

# Guardians of the law in the dock

By Piyumi Buddhakorala and Michael Hardy

With police impunity on the rise, for once the men in khaki were made to feel what it was to be on the receiving end when the residents of Angulana attacked a police station on Thursday morning in retaliation for the killing of two young boys, Dinesh and Dhanushka the previous night. The Angulana Police Station windows were smashed and several police vehicles were destroyed in a show of people-power by more than 1000 villagers.

The police initially claimed that Dinesh Tharanga Fernando (26) and Danushka Udayakantha (21) were arrested and killed because of their involvement with underworld drug trafficking. Their bodies were found Thursday morning in Lunawa and Angulana.

One resident of the area, Edverth Vandoff, claimed that the police were unfair in their arrest because the two were not connected with the underworld. He said that Dinesh and Dhanushka were intoxicated after the consumption of alcohol and had mocked a woman, Nadeeka, whom the residents of Angulana knew to be a prostitute.

The residents claim that Nadeeka had connections with Officer-in-Charge T.W. Newton of the Angulana Police Station. After Nadeeka called the police, the two boys were remanded at 9.30 p.m on Wednesday. According to Vandoff, the father of one of the boys came in to the police station to bring the boys dinner and was told by the police to come back in the morning. He did so at 6 a.m and was told that the boys were transferred to the Mount Lavinia Police Station.

On his way there, he was told by a passerby that a dead body was found on the beach in the northern part of Ratmalana. Having rushed there and identified it as his son, he told the residents of the killing.

On Thursday morning the furious residents attacked the Angulana Police Station and burnt Nadeeka's house to the ground. Former Municipal Council Member Nalini Fernando alleged that the police were responsible for the killings.

"They were good boys," she said. "Dinesh was from the army. They were young boys that needed to be guided and disciplined."

The Sunday Leader learned from Police Spokesperson SSP Ranjith Gunasekera that seven police officers, including OIC Newton, were arrested at 10 p.m on Thursday. All policemen at the Angulana station have been replaced and a new OIC has been appointed. The Mt. Lavinia Magistrate has ordered a full inquiry into the incident.



In their anger, villagers burnt down the house of the woman who reported the boys to the police. On Thursday afternoon the ashes were still smoldering.

Photos by Thusitha Kumara



Edverth Vandoff, a resident of Angulana, described the events of the previous night and praised the villagers for attacking the police station. "This is what the public should do in situations like this," he said.



The army had to be dispatched to break up the protest. Army soldiers and anti-riot police continued to guard the station for the remainder of the day.



A crowd of approximately 1,000 villagers laid siege to the Angulana Police Station early Thursday morning to protest the killing of two local boys. The protesters broke the station's windows and destroyed several police vehicles.



On Thursday afternoon, about a hundred villagers were still gathered around the police station, which was guarded by riot police wielding shields and automatic weapons.



A destroyed police trishaw offered more evidence of the crowd's anger. According to villagers, police officers arrested the two boys for taunting a prostitute connected to the station OIC. Police spokesman S.S.P. Ranjith Gunasekera initially claimed that the boys were drug peddlers.

On The Spot