

Dear friends,

One year ago 17 ACF aid workers were discovered shot dead in our base of Muthur. They have been killed inside the premises of a humanitarian organisation, an area that had been considered up to that moment, all over the world during crisis, as a sanctuary & a place of protection. Seventeen of our colleagues, seventeen of our friends, brothers and sisters. Thirteen men and four women. One father and his daughter, one mother and five fathers. Eleven of them were not even thirty years old. 17 beautiful human beings who lost their lives for wanting to help others.

For ACF, as well as for many NGOs & international organisations, there will always be a before and an after Muthur. Such a deliberate and brutal slaying of so many NGO workers has no precedent in the history of international aid. It affected and outraged every aid worker, and the very existence of our humanitarian vocation has been questioned, as the principles of neutrality & impartiality have been overthrown.

As a consequence, it is the living conditions of people who rely on NGOs support that are further deteriorating.

In respect of our common goal, for the mandate given by the civil societies to aid workers, and in memory of our regretted friends, the truth has to be disclosed about what happened in Muthur, with clear and conclusive findings.

Beyond that, the search for the truth is the only consolation ACF can offer to the victim's families, to their relatives and to all our teams abroad. Another hope of the organisation is to raise awareness towards all belligerent regarding the protection of humanitarian workers. For those three reasons, ACF will never give up and will continue until the persons responsible for this horrible tragedy are found and prosecuted, whatever time and energy it takes.

Today is a day of memory: to remember our loss, to remember how great these persons were, and to remember also, that beyond the words "17 victims", they are 17 lives who are deeply missed.

While I am speaking, commemorations are held in the 5 ACF HQ as well as in the 40 countries where ACF Network intervenes. Ceremonies are held also in Batticaloa and in Trincomalee. I would like to thank all of you, on behalf of ACF, for being here today. Thank you for all the support you have brought and will bring to us. I especially would like to thank the Honourable Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights, Mr Samarasinghe: it means a lot to us

that the Sri Lankan authorities join us during this important moment; I also would like to thank Sir John Holmes, the UN Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator: by his attendance and collaboration, he illustrates the commitment of the whole humanitarian world. Our collective thoughts go to this team of Muthur.

Seeing all of you here, one year after this tragic event, demonstrates how much our sorrow and concern are still alive. These 17 victims are not, and will not be forgotten, as it unfortunately happens to too many civilians in armed conflicts all over the world.

In order to make sure none of them will ever be forgotten, I would like to name once again our lost friends.

Muralitharan
Arulrajah
Pratheeban
Jaseelan
Kavitha
Kovarthani
Abdul Latiff Mohammed Jawffar
Ganesh
Kokilavathani
Romila
Narmathan
Ketheswaran
Rishikesan
Koneswaran
Anantharajah
Sritharan
Kodeeswaran

We deeply miss them