

Many Tiger defectors don't know about Eelam. (1993, November 25).
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By Daryll de Silva

A large number of LTTE defectors who have surrendered to the security forces in the eastern province admit not knowing anything about a demand for 'Eelam' and say that they joined the Tigers because of the glamour of wearing an uniform and carrying a weapon, which life they got disenchanted with after normalcy was restored in the east.

The *Daily News* interviewed several of these defectors in Batticaloa recently and every one of them said they had come to realise that life was much better on the side of the security forces than fighting for the LTTE under duress. They all pleaded that their identities should not be disclosed due to fear of reprisal from the Tigers.

There are around 150 defectors who have sought the protection of the security forces in the Batticaloa district. Most of them are too afraid to return to their own homes. They say that life soon became unbearable due to the various menial demands that were made by their group leaders.

Most of these defectors do not like to disclose what they have done, but say that they came over to the government side because they were fed up with the LTTE and that the morale in the Tiger ranks is now not as good as it once was. They fear that giving details to the media, of what they have done would jeopardise their lives.

"That they have surrendered to us does not mean that we are giving them an amnesty", a senior military officer in Batticaloa said, adding that they were still being treated as terrorists. The defectors themselves however said that the treatment they were getting from the security forces was heaven compared to the hardships they underwent in the LTTE.

Security force officials believe the large number of defections is due to the restoration of normalcy in the east. "The public must be made aware of this, but at the same time we must not hinder other prospective deserters from coming over to us", the officer said.

He explained that while the media was needed to get the message across to the rank and file of the LTTE cadres, who have still not crossed over, a problem would arise if the identities of those who have surrendered become known.