you fellows promised? How can we bear it when our beloved heroes are imprisoned for making it possible for us to breathe in freedom? You good governance leaders, should we not breathe in freedom?*

Sample of comments (translations):

රට වැසියන්ට මරණ හයෙන් කොරට නිදහසේ දිවි ගෙවන්නට කම වී තිය කැප කල උදාර රණවිරුවන් සිරගත කරන යහපාලන කරුවන්, . . . පරිස්සම් වෙන්න



<sup>16</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925862375748.1073741827.1445924805709187/1445932649041736/?type=1>

Jaya Seyara: *'Curse you dog Ranil. You will be struck by lightning for the pain you cause innocent people. Curse you.'*<sup>17</sup>

Samagi Kalhara: *'Ranil faggot and John faggot you will be struck by lightning, you devils.'*<sup>18</sup>

Roshan Gunathilaka: *'The president of Sri Lanka is either a faggot or a Tamil (demalek).'*<sup>19</sup>

Hasitha De Alwis: *'Fucking son of a bitch my only wish is that that dog Prabhakaran will be reborn and start the war again so that useless, unholy, fucking faggots like you and UNP fuckers including faggot Ranil torn to pieces and lying dead on the streets. I curse you and your gay, hell-government. Curse you, curse you, curse you....'*<sup>20</sup>

## Homosexuals

By extension of the above, hate speech targets homosexuals and gays, demonstrating homophobia.

## Individuals with dissenting views

Individuals who post opposing views and do not subscribe to hard line ultra nationalist or racist views or support the judgement in Sunil's case are targeted with hate speech.

Example of comments from a dialogue<sup>21</sup>

(Translation):

Chamila Mahesh Ranatunga: *'Just because one is a Sinhalese it does not make one a patriot nor does being a Tamil make one a Tiger. Crimes must be punished.'*

(11 Replies)

Madhushankhe Leonidaz Konarasinghe: *'Tamils accept Prabhakaran who killed 27,000 soldiers as their leader. But when talk of this Sinhalese man, mixed race cads like you betray the Sinhalese. Remember, your unborn descendants will be finished off you damn dog.'*

Madhushankhe Leonidaz Konarasinghe: *'Go to hell you scum'*

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<sup>17</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445932319041769/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446148229020178&offset=0&total\\_comments=39&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445932319041769/?type=1&comment_id=1446148229020178&offset=0&total_comments=39&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22})

<sup>18</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446632032305131/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446769902291344&offset=0&total\\_comments=20&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R8%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446632032305131/?type=1&comment_id=1446769902291344&offset=0&total_comments=20&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R8%22})

<sup>19</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446543912313943/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446568975644770&offset=0&total\\_comments=28&comment\\_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22%7D](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446543912313943/?type=1&comment_id=1446568975644770&offset=0&total_comments=28&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22%7D)

<sup>20</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445932319041769/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446036819031319&offset=0&total\\_comments=39&comment\\_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22%7D](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445932319041769/?type=1&comment_id=1446036819031319&offset=0&total_comments=39&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22%7D)

<sup>21</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925862375748.1073741827.1445924805709187/1445932649041736/?type=1&comment\\_id=1445939502374384&offset=0&total\\_comments=64&comment\\_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22%7D](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925862375748.1073741827.1445924805709187/1445932649041736/?type=1&comment_id=1445939502374384&offset=0&total_comments=64&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22%7D)

Chamila Mahesh Ranatunga: *'Friend don't think as Sinhalese or Tamils, all are humans. We don't know if we will be Sinhalese, Tamil or Muslim in our next birth. There are laws even in war. If the army of a country does not abide by them what is the difference between them and terrorists?'*

Chathura Samaraweera: *'Chamila, since Tamils are human, let Tamils sleep with your mother in your home. You faggot.'*

**Chamila Mahesh Ranatunga** Sinhala una kiyla desha premiyekwath demala una kiyla kotiwath wenne ne aparada walata daduwam.lebiya yuthui  
Like · Reply · 25 June at 13:24

Hide 11 Replies

**Madhushankhe Leonidaz Konarasinghe** hamudaawe 27000 k marapu prabhakaran wa demalu okkoma thamange naayakaya Vdihata pilligannawa ... Eth me sinhala miniha gana kathaa karaddi thopi wage jaathiya mix wechcha amanayo me Vdihata sinhala jaathiya paawa dena nisaa thamai mathaka thyaaganin thope noopan parapuratath ekka kelavilaa yanne para balla ..  
See Translation  
Like · 4 · 25 June at 13:44

**Madhushankhe Leonidaz Konarasinghe** Nodakin tho 😊  
Like · 3 · 25 June at 13:44

**Chamila Mahesh Ranatunga** Machan demallu sinhala kiyla hithnna epa bn okkoma minissu kiyla hithahn api labana athme demalada sinhalada muslimada kiynna dnne nene yudda karaddi nithi thiyenwa bn rataka army 1k ewa pili padina ona nethnm apei terrorist lagei wenasa mokakda ?  
Like · 25 June at 13:47

**Chathura Samaraweera** chamila ehenam demalunta ube gedara amma ekka nida ganna dipan.un minissune.ponnaya  
Like · 2 · 25 June at 14:05

**Exceptions:** A limited number of comments posted by individuals challenge the version/s of the incident posted on the Facebook page and question the veracity of claims made by the administrator’s version of events. Although the general pattern is to take on those expounding opposing views often with vicious hate speech, these particular posts containing arguments based on logical reasoning and facts attracted little or zero hate speech responses / comments.

Example: Please refer to Addendum B of this report for translation of comment posted by Inoka Jeewan Abeywardana, below<sup>22</sup>

1 Reply

**Inoka Jeewan Abeywardana** <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10206097983001098&set=a.1657586932044.154774.1608253467&type=1&theater>

**මිනි මරුවන් රන විරුවන් කරනා බයි පොලිටික්ස්.**  
සත්‍ය කිසිවිම දැනගන්න මිනිසුන් කිසිවක්වත් මිනිසුන් අවසාන අනතුරු ඇතුළු වලට පිලිගැනීමේදී

**Inoka Jeewan Abeywardana** 😊 feeling hopeful with Sujeewa Senasinghe and 61 others in Colombo, Sri Lanka

එල්ලෙන්ට වැලක් විලිවසාගැනීමට රෙද්දක් සොයමින් සත්‍යයේ සෑදි පහරට හසුවී සමානෝපායන සහ අසත්‍යයේ නිර්මාපකයින්ට කවින් පිදුරු සපයන් හමුවී තිබෙනවා. මවුන් එම පිදුරු සපයන එල්ලෙම...

See More

Like · Reply · 26 June at 10:49

**Uddika Bandaranayake** ethkota yako ape rate bomba walin marunu inissunta ko nadu.ponnaya  
Like · 26 June at 11:07

22

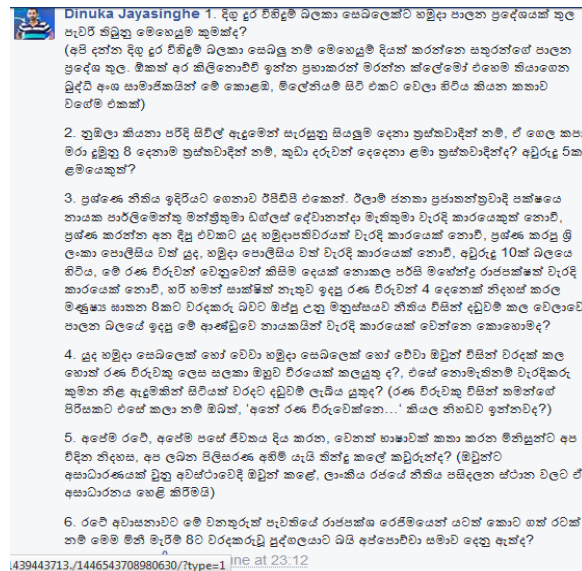
[https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925122375822.1073741825.1445924805709187/1445925129042488/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446114695690198&offset=0&total\\_comments=54&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925122375822.1073741825.1445924805709187/1445925129042488/?type=1&comment_id=1446114695690198&offset=0&total_comments=54&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22})

Examples of other posts expressing similar, opposing views yet attracting very little hostility:

Link to post by Kavinda Senevirathna UNP Young Graduates Front – Matara District.<sup>23</sup>  
Replies 0



Link to post by Dinuka Jayasinghe<sup>24</sup>  
Replies 2



<sup>23</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446632032305131/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446846258950375&offset=0&total\\_comments=20&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R1%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446632032305131/?type=1&comment_id=1446846258950375&offset=0&total_comments=20&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R1%22})

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445928959042105/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446281022340232&offset=0&total\\_comments=107&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22}](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445928959042105/?type=1&comment_id=1446281022340232&offset=0&total_comments=107&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22})

## Defining Variables

Prof. Benesch identifies five variables which affect the intensity of hate speech and the level of dangerousness<sup>25</sup>. These are the speaker, the audience, content of the speech, social and historical context and the mode of dissemination.

### Speaker

The key indicator is the influence or authority wielded by the speaker over the audience. Influence does not necessarily derive from a position of authority. Authority is also linked very strongly to credibility. If a speaker is seen to be credible, the audience is more likely to listen, automatically elevating the speaker to a position of authority.



For example, the use of imagery depicting soldiers in battle fatigue, reinforces the image of ‘the war hero’ (*ranaviruwa*) which is used throughout to describe Sgt. Rathnayake. It does more than evoke national pride, it clothes the Facebook page with credibility as a voice of war heroes.

*Link to image*<sup>26</sup>



#### Special Forces : Sri Lanka LRP (LRRP) - මහසොහොන් බලකාය | Full Movie

Storyline: Sri Lanka went through a two-decade long civil war that saw the country plunged into chaos. In...

YOUTUBE.COM

Another example is the use of extremely emotive videos. The YouTube video<sup>27</sup> titled ‘Special Forces Sri Lanka LRRP’ which is about the training and selection process of the LRRP soldiers. It showcases the high level of dedication, endurance, strength, skill and valour required to

belong to this elite patrol and evokes admiration and respect for the men who serve in this elite group. Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake served in the LRRP and therefore creates empathy towards him as well as legitimacy and credibility to those championing his cause.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.worldpolicy.org/sites/default/files/Dangerous%20Speech%20Guidelines%20Benesch%20January%202012.pdf>

<sup>26</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHerros/photos/a.1445925862375748.1073741827.1445924805709187/1445925832375751/?type=1&theater>

<sup>27</sup>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUwZrjlzCN4>

Similarly, the narrative by a soldier <sup>28</sup> describing the horrors and hardship endured by him and his fellow soldiers in battle, of bravery and of losing comrades. The narrative rings true and personal, taking the reader through the writer's experience of war, first hand. The text above the graphic describes the story of a young soldier who was posted in Nadukerni. While on picket duty he observed two LTTE girls near a bush but did not shoot at them. His fellow soldiers heard gun shots and ran to him, finding him lying in a pool of blood with gunshot injuries to his stomach. When his Sergeant questioned him as to why he did not open fire when he saw the LTTE girls, he answered, "How can I shoot at girls? We also have sisters at home". The soldier succumbed to his injuries.



Another example of a powerful, emotive post is the story of a fallen soldier, a highly decorated sniper known by the name Nero<sup>29</sup>. While the intention of these posts may be to simply highlight the bravery and sacrifices made by soldiers, the posts also lends authenticity to the Facebook group's voice.

### Audience

The manipulation of the audience's fears by the speaker. Incitement by the use of rhetoric which feeds the fear and makes the audience feel vulnerable.

For example, manipulating fears of an international conspiracy or scheme to further pro-LTTE agenda and implication of leaders in government.

Translation of post<sup>30</sup> 'LRRP was a headache to the Tigers. This case which is based on lies is a scheme by Tigers to get the international community to ban the LRRP. The case dragged on from the year 2000 due to lack of evidence. Why was it resurrected suddenly? How did the evidence become sufficient to prove the case?'

Four of the soldiers from this small group of the LRRP were released due to lack of evidence. How then did the evidence prove that war hero Sunil who was with them is guilty? Who is behind this move to insult war heroes, branding them murderers on the evidence of Tigers?'



<sup>28</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHerোস/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446328962335438/?type=1&theater>

<sup>29</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHerোস/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446894498945551/?type=1&theater>

<sup>30</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHerোস/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446543912313943/?type=1&theater>

Similarly, this post<sup>31</sup> builds on islamophobia.

The title text translation: *'Secret deal to give Sampur which war heroes saved by sacrificing their lives, to Azath Salley'* juxtaposed with a photograph of President Maithripala Sirisena with an unidentified Muslim man and Azath Salley feeds Islamophobia. Text on bottom of image *'Military camps in Sampur removed. Now the land is given to Azath Salley. Can one bear this? Share and educate all.'*



NOTE: A similar photograph is found posted in the President's official Twitter account<sup>32</sup> on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015 of the President meeting leaders from the Dawoodi Bohra and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka. The person greeting the president is identified as the representative of the community.

**Content of the speech**

Speech which makes the audience assess an imminent and serious threat from the group against whom they are attacking, or an imminent threat to their cause.

Example: translation of the last paragraph of this post<sup>33</sup> (above the graphic):

*'There will be a function in Sri Lanka in the future with the Tamil diaspora. One of the main conditions to facilitate Tamil diaspora leaders coming to our country is the weakening of the LRRP.'*

Translation of text in graphic headline:

*'Death to LRRP war hero to please Tamil diaspora.'*

ඉදිරියේදී දෙමළ ඩයස්පෝරාව සමග ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ උත්සවයක් පවත්වන නිසා, දෙමළ ඩයස්පෝරා නායකයින්ට මෙරටට පැමිණීමට නම් දිගු දුර විහිදුම් බලකාය අවසන් වී තිබීම පූර්ව කොන්දේසියක් වී තිබෙනවා.



31 <https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/posts/1452268291741505>  
 32 <https://twitter.com/maithripalas/status/578195113182035968>  
 33 <https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/posts/1445926119042389:0>





Post <sup>34</sup> re-posted from Sinhala Buddhist Facebook page<sup>35</sup>

Translation of the text used in the graphic:  
*'Is this how gratitude is shown to those who lost their limbs to save the country?  
 Divaina newspaper headline – special allowance payable to executive grade government servants not for the military.  
 Share if you are disgusted by this move to cut off the allowance of those who cannot engage in any other job.'*

**Socio-Historical context**

Social and or historical context of the relationship between the groups. The reasons may be varied and many, but can act as a trigger which can be harnessed to incite violence.

The context of 30 years of war, brutal terror attacks by the LTTE targeting civilians such as the bombing of the Central bank, Buddhist sacred sites, public transport and other places remain as unhealed wounds in the Sinhala psyche. Stoking these wounds by raising the spectre of a return to that era of death and destruction creates a fear psychosis and anger against the Tamil community and anyone seen to be associated with, or supportive of them.

The anti-Muslim sentiments and hate speech articulated by the BBS (*Bodu Bala Sena*) while championing ultra-Sinhala Buddhist nationalism created a wave of Islamophobia. Incidents of violence against Muslims such as in Grandpass on 12 August 2013 <sup>36</sup> and the riot in Aluthgama on 15 June 2014<sup>37</sup> heightened tension between the Sinhala and Muslim communities.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/SinhalaBuddhist/photos/a.10150264663426934.380286.151742781933/10153539489396934/?type=1&theater>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/SinhalaBuddhist>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=23703>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2015/03/15/aluthgama-report-fingers-point-at-hate-speech/>

## Mode of transmission

The importance of the mode of transmission is heightened if it is the only or primary source of information or news to the audience. Social media allows messages to be transmitted across boundaries and reach thousands of people instantly. The official Facebook page to save Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake recorded over 11,000 likes within the first 48 hours of being set up.

## Characteristics of Hate Speech

### Education

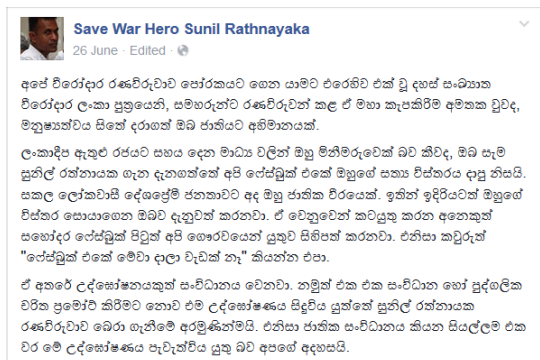
A method used by groups to generate sympathy and support for their cause and attract more group members is to position themselves as a source of credible information. The assimilation of the role of an educator of the public, revealing the true facts where other media vehicles have failed.

Example; translation of post<sup>38</sup>

*'The thousands of brave sons of Sri Lanka who opposed the sending our brave war hero to the gallows, even though some have forgotten the great service rendered by war heroes, you have not. You are a credit to our nation.*

*While the 'Lankadeepa' (Sinhala language newspaper) and other media who support the government branded Sunil Rathnayake a murderer, it is from our Facebook page that you learned the true facts. Today he is a hero to patriots all over the world. So, we will continue to find out more information and educate you. We also remember with gratitude other Facebook pages which do the same. Don't say that "it is pointless posting these on FB".*

*We are also planning a demonstration. It is not to promote any organization or individual but to save war hero Sunil Rathnayake. Hence it is our view that all organizations which claim to be national organizations should join together for this demonstration'.*



38

<https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446076285694039/?type=1&theater>

Second example <sup>39</sup> is a post with the following text (translation),

*'Do you know? That Sunil Rathnayake is one of a handful of the elite Mahasohon Balakaya or LLRP who survived the 2002 Millennium City betrayal by Ranil Wickremesinghe which cost the lives of 160? Who are the political leaders of today trying to please by sending him to the gallows?'*



Third example<sup>40</sup>, text translation:

*The true story of a soldier condemned to death!*

- *While on a patrol in the year 2000, they encountered a group of armed terrorists dressed in civilian clothing.*
- *In the ensuing battle, eight terrorists died and a few others escaped.*
- *One of the terrorists who escaped filed action in court against this group of soldiers.*
- *While this case was to be set aside due to lack of evidence, yhapalanaya came in to power and non-existent evidence suddenly emerged.*
- *Finally, this war hero was condemned to death on the evidence of a former terrorist.*

*If this is justice, why do we need law courts, the law and judges in this country?*



## Denialism

A feature of denialism is where certain facts or occurrences are ignored, denied or dismissed as exaggerations. Example, the Saving Sunil page discredits the evidence of the witness Maheswaran as lies spun by an LTTE carder and ignores other evidence presented to the court such as forensic evidence and evidence provided by the Military Police.<sup>41</sup> (See post below). SaveOurWarHeros

<sup>39</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446353668999634/?type=1&theater>

<sup>40</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446905015611166/?type=1>

<sup>41</sup>

Mirusuvil massacre : Major Sidney de Soysa of Military Police continues evidence, Indeewara Thilakarathne, Daily News 7<sup>th</sup> June 2003; <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2003/06/07/new20.html>

# එදා මිලේනියම් සිටි මහා පාවාදීම වසාගැනීම කඳහා රනිල්ගේ නින්දිත උත්සාහය.



දිගු දුර විහිදුම් ඔලකායේ සහ විශේෂ ඔලකායේ කිරිනාමය විනාශ කිරීම. රනිල්ට හිතවත් විනිසුරුවන් ලවා හිටපු කොටි සාමාජිකයන්ගේ සාක්ෂි යොදාගෙන රණවිරුවන්ව වල්ලුම්ගස් යවයි. එදා මිලේනියම් සිටි හෙළිකිරීම වරදක් නොවන බව පෙන්වීම එහි අරමුණයි.

Post translation<sup>42</sup>

'Ranil's disgraceful attempt to cover up the Millennium City betrayal. Destroying the good name of the LRRP and Special Forces. Ranil uses judges who are his friends and the testimony of former Tiger carders to send war heroes to the gallows, with the intention of showing that the Millennium City revelation was not wrong.'

Another example is a similar post is given below.  
Translation of post <sup>43</sup>

'Do you know?

- One of the conditions of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement was the disbanding of the Mahasohon Balakaya (LRRP).
- Betraying Millennium City safe house to the Tigers was done according to the Ceasefire Agreement. As a result, 160 intelligence officers from the LRRP including Malay national Major Muthalif, Tamil national Captain Nilaam were killed by Tiger pistol gangs.
- A few exceptional personnel escaped death.
- Staff Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake is one of them.
- He served in the Army until the end of the Humanitarian Operation. He is an exceptional soldier who went in to Tiger territory and fought. He was shot and seriously wounded twice but continues to walk.
- Yet, the Tigers could not kill this exceptional war hero, but today he is sent to the gallows on the false testimony of a Tiger carder.'

## ඔබ දන්නවාද?

- 2002 සටන් විරාම ගිවිසුමේ එක් කොන්දේසියක් වූයේ මහසොහොන් ඔලකාය විසුරුවා හැරීමයි.
- සටන් විරාම ගිවිසුම අනේ අනුව මිලේනියම් සිටි කොටිනට පාවා දුන් අතර මැලේ ජාතික මේජර මුතලිල්, දම්පු ජාතික කැපටන් නිලාම් ඇතුළු දිගු දුර විහිදුම් ඔලකායේ මුද්දි අංශ නිලධාරීන් 160 ක් පිට පිට කොටි පිස්තෝල කල්ලිය අතින් ඝාතනය වුණා.
- ඉන් අති දක්ෂයින් කිහිප දෙනෙක් ජීවිතය රැක ගත්තා.
- ඒ කිහිප දෙනාගෙන් අයෙක් තමයි මාණ්ඩලික සැරයන් සුනිල් රත්නායක.
- ඔහු පසුගිය මානුෂික මෙහෙයුම අවසන් වෙනකම්ම හමුදාවේ සිටි අතර, කොටි හට ඇතුළුට ගොස් සටනේ යෙදුන, ඔහු වරක් ඔරපතල ලෙස වෙහි කාලක් දෙපයින් ඇවිදින විශිෂ්ට නිලධාරියෙක්.
- එදා කොටිනට ඝාතනය කළ නොහැකි වූ මේ විශිෂ්ට රණවිරුවා, කොටි සාමාජිකයන්ගේම වහාම සාක්ෂි මත පදනම්ව පෝරකයට ගෙන යනවා.

NOTE: The Ceasefire Agreement of 2002<sup>44</sup> does not mention the disbanding of any Army unit and hence does not support either the first or the second claim.

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445932319041769/?type=1&theater>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.Facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446407345660933/?type=1&theater>

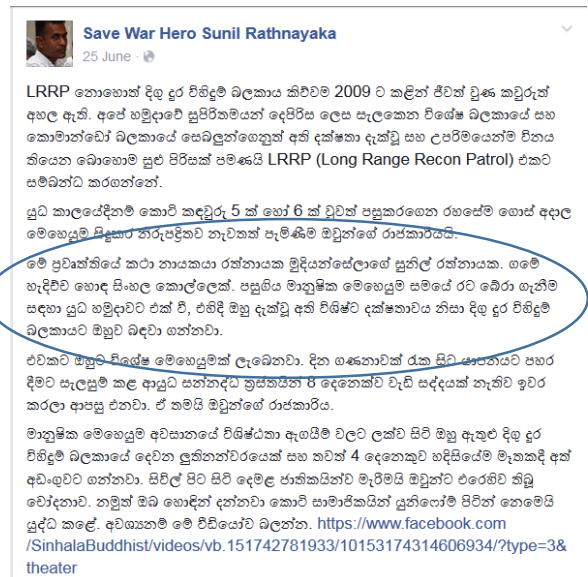
<sup>44</sup> Agreement on a ceasefire between the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, February 2002, Official website of the Sri Lankan Government's Secretariat for Coordination of the Peace Process (SCOPP) <http://www.peaceinsrilanka.lk/negotiations/cfa>

"There's nothing so absurd that if you repeat it often enough, people will believe it" <sup>45</sup> Repetition is an essential prop for denialism. Examples are found throughout the Facebook page posts and comments (refer the last three posts examined above).

In the same context of denialism, it is interesting to note inconsistencies between posts within the Saving Sunil Facebook group. For example, highlighted paragraph 3 of the post below <sup>46</sup> asserts that Sunil Rathnayake joined the Army during the Humanitarian Operation. However, according to the Ministry of Defence of the Government of Sri Lanka<sup>47</sup> the Humanitarian Operation began in July 2006. No explanation is given by the FB group as to how Sunil Rathnayake was one of the few who escaped the aftermath of the Millennium City betrayal in 2002;(as per previous posts (examined above), if he joined the Army during the Humanitarian Operation which was between 2006-2009.

Translation of paragraph 3

*'The protagonist of this news story is Rathnayake Mudiyananselage Sunil Rathnayake. A good Sinhalese boy from the village. During the time of the Humanitarian Operation he joined the Army to save the country and there due to his exceptional abilities, was selected to the LRRP.'*



<sup>45</sup> Attributed to William James, father of modern psychology; [http://quotes.liberty-ree.ca/quotes.nsf/quotes\\_about!ReadForm&Count=50&Start=51&RestrictToCategory=media](http://quotes.liberty-ree.ca/quotes.nsf/quotes_about!ReadForm&Count=50&Start=51&RestrictToCategory=media)

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.Facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445926119042389/?type=1&theater>

<sup>47</sup> 'Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis - July 2006 – May 2009, published by the Ministry of Defense, paragraph 1, page 1 of the Executive Summary; [http://www.defence.lk/news/20110801\\_Conf.pdf](http://www.defence.lk/news/20110801_Conf.pdf)

## Building group solidarity

The purpose of most groups is to build group solidarity to promote and protect the cause of the group.



The cover page of the saving Sunil Facebook group<sup>48</sup> text translation, 'these chains are not binding you son, they are binding our freedom'.

Another example<sup>49</sup>

Translation of post, 'He may be a murderer to you but to us he is one who built a country for us to live in. He is one of us'.

The images and language used in both examples promote group solidarity.

## Nationalism

Position themselves as defenders of the nation against others who are portrayed as enemies of the group is a common feature of hate groups.



**LRRP රණවිරුවාට, දෙමළ ඩයස්පෝරාව කතුව කිරීම කඳහා මරණ දඩුවම.**

**ලංකාදිව ONLINE**  
 2015 ජූනි මාස 25 දාහි දිනපත්තිය  
 NDB හසුලු 00 සමු අලුතෙන් නව පුවත් පිටුව  
 ශිට්පු හසුලු මසබලයාට මරණ දඩුවම

ජීවිතේ පරදවට තියමින් රට වෙනුවෙන් තම භාරණය කැප කළ හමුදා දිගු දුර විහිදුම් ඔලකායේ සිහුව, අපේම සිංහල උන් එකතු වෙලා පෝරකයට දක්කද්දී සිහුගෙ ඇස් දෙකේ ඇඳුණ ඒ වේදනාව වචනයෙන් තියන්නේ කොහොමද?

දිගු දුර විහිදුම් ඔලකාය ගැන ජාත්‍යන්තර කොට් ඩයස්පෝරාව දැකී ඕයකින් පසුවෙන අතර, ඉදිරියේදී අනෙකුත් LRRP රණවිරුවන්වත් දංගෙතියට ගෙන යාමට සැලසුම් කරයි. මේ මනා පාවාදීමට එරෙහි වෙමු. හැකි තරම් Share කර සමාජය දැනුවත් කරන්න.

48

<https://www.Facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445925862375748.1073741827.1445924805709187/1445984602369874/?type=1&theater>

49

<https://www.Facebook.com/SaveOurWarHeros/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446076285694039/?type=1&theater>

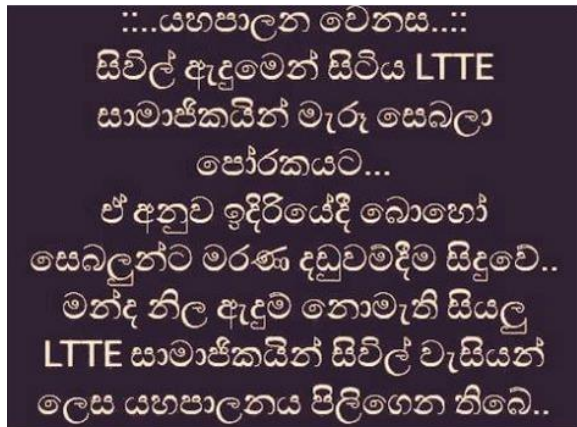
Post<sup>50</sup> translation, 'Death to LRRP war hero to please Tamil Diaspora.

*How can one express in words the look of pain in the eyes of the LRRP hero who sacrificed his youth and gave his life to serve his country; when our own Sinhalese are taking him to the gallows?*

*The international Tiger diaspora fear the Long Range Reconnaissance Petrol and have planned to take other LRRP war heroes to the gallows soon. Let us oppose this betrayal. Educate society by sharing this'.*

### Scare tactics

Portrayal of the race/group to be outnumbered and vulnerable, 'us against the world' rhetoric, fanning fears of imminent danger.



Example<sup>51</sup> post translation, 'The change brought by yahapalanaya (good governance). The soldier who killed LTTE carders dressed in civilian clothes sent to the gallows... In the future many soldiers will be condemned to death in similar manner since the yahapalanaya (meaning Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government, voted in 8<sup>th</sup> January 2015 and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2015, respectively) has accepted all LTTE carders not in uniform to be civilians.'

The message feeds the already existing fear of Sinhalese of being a minority in the world, under siege. Creating fear by claiming that many soldiers will soon be condemned to death, leaving the country and Sinhala race vulnerable to enemy forces.

### Othering

Hate speech focusing on differences which makes 'them' seem strange and not falling within what is acceptable or normal. Comments attacking persons based on their sexual orientation or labelling persons as being gay. Examples of such 'gay bashing' is dealt with elsewhere in this report.

On another level, the Tamil and Muslim communities too are targeted in posts and comments as 'outsiders' or 'others' who don't belong. Examples are discussed elsewhere in this report.

<sup>50</sup>

<https://www.Facebook.com/WarHeroSunilRathnayaka/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445926119042389/?type=1&theater>

<sup>51</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/WarHeroSunilRathnayaka/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1446904938944507/?type=1>

## Observations

At the time of conclusion of this study, the saving Sunil group featured over 16,000 followers. While this number is comparatively small in proportion to the 3.1 million Facebook users in Sri Lanka<sup>52</sup>, the pace of its growth, content and purpose reveal points to ponder as well as patterns which are noteworthy in the study of online hate speech in Sri Lanka.

Clearly, the cause of Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake was politicised and the Facebook page dedicated to him used as a political campaign platform. The verdict against Sgt. Rathnayake was delivered the day before Parliament was dissolved by President Sirisena in 2015, calling for general elections. The crux of the argument put forward by the Saving Sunil page, liberally augmented by hate and dangerous speech reflected the hard line political rhetoric of the pro-Rajapakse camp - that only a Rajapakse led government can protect the majority Sinhala Buddhist community and war heroes from international interference and witch hunts while the Wickremesinghe led UNFGG (UNP) campaign with its inclusiveness of minorities and war related faux pas of the past would result in a resurgence of the LTTE, minority dominance and war crimes convictions of war heroes.

According to social media analyst Nalaka Gunawardena, Facebook emerged as a widely used space as never before during the 2015 general election campaign period<sup>53</sup>. He notes that the forerunners of social media political discourse “were not politicians or their support teams but politically charged and digitally empowered citizens, especially youth”. Research on social media usage indicates that 41% of Sri Lankan Facebook users are between the ages of 18 and 24 years.<sup>54</sup> Did the Saving Sunil page consciously target this demographic who are also first time voters? This is a generation which was born and grew up in the time of war. A generation which became aware of ethnic identity at a very early age, resulting in stereotyping and suspicion of other communities. Hence, is fear mongering hate speech vilifying the unfamiliar ‘Other’ more likely to find resonance and amplification within this demographic of followers?

Further, the nature of the hate speech found in the Saving Sunil page mirrors hate speech content found in other Facebook groups which share similar views, as evident in cross posts examined elsewhere in this report. Social media such as Facebook groups create virtual communities who ‘gather’, bond and vent over shared interests or causes. This like-mindedness is the glue that binds group members together. Such groups become echo chambers where an inkling of hate is quickly amplified into something larger by feeding group members information which simply reinforces that initial thought<sup>55</sup>. Intolerance of ‘outsiders’ or those who disagree or challenge the ethos of the group and vicious hate speech targeting them as exemplified in the Saving Sunil group, is common. This creation of a space which reflects one’s own ideals with the exclusion of others is similar in effect to a ‘filter bubble’,<sup>56</sup> a term coined by Internet and political activist Eli Pariser to explain the result of a personalized search used by online search engines, guessing at what information a user would like to see, based on information such as past click behaviour and search history. According to Pariser, a

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<sup>52</sup> Facebook statistics

<sup>53</sup> Sri Lanka Parliamentary election 2015 – How did social media make a difference? - <http://groundviews.org/2015/09/03/sri-lanka-parliamentary-election-2015-how-did-social-media-make-a-difference/>

<sup>54</sup> According to Socialbakers data - <http://roar.lk/five-unconventional-social-media-trends-sri-lanka/>

<sup>55</sup>

[http://motherboard.vice.com/read/the-state-department-is-worried-social-media-bubbles-escalate-social-unrest?trk\\_source=recommended](http://motherboard.vice.com/read/the-state-department-is-worried-social-media-bubbles-escalate-social-unrest?trk_source=recommended)

<sup>56</sup>

Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*, Penguin Press (New York, May 2011)



user in effect becomes less exposed to information or views which contradict their own and isolates users in their own ideological bubbles<sup>57</sup>. Similarly, members of the Saving Sunil page and similar communities are less likely to be exposed to or accept views contrary to their own.

Of the over 16,000 'likes' the group attracted, over 11,000 'likes' were recorded within 2 days of the page being set up. At the end of four weeks on 25 July 2015, the number of 'likes' were 16,966, which means only approximately 7,000 'likes' were added during the balance period of 28 days. With time, the Saving Sunil page shows a decline in activity<sup>58</sup>. Member activity too declined over time, and the last post examined in this study (24 July 2015)<sup>59</sup> attracted only 428 Likes and 5 comments. This is in contrast with 600 plus or even 1000 plus likes in response to earlier posts. The downward trend of member activity continues even after the period of this study<sup>60</sup>, attracting even lesser numbers of Likes and comments. There is no evidence of a reversal of Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake's fate to render the cause of saving Sunil redundant. It is possible that member interest in Sunil's cause waned as the Facebook campaign ran out of steam in the absence of a plan of action or group activity to consolidate support.

What then was the purpose of the saving Sunil Facebook group? What effect did it have? It is safe to say that it had no effect on Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake's conviction, which still stands, pending his appeal. If it was a shrewd attempt at flagging the issue on a wider political platform at national level, it failed on the count that the cause of Sgt. Rathnayake was not picked up by any candidate – not even by the Rajapakse camp which was very vociferous in decrying any investigation of military conduct during the war. If it was meant to be a creative political campaign tool to garner support for Rajapakse, while there is no way to gauge the impact of the page in terms of influencing voter preferences, considering the stunted growth of followers and the 'filter bubblesque' nature of the group, it can be argued that the exercise was more preaching to the converted rather than winning over new voters.

CPA's 'Liking Violence' report of 2014 noted somewhat of a disturbing correlation between intensified online hate speech and exacerbation of physical violence<sup>61</sup>. In June 2014, Buddhist groups circulated a story online that a monk was attacked by Muslims, sparking a riot in Aluthgama where 4 people were killed, 200 homes and shops destroyed, and 17 mosques attacked. More than 2,200 people were displaced by the violence<sup>62</sup>. The twenty Facebook pages examined in the study reveal high volumes of hate content targeting the Muslim community during the 2013-2014 period. This deluge of online hate speech was supported by extensive coverage of similar rhetoric by fringe groups such as the *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS) and *Sinhala Ravaya* and other groups on mainstream media and at public rallies, inciting violence. The actual attacks and acts of violence against minority Muslim and Christian religious communities went largely unpunished, which emboldened the perpetrators.

Online hate speech targeting religious minorities still subsists in varying degrees; as much as hate speech targeting myriad others through online spaces such as the saving Sunil page. A significant

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<sup>57</sup> [http://www.ted.com/talks/eli\\_pariser\\_beware\\_online\\_filter\\_bubbles?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles?language=en)

<sup>58</sup> The increase of the number of 'likes' from week 3 to week 4 is negligible (0.7%). See screenshot of graphs at the end of this chapter.

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/WarHeroSunilRathnayaka/posts/1452655055036162>

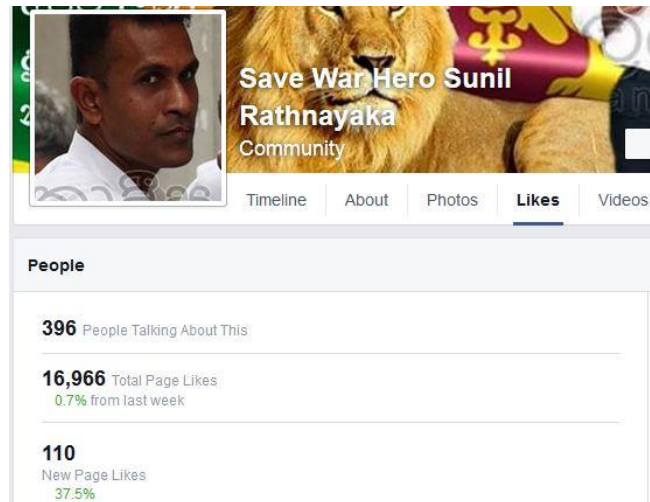
<sup>60</sup> Last viewed 19<sup>th</sup> August 2015

<sup>61</sup> At page 26; <http://www.cpalanka.org/liking-violence-a-study-of-hate-speech-on-Facebook-in-sri-lanka/>

<sup>62</sup> Online hate speech stokes fear of religious violence in Sri Lanka - <http://groundviews.org/2014/09/26/online-hate-speech-stokes-fear-of-religious-violence-in-sri-lanka/>

difference post January 8<sup>th</sup> is the absence of impunity previously enjoyed by the BBS and their ilk. The Sirisena-Wickramasinghe government adopted a tough stance against those igniting communal and religious disharmony and in February 2015 Prime Minister Wickramasinghe warned traditional media institutions of strong action if they continued disseminating hate speech against minorities<sup>63</sup>. These measures have zero effect on eliminating hate speech on social media. However, the resultant decline of control radical groups exert over society has diminished opportunities for translating hate rhetoric in to physical violence or mass social action.

Online hate speech receptacles such as the saving Sunil Facebook page and hundreds of similar groups will not doubt continue to mushroom on Sri Lanka's social media fabric. However, this phenomenon by itself, in a political and social context which affords less space for impunity and hate is far less likely to thrive long term or have any significant traction. It is more likely that such Facebook campaigns will emerge from time to time and fade out, forming a pattern of waves of online hate speech.



<sup>63</sup> <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/pm-to-remove-racist-media-institutions-from-stock-market/>

## Addendum A

Facts surrounding the incident commonly referred to as the Mirusuvil massacre are as follows.<sup>64</sup> On the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2000, Kathiran Gnanachandran, Gnanachandran Santhan, Gnanapalan Raviveeran, Sellamuttu Theivakulasingham, Vilvarajah Pratheepan, Sinniah Vilvarajah, Nadesu Jeyachandran, Vilvarajah Prasath and Ponnathurai Maheswaran set off from Udupiddy on bicycles to visit their former homes in Mirusuvil. They were originally residents of Mirusuvil, displaced by heavy fighting between the Sri Lanka military and the LTTE. Mirusuvil at the time of the incident was under the control of the Sri Lankan army and displaced civilians would from time to time visit their former homes to gather firewood etc. The party included a father and his 13 year old son and another father and his two sons aged 5 years and 13 years. While in Mirusuvil, they were taken in for questioning by a group of Army soldiers. According to the evidence of the key witness Ponnathurai Maheswaran who is the only survivor of the party of 9, the others were blindfolded and executed. Maheswaran escaped with injuries and returned to his relative's home and informed the EPDP office and subsequently the Commander of the Army who ordered an investigation in to the alleged incident. The Military Police, in the course of their investigations found human blood on the concrete slab of a toilet pit where Maheswaran claimed the incident occurred, and where the bodies were dumped. The inside of the pit however contained only a carcass of a goat. The Military Police tracked down a platoon of the Gajaba Regiment which was encamped nearby and inquired about a soldier who had recently slaughtered a goat. The 1<sup>st</sup> accused Sgt. Rathnayake a member of the Army's elite special force the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) admitted to the fact. Sgt. Rathnayake was also identified by a terrified Maheswaran as one of the assailants and was placed under arrest. Based on information gathered from Sgt. Rathnayake, the Military Police were led to the place where the 8 bodies of the civilians were disposed of in another toilet pit approximately 500 meters from the original toilet pit shown by Maheswaran. All the bodies were found with slashed necks including the 5-year-old, as per the judicial medical examiner.

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<sup>64</sup>

Additional Solicitor General Sarath Jayamanne the Chief Prosecutor in Ceylon Today, 26 June 2015 <https://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-96861-news-detail-mirusuvil-massacre.html>

# Addendum B

Inoka Jeewan Abey Siriwardana 65

Image text translation:



Date Accessed: 20 July 2015

Replies: 1

Image text translation:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10206097983001098&set=a.1657586932044.154774.1608253467&type=1&theater>

Bi-politics which turns murderers in to war heroes.

Read the letter to know the truth. Answer the questions at the end.

(Text)

එල්ලෙන්නට වැලක් විලිවසාගැනීමට රෙද්දක් සොයමින් සත්‍යයේ සැඩ පහරට හසුව ගසාගෙන යන අසත්‍යයේ නිර්මාපකයින්ට තවත් පිදුරු ගසක් හමුව තිබෙනවා. ඔවුන් එම පිදුරු ගසෙහි එල්ලෙමින් සත්‍යයේ සැඩ පහරින් බෙරීමට අසත්‍ය රජ කරවීමට උත්සාහ කරනවා. නමුත් ඔවුන්ට සහනයක් ලැබෙන්නේ මද වෙලාවකට පමණයි. සත්‍යයේ දිය දහර අසත්‍යයට වැඩි ආයුෂ ලබා දෙන්නේ නැහැ.

කතානායකයා මහේශ්වරන් ජාතිය ශ්රී ලාංකික භාශාව දෙමල. යාපනයට කිලෝමීටර් 16ක් පමණ දුරකින් පැවති මිරුසවිල් නම් ජ්රදේශය කාලයකට ඉහත එය කොටි සංවිදානයේ ග්රහනයට නතු වෙලා තිබිබ ජ්රදේශයක් ඒ ජ්රදේශයේ පදිනවිව ඉදපු මිනිස්සු ආරක්ශාව පතා රජයේ පාලන ජ්රදේශ වලට ඇවිත්

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[https://www.facebook.com/WarHeroSunilRathnayaka/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445926119042389/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446114665690201&offset=0&total\\_comments=25&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R4%22}](https://www.facebook.com/WarHeroSunilRathnayaka/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445926119042389/?type=1&comment_id=1446114665690201&offset=0&total_comments=25&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R4%22})

තිබෙනවා ආරක්ෂාව පතාගෙන. ඔවුන්ට ශ්‍රී ලංකා රජයෙන් යුද හමුදාවෙන් ශ්‍රී ලාංකිකයින්ට දක්වන සැලකිල්ල කිසිදු වෙනසක් නොමැතිව දක්වලා තිබෙනවා. 2000 වසර වන විට මිරිසවිල් ජරදේශය තරස්තවාදීන්ගෙන් මුදවාගෙන රජයේ හමුදා විසින් පාලනය කරන තත්වෙක තමයි තිබුනේ. කලින් මිරිසවිල් ජරදේශයේ පදිනිවි කරුවන් විදියට ඉදපු මිනිසුන් වරින් වර තමන් ඉදපු ඉඩම් වලට ගොස් තම තමන්ගේ හව හෝග ආදිය රැගෙන නැවතත් තමන් වර්තමානයේ පදිනිවි ජරදේශවලට එන එක පුරුද්දක්ව තිබුනා. ඒ ජරදේශය පදිනිවිය අත්හැරි පෙදෙසක් නිසා තරමක වන ගහනයකින් යුක්තව තමයි ඒ වනවිට මිරිසවිල් ජරදේශය තියෙන්නේ.

ඔන්න දැනුයි කතානායකය කතාවට එන්නේ 2000 වසරේ දෙසැම්බර් 20 වැනිදා මහේශ්වරනුත් ඔහුගේ නෑදෑ පිරිසකුත් එක් නෑදෑ සොහොයුරකුගේ දරුවන් දෙදෙනා වන වයස අවුරුදු 5 සහ අවුරුදු 13 වන අයත් සමගින් පුද්ගලයින් 9 දෙනෙකුත් යුත් කන්ඩායමක් මිරිසවිල් ජරදේශය කරා බයිසිකල් වල නැගී පිටත් වූයේ තමන්ගේ ඉඩමේ ඇති හව හෝග රැගෙන ඒමේ හා ඉඩමට සාත්තු සප්පායම් කිරීමේ අරමුණෙනි. කලින් සදහන් කල කුඩා දරුවන් දෙදෙනාද දෙවෝපගත ලෙසම තම පියා සමගින් එම ගමනට එක්ව තිබුනා. දිවා කාලයේ තම ඉඩමට පැමිණ තම කාර්යන්හි නියතව ගෙදර යෑමට සූදානම් වූ අවස්තාවේ යුද හමුදා ඇදුම් වලට සමාන ඇදුම් වලින් සැරසුනු පිරිසක් පැමිණ ඔවුන්ව අතඩංගුවට ගෙන තිබෙනවා. ඉන් අනතුරුව එම පිරිසේ සිටි 9 දෙනාගේම දෑස් බැද දමමින් ඔවුන් යම් දිශාවකට රැගෙන ගොස් වැටකින් එහා පැත්තට ඔවුන් ඔසවා විසි කර තිබෙනවා . ඒ අවස්තාවේදී මහේශ්වරනගේ ඇස් බැද තිබුනු රෙදිකඩ එහා මෙහා වෙලා මහේශ්වරනට අවට පෙනෙන්න අරගෙන තියෙනවා. ටික වෙලාවකින් යුදහමුදා ඇදුමට සමාන ඇදුමකින් සැරසී සිටි පුද්ගලයින් දෙදෙනෙකු පැමිණ මහේශ්වරන අසල තිබුනු වැසිකිලි වලක් ලගට රැගෙන ගිහින්න. එතන ආයුද සන්නද්ද තවත් හමුදා ඇදුමට සමාන ඇදුම් ඇදගත් පුද්ගලයෙක් ඉදල වැසිකිලි වල තුල මිනිසුන් කැගසන දඟලන ශබ්දයෙනුත් අවට තම නෑපිරිස නැති බව දැනීමෙන් බියපත් වුනු මහේශ්වරන තම ගමේ තමන්ට ඇති හුරුපුරුදුව කියාපාමින් හමුදා සෙබලුන්ගෙන් මිදිල කැලයට පැන පන බේරගෙන තියෙනවා.

පහුවෙනිද වෙනකම් කැලයේ කල අසිරු ගමනින් පස්සෙ තමන් එවකට පදිනිවි නිවසට එන මහේශ්වරන තම පියා දැනුවත් කරල රෝහල් ගත වෙනවා. ඉන් දවස් දෙක තුනකට පස්සෙ ඊපීඩීපී සංවිදානයට දැනුම් දීල ඔවුන්ගේ මාර්ගෙන් මානව හිමිකම් සංවිදානවලටත් යුද හමුදාපතිවරයාටත් දැනුම් දෙනවා. ඒ අනුව ක්රියාත්මක වුනු යුද හමුදාපති වරයා පොලීසියට නීතිය ක්රියාත්මක කරන්න නියෝග දෙමින් යුද හමුදා පොලීසියටත් පරේශනය කරන්න බාර දෙනවා. යුදහමුදා පොලීසිය මහේශ්වරනගෙන් ජරශ්න කරන්න ආවට ඒ ඇදුමටත් බය වුනු මහේශ්වරන පසුව කෙමෙන් කෙමෙන් යුද හමුදා පොලීසියට හුරු වෙලා තියෙනවා. ඉන් අනතුරුව යුදහමුදා පොලීසිය විසින් මහේශ්වරන ඔය සිදුවීම සිදු වුනු ස්තානයට එක්කරගෙන ගිහින්න තියෙනවා. ඒ සිදුවීමෙන් දින 7කට 8කට විතර පස්සෙ. එම ස්තානයට යන විට සිදුවීම සිදුවූ වැසිකිලි වල මත රුධිරය දක්නට ලැබිල ඒත් එක්කම ඒ අවට එලුවෙකුගේ මාංශ කොටස් එලුවෙකුගේ හම් කැබලි මෙන්ම එලුවෙක් ඇල්ලීමට යොදාගන්නා ලදැයි සැක කල හැකි මංදක් දකින්නත් ලැබිල. නමුත් සැකය අත් නොහල යුද හමුදා පොලීසිය විසින් වැසිකිලි වල තුල යම් කිසි හෝඩුවාවක් තිබේ දැයි විපරම් කරල. ඒත් වැසිකිලි වල තුල කිසිම මල සිරුරක් දක්නට ලැබිල නෑ. යුදහමුදා පොලීසි නිලදාරීන් එතනින් ඉවත් වෙන්න යන අවස්තාවේදී ඒ ආසන්නයේ ගැවසුනු හමුදා අනුකන්ඩයක් දැකල ඔවුන්ව ලගට ගෙන්නගෙන. එක් වරම එක් පුද්ගලයෙක් දුටු මහේශ්වරන මහ හඩින් විලාප දෙමින් තමන්ට පහර දුන් පුද්ගලයා ඔහු බවට හඳුනාගෙන තිබෙනවා. ඒ පලමු විත්තිකරු මේ දිනවල බයිසන්ගේ ජාතික විරයා සාජන්ට සුනිල් රත්නායක. 😊

ඉන් පසුව ක්රියාත්මක වුනු යුද හමුදා පොලීසිය සාජන්ට සුනිල් රත්නායකගෙන් ඒ සම්බන්දව ජරශ්න කරල. ඔහු හෙලිකල කරුනු අනුව සහ ඔහුගේ මගපෙන්වීම අනුව කැලයේ යම් තැනක් සොයාගෙන එය පස්වලින් යමක් වසා දැමූ සලකුනු පෙන්වල. එතැන මල සිරුරු ඇතැයි සැක කල යුද හමුදා පොලීසිය විසින් ශ්‍රී ලංකා පොලීසිය හා මහේශ්වරනවරයා හා අධිකරන වෛද්යනිලදාරීවරයා පැමිණ එම

ස්තූතියෙන් මල සිරුරු 8ක් ගොඩට ගෙන තිබෙනවා. ඒ සියලුම මල සිරුරු ගෙල කපා ගාතනය කර තිබූ ඒවා. ඔවු ඒ එදා මහේශ්වරන් සමග පැමිණි කුඩා දරුවන් දෙදෙනාද ඇතුළත් නෑදෑ පිරිස.

තව දුරටත් සුනිල් රත්නායකගෙන් කල ජර්ශන කිරීම් මගින් කපිතාන් රාජසිංහ වෙදකාරගෙදර සේනක මුනසිංහ යුද හමුදා බලයලත් නිලදාරී ගාමිනී මුනසිංහ සැරයන් වරුන් වන හෙරත් මුදුයන්සේලාගේ ජයරත්න හා සුබසිංහ ආරච්චිලාගෙ පුශ්ප සමන් කුමාර යන අයවත් සැක කරුවන් ලෙස නම් කරමින් අධිකරනය ඉදිරියෙහි චෝදනා ගොනු කරමින් නඩු පවරනව. අර කලින් කියපු වැසිකිලි වල උඩ තිබුණු ලේ එලුවෙක්ගෙ නොවෙයි මිනිස් ලෙ කියල රජයේ රස පරීක්ශක වරයට හෙලිවෙනව. සැකකරුවන්ගෙන් කෙරුණු ජර්ශන කිරීම් හමුවේ වෙනත් වැසිකිලි වලක තිබිල මහේශ්වරන්ගෙ න පිරිස ආපු බයිසිකල් හමුවෙනව. වසර 15ක් පමන කල් ගතවුණු අධිකරන කාර්යාලය අවසානයේ දී එනම් ජුනි 25 අධිකරනය විසින් පලමු විත්තිකරුව වැරදිකරු කරමින්ද අනෙක් විත්තිකරුවන්ට එරෙහි ජරමානවත් ශාක්ශි නැති නිසා සැකයෙ වාසිය ඔවුන්ට දෙමින් ඔවුන් නිවරදි කරුවන් කරමින් තීන්දුව ලබා දෙනව .

ඔන්න ඔය සිදුවීම් තමයි රන විරුවන් පෝරකයට නග්ගනව කියල සුනිල් බෙරාගනිමු කියල බයිසන්ට උදාන වාක්ය සපයපු කතාව. රන විරුවන්ට සැබවින් ආදරය කරන මිනිස්සු නම් රන විරුවන්ට සැබවින් ආදරය කරන දේශපාලකයෝ නම් කරන්න ඕනෙ රන විරුවන්ගෙන් නාමයෙ මඩ තවරපු සුනිල් වැනි පුද්ගලයින්ට දඩුවම් කිරීම නොවෙද?

බයිසන්ගෙ තර්ක වලට අපිට අහන්න ජර්ශන තියෙනව ඒ ජර්ශන වලට උත්තර දෙන න බයිසන්ට කොන්දක් නෑ කියලත් දන්නව දන්නා කෙනෙකුන්ට පිලිතුර දෙන හැකිවෙත්වා කියල පතමින් ජර්ශන 6ක් අහන්නම්

1. දිගු දුර විහිදුම් බලකා සෙබලෙක්ට හමුදා පාලන ජරදේශයක් තුල පැවරී තිබුණු මෙහෙයුම කුමක්ද? (අපි දන්න දිගු දුර විහිදුම් බලකා සෙබලු නම් මෙහෙයුම් දියත් කරන්නෙ සතුරන්ගේ පාලන ජරදේශ තුල 😊ඕකත් අර කිලිනොව්ව් ඉන්න ජරභාකරන් මරන්න ක්ලේමෝ එහෙම තියාගෙන බුද්දි අංශ සාමාජිකයින් මේ කොලබ මිලේනියම් සිටි එකට වෙලා හිටිය කියන කතාව වගේම එකක් )

2. නුබලා කියනා පරිදි සිවිල් ඇදුමෙන් සැරසුණු සියලුම දෙනා තරස්තවාදීන් නම් ඒ ගෙල කපා මරා දුමුණු 8 දෙනාම තරස්තවාදීන් නම් කුඩා දරුවන් දෙදෙනා ළමා තරස්තවාදීන්ද? අවුරුදු 5ක ළමයෙකුත්? 😞

3. ජර්ශන නීතිය ඉදිරියට ගෙනාව ඊපීඩීපී එකෙන් ඊලාම් ජනතා ජරජාතන්තරවාදී පක්ශයෙ නායක පාර්ලිමෙන්තු මන්ත්රීතුමා ඩග්ලස් දේවානන්දා මැතිතුමා වැරදි කාරයෙකුත් නොවී, පරේශන කරන්න අන දීපු එවකට යුද හමුදාපතිවරයන් වැරදි කාරයෙක් නොවී, පරේශන කරපු ශ්රී ලංකා පොලිසිය වත් යුද හමුදා පොලිසිය වත් වැරදි කාරයෙක් නොවී, අවුරුදු 10ක් බලයෙ හිටිය මේ රන විරුවන් වෙනුවෙන් කිසිම දෙයක් නොකල පරිසි මහේන්ද්ර රාජපක්ශත් වැරදි කාරයෙක් නොවී, හරි හමන් ශාක්ශිත් නැතුව ඉදපු රන විරුවන් 4 දෙනෙක් නිදහස් කරල මනුශ්ය ගාතන 8කට වරදකරු බවට ඔප්පු උනු මනුස්සයව නීතිය විසින් දඩුවම් කල වෙලාවෙ පාලන බලයෙ ඉදපු මේ ආන්ඩුවෙ නායකයින් වැරදි කාරයෙක් වෙන්නෙ කොහොමද?

4. යුද හමුදා සෙබලෙක් හෝ වෙවා හමුදා සෙබලෙක් හෝ වෙවා ඔවුන් විසින් වරදක් කල හොත් රන විරුවකු ලෙස සලකා ඔහුව වීරයෙක් කලයුතුද එසේ නොමැතිනම් වැරදිකරු කුමන නිල ඇදුමකින් සිටියත් වරදට දඩුවම් ලැබිය යුතුද? ( රන විරුවකු තම න පිරිසකට එසේ කලා නම් ඔබත් අනේ රන විරුවෙක්නෙ කියල නිහඩව ඉන්නවද? )

5. අපේම රටේ අපේම පසේ ජීවනය දිය කරන වෙනත් භාශාවක් කතා කරන මිනිසුන්ට අප විදින නිදහස අප ලබන පිලිසරන අහිමි යැයි තීන්දු කලේ කවුරුන්ද? (ඔවුන්ට අසාදාරනයක් වුණු අවස්තාවෙදී ඔවුන්

කලේ ලාංකීය රජයේ නීතිය පසිදලන ස්තාන වලට ඒ අසාදාරනය හෙලි කිරීමයි)

6. රටේ අවාසනාවට මේ වනතුරුත් පැවතියේ රාජපක්ෂ රෙජිමයෙන් යටත් කොට ගත් රටක් නම් මෙම මිනී මැරීම් 8ට වරදකරුවු පුද්ගලයාට බයි අප්පොව්වා සමාව දෙනු ඇත්ද?

### **Comment Translation:**

The authors of untruths who searching for a vine to cling to and cloth to cover their nakedness while caught in the current of truth have found a straw. They are attempting to cling to this straw and escape the current of truth and make untruths reign. But their satisfaction will be short lived. The cascading waters of truth will not grant long life to untruths.

The protagonist Maheshwaran is Sri Lankan. Language is Tamil. The area of Mirusuvil which is located about 16 KM from Jaffna was under the control of the LTTE some time ago. The people living in that area had come to the GOSL controlled areas seeking protection. They received the same treatment due to every Sri Lankan. By the year 2000, Mirusuvil was back under GOSL control. Previous occupants of land in Mirusuvil were in the habit of returning to Mirusuvil to bring vegetables etcetera growing in their land to their current places of residence. Since there was no human habitation anymore, Mirusuvil was covered by a fair amount of jungle.

The protagonist now begins his story. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2000, Maheshwaran and a group of his relatives totaling 9 in number, including two children aged 5 and 13 years set off on bicycles to gather vegetables growing in their land and to tend to their land. The two children joined their father on this fateful trip. After attending to their chores during the day they prepared to return to their current homes but were arrested by a group of persons dressed in clothing similar to those worn by the army. They were blindfolded and taken in a particular direction where they were thrown over a fence. Maheshwaran's blindfold came loose and he was able to observe his surroundings. In a short while two persons dressed in clothing similar to those worn by the army carried Maheshwaran to a toilet pit which was nearby. He observed another person wearing similar clothing carrying weapons and heard people shouting and struggling in the toilet pit. He realized that his relatives were not near him and became fearful. He ran away in to the jungle escaping the soldiers, using his previous knowledge of the area.

After a harrowing journey, Maheshwaran arrives at his residence the following day, informs his father, and his hospitalized. A couple of days later Human Rights groups and the Commander of the Army are informed of the incident through the EPDP. The Commander of the Army instructs the Police to maintain the law and orders the Military Police to investigate. When the Military Police arrived to question Maheshwaran he was initially fearful of their uniform but gradually grew accustomed to them. The Military Police took Maheshwaran to the place where the incident is said to have occurred, about 7-8 days after the incident. When they approached the toilet pit, they observed blood on top of the pit as well as parts of goat flesh, pieces of goat hide and a snare which could have been used to catch a got strewn in the vicinity. When the toilet pit was examined, there were no human remains in it. While the Military Police were preparing to move out of the area, they observed a group of soldiers nearby and got them to come over. When the group of soldiers approached them, Maheshwaran began to scream in fear identifying one of the soldiers as the person who assaulted him. That first accused is the hero of the masses Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake.

The Military Police questioned Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake. Based on information received from him and his guidance, they were led to a place in the jungle where something seemed to be buried. Eight human bodies of Maheshwaran's relatives who were with him that day including the two children were exhumed in the presence of the Military Police, the Police, Magistrate and the Judicial Medical Officer. All the bodies showed signs that their throats had been cut.

On further questioning of Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake, he and Captain Rajasinghe Vedakaragedara Senaka Munasinghe, Army Warrant Officer Gamini Munasinghe, Sergeant Herath Mudiyanse Jayarathne and Sergeant Subasinghe Arachchilage Pushpa Saman Kumara were indicted as suspects before the courts. The

report of the state Forensics Examiner identified the blood found on top of the toilet pit as human blood and not goat blood. Based on information gathered by questioning the accused, the bicycles ridden by Maheshwaran and the others were recovered from another toilet pit. After 15 years, the court concluded the case against the accused on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015, finding the first accused guilty of murder and dismissing the charges against the other four accused for lack of conclusive evidence against them.

This is the incident used by the masses claiming to save Sunil and that war heroes are being sent to the gallows. Shouldn't people and politicians who truly love war heroes punish those like Sunil who tarnish the name of war heroes?

We have questions to ask those who argue and we know that they are spineless to answer these questions. Hoping that anyone who knows will give the answers. Here are the 6 questions

1. What operation did a soldier of the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol have in a military controlled area? (The Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol that we know of operates in enemy controlled territory. This is like the story of Intelligence officers staying at Millennium City in Colombo waiting with bombs to kill Prabhakaran who was in Kilinochchi)
2. If as you say all dressed in civilian clothing are terrorists, are the two children whose throats were cut also terrorists, even the 5 year old?
3. If Member of Parliament and leader of the EPDP Eelam Peoples Democratic Party Mr. Douglas Devananda who brought this issue before the authorities is not to blame, nor the then Commander of the Army who ordered the investigation, or the Police or the Military Police who investigated, or Percy Mahinda Rajapakse who was in power for 10 years and did nothing for these war heroes is to blame, how is it that when four of the accused are acquitted and the man convicted of 8 murders is punished under the law, the current government is held to be at fault?
4. Irrespective of what uniform one wears, an Army soldier or any other soldier who commits a crime should not be hailed as a hero. Should not that person be punished for his crime? (If a war hero did the same to your own, would you keep quiet saying it is a war hero?)
5. Who decreed that those who live in our own country and whose lives are spent on this soil but speak a different language should be denied the freedom and protection that we have? (When they were wronged, they came to the Sri Lankan government establishments).
6. Since, unfortunately, this country was under the Rajapakse regime, would the father of the masses pardon the person responsible for these 8 murders?

*REPLIES: 1*

Uddika Bandaranayake <sup>66</sup>

Then you devil where are the court cases for those who died in bomb attacks in our country, faggot.

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[https://www.facebook.com/WarHeroSunilRathnayaka/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445926119042389/?type=1&comment\\_id=1446114665690201&reply\\_comment\\_id=1446166009018400&total\\_comments=1&comment\\_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22}](https://www.facebook.com/WarHeroSunilRathnayaka/photos/a.1445926235709044.1073741828.1445924805709187/1445926119042389/?type=1&comment_id=1446114665690201&reply_comment_id=1446166009018400&total_comments=1&comment_tracking={%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22})