

# REHABILITATION CENTRE FOR TORTURE VICTIMS [RCTV]

(An initiative of PEOPLE'S WATCH – TAMILNADU)

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## Celebration of Child Rights

The 10 day Summer Camp for Children of Torture Victims that took place at Mahatma School, Alagar Kovil near Madurai came to a close on 20.05.06

The Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims of People's Watch - Tamil Nadu, which provides educational assistance to the children of victims of torture especially police excess and untouchability from various parts of Tamil Nadu, also conducts a Summer camp for 10 days every year in the month of May.

This year 234 children took part in this Summer Camp. A day at the Camp would begin at 6.00 a.m. with Yoga and would end in the night with *Kundakka Mandakka*, an entertainment activity that children look forward to with great eagerness. The children were divided into 10 teams according to their age and taught leadership skills, drama, folk dances, crafts, painting and naturopathy. They were taken for trekking to the nearby hills so that they would learn to appreciate Nature and were also taught to identify medicinal plants.

Totally unlike other Summer Camps, this was a camp with a difference. The specialty of the camp was that the freedom of the children was not curbed and they were allowed to move about without restrictions and at the same time were imparted knowledge on various subjects and guided by the trainers and coordinators.

Children forgot their worries and mingled with others, establishing relationships swiftly, comforted in the knowledge that there were others like them too. At the Camp they developed aims of making it big in the future.

Thangam, a tenth standard student and daughter of late Murugesan of Melavalavu who was murdered in a Caste clash said that her greatest desire was to create a society free from caste. Rathi, daughter of Veerappan's younger brother from Gobinatham in the Karnataka – Tamil Nadu border said that her goal in life was to become a teacher and

impart knowledge on human rights to children. Another child at the camp, Manikandan, says that he wants to become a high official in the Police Department and serve people. His father was subjected to torture at the Police Station due to which he died.

On the final day of the camp the children performed the art forms that they had been learning in the camp. Dr. Dheep, Psychiatrist was the Chief Guest at the Valedictory Function and Mr. John Moses delivered the Special Address. Mr. C. J. Rajan, Senior Coordinator of the Rehabilitation Centre for Torture delivered vote of thanks. Children departed with heavy hearts, expecting to see their friends once more in the coming year's camp.