

"Irresponsibility reason for capture". (1994, September 04). *The Island*.

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Irresponsibility of those at the decision making level was the reason why they had been captured by the LTTE and kept in detention for over four years, the ten policemen who had been released by the LTTE as a gesture of goodwill told the Deputy Minister of Defence Colonel Anuruddha Ratwatte and three services commanders yesterday at the Palaly Military installation.

They had been brought to Palaly from Point Pedro where they were handed over to the International Red Cross by the LTTE to be brought through Kankesanthurai.

The ten policemen, who were emotional and in tears on seeing their counterparts appealed to Minister Ratwatte to secure the release of other policemen. They said there were about 19 others held in captivity in Jaffna. They were captured by the LTTE in 1990 along with those ten who arrived in Colombo yesterday.

Minister Ratwatte assured them all what could be done by the government would be done to have other Prisoners of war released soon. He said despite the fact that there were many others in the LTTE's custody, he was happy

to see those officers returned safely to their families.

The ten policemen told the Minister that they had once staged a fast unto death in prison. But the LTTE had waited till they fainted due to starvation and then given them saline. The LTTE had done so for a long time and the POWs had finally called off the fast. They said they had been kept in dark cells where there was very little ventilation. "As a result we can now hardly see anything", they complained to the Minister.

The policemen said eight of them had been serving at Udu-sudan police station when the LTTE surrounded the police station in 1990 in the wake of the talks between the LTTE and the previous government. A. D. Pemadasa who was captured at the Udu-sudan Police station told "The Island" that on June 13, 1990 OIC of the Police station Wickremaratne was on leave and acting for him was SI Yoganathan. When the LTTE sieged the station, the SI had asked policemen not to open fire. They had then laid down arms and surrendered to the LTTE on the acting OIC's advice.

They said others who are still in captivity had been disturbed when the LTTE announced only ten would be released.

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There were, they said 19 other policemen and one soldiers among them.

However some of these ten policemen believe that there could be over 100 personnel of the Police, Army and other forces in the LTTE detention camps, W. M. Karunanayaka (35) one of the ten policemen told "The Island" that he had at times seen about 40 soldiers being taken here and there by the LTTE in detention camps. He had been

captured from the Mankulam camp. From the Mankulam Police alone the LTTE had captured 18 policemen and some had died and E. M. Dasanayake (31) believes only 7 have survived hardships in detention camps. K. B. Jayatilake (32) told "The Island" that while in the detention camp they had been informed by the LTTE of the change of government and the PA's victory.

Minister Ratwatte assured the policemen that the government

will do everything possible to have other prisoners released.

Defence Secretary General Hamilton Wanasinghe, Army Commander Gerry de Silva, Air Force Commander Oliver Ranasinghe, Navy Commander Mohan Samarasekera and military officers of the Palaly military station took part in the reception Minister Ratwatte gave the released police officers.

The police officers were sent to Colombo in the afternoon.