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Pottu Amman in command?

ORDERS TO SHOOT CIVILIANS ESCAPING NFZ:

Rafik JALALDEEN

Who is Pottu Amman?

- * Shanmugalingam Sivashankar alias Pottu Amman
- * Born in 1962
- * Leader of the LTTE intelligence wing
- * Second in the LTTE hierarchy after leader Velupillai Prabhakaran
- * Joined the LTTE in the 1981
- * Considered to be the mastermind behind the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- * Convicted in both India and Sri Lanka for his involvement in terrorist activities.

Unconfirmed military sources said that Pottu Amman, the so-called intelligence leader of the LTTE had taken the overall command of the outfit with Prabhakaran's fast deteriorating mental health condition and Velawan has been appointed as new military chief.

"Civilians who sought refuge with the Security Forces have told that Pottu Amman has issued strict orders to LTTE cadres manning the borders of the No Fire Zone (NFZ) to shoot at any civilian who dares to escape from the NFZ. The orders have been given following the LTTE's recent debacle in Puthukudiyiruppu East", defence sources said.

According to escaped civilians, the infamous LTTE intelligence leader has convinced the LTTE cadres that the civilians are their last hope of survival and to use them as human shield.

Meanwhile, the Security Forces urged the LTTE cadres yesterday to release civilians under their captivity in the No Fire Zone and surrender to the troops.

Since the LTTE cadres were defeated in the Northern and Vanni theatre, they have infiltrated the NFZ demarcated by the Government and are holding over 40,000 civilians hostage amidst pressure mounted by the United Nations and the International Community.

Military spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara said the Security Forces used loudspeakers urging the LTTE cadres to release civilians from the NFZ and surrender to the Security Forces immediately.

The announcement was made by troops "Calling on the LTTE to allow civilians to crossover the NFZ and in to Puthukudiyiruppu", Brigadier Nanayakkara told the Daily News.

He said 42 civilians fleeing LTTE atrocities in the NFZ sought protection with troops of the 58 division in Puthukudiyiruppu on Tuesday.

Over 65,000 displaced civilians had reached the cleared areas.

The NFZ which has been demarcated by the Government as a safety zone for civilians held hostage by the LTTE in the Vanni has now become a sanctuary for top LTTE leaders including Velupillai Prabhakaran.

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