



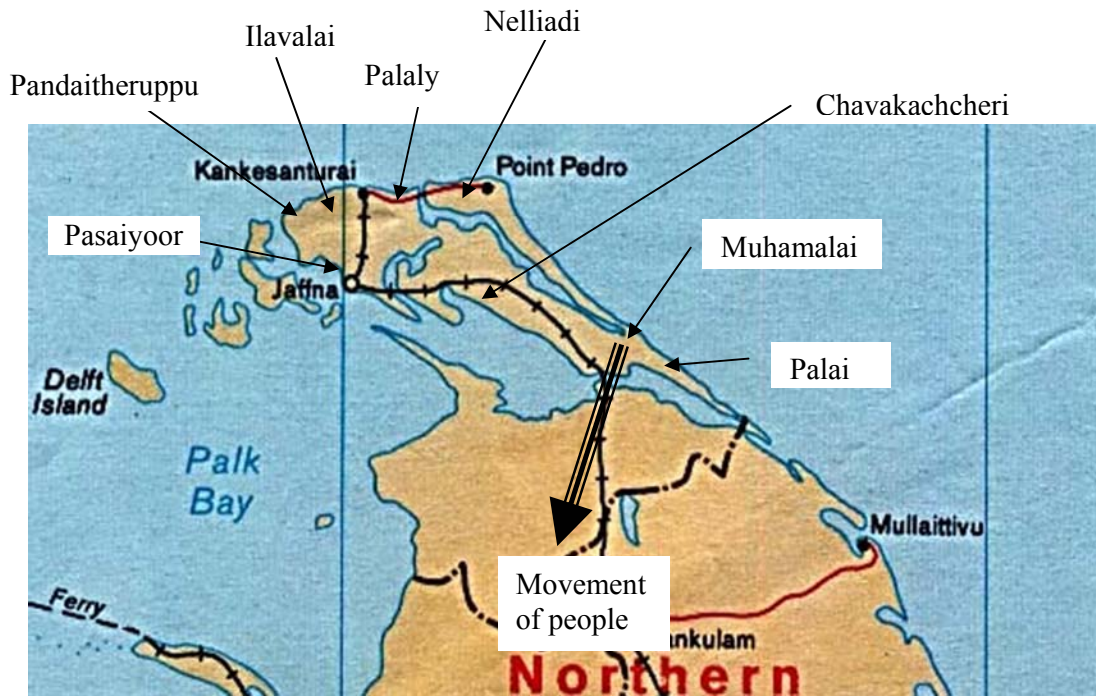
வடகிழக்கு மனித உரிமைகள் செயலகம் NORTH EAST SECRETARIAT ON HUMAN RIGHTS NESOHR

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NESOHR Report on Jaffna displacement issued on 18th January 2006

The displacement



From December 2005 people are continuously displacing from the Jaffna peninsula that is controlled by the Sri Lankan armed forces to the Vanni region administered by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The above map shows the Muhamalai border check-point where people pass through when they are displacing from Sri Lankan Army (SLA) occupied area to LTTE administered area. Other area names referred to in this report are also marked in the map.

Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO), the main organisation that provides emergency relief for people in Northeast, has established registration points at the Muhamalai border check-point and at Palai where displacing families can request assistance. By January 14th, 1725 displacing families have registered for assistance with TRO. Families with relatives in Vanni are moving in with them without registering with TRO. In total, close to 3000 families have displaced up until January 14th.

This report is an attempt to evaluate the reasons for this displacement based entirely on the views repeatedly expressed by the displacing people. NESOHR recorded the views of around 50 displacing people and also spoke to scores more displacing people to produce this report.

NESOHR has also spoken to several families whose members were killed, abducted, arrested and disappeared. Their comments are not included in this report. NESOHR will be producing separate reports on these violations.

There were four main threads in these views repeatedly expressed by the displacing people.

- The first thread gives some indication about the people who are displacing.
- The second thread is what people said about their own experience that has forced them to make the decision to displace.
- The third thread is the stories people related that has started to permeate the entire Sri Lankan military controlled region in Jaffna.
- The fourth thread is the frequent lament of people in leaving behind a home, their possessions in it and their livelihood.

People's views separated into these threads are presented below.

Thread one: Who are leaving

Comments made to NESOHR by the displacing people revealed some categories of people who are displacing. In order to extract these categories of people NESOHR also spoke to several people who have not displaced and are staying in their homes in Jaffna. *NESOHR found the terror in the minds of people cuts across all strata of the Jaffna society.* Yet, a determination to face whatever that may come and stay put was found also among all the people. People expressed their fatigue about displacing yet again. Yet, some have been forced to let go of this determination as the fear mounted. The final decision to displace was influenced by several factors.

During the four years of the ceasefire agreement (CFA), people genuinely believed that there would not be another escalation of violence. They therefore confidently expressed their political views in public gatherings, supporting the Tamil rights to self determination in events like the "Pongu Thamil", and the "Tamil Uprising" events. The Sri Lankan military has noted the people at the forefront of these events and now appears to be on an extermination drive to eliminate these people. People have commented that those who are terrorising the people are doing so with a list of names.

A large number of university students and recent graduates who are yet to find employment are feeling vulnerable by the terror spread by the SLA and its paramilitaries and are displacing to Vanni.

Some of those displaced are families of LTTE members who are frightened that they may be targeted because some of those killed in the recent violence are families of LTTE members. For example, Mathuranayagam (see NESOHR case report) was abducted in Ilavalai, even though he is intellectually handicapped. His late brother was a LTTE member.

During the period of 1996 to 2001, the SLA has given people in Jaffna an Army Identity Card, commonly referred to as “Army IC” by the people. Those who returned to Jaffna after the signing of the CFA do not have this “Army IC”. Thus there exists a clear identification method between the people who stayed in Jaffna during this period and those who returned after the CFA. NESOHR found that people who do not have the “Army IC” expressed this as an additional cause for fear because the SLA is readily able to identify them as those who chose to stay away. Many of these people are choosing to displace.

Majority of the displacing people have relatives who are already in Vanni. They are therefore more familiar with the different administrative style and know exactly what they can expect if they displace. This was a factor influencing people’s decision to displace.

Thread two: Their own experience

The comments below are typical of people’s experiences and were constantly repeated by those who have displaced.

- “The SLA camp is not very far from our house in Point Pedro. The SLA comes regularly to our home to check. They will search through all our belongings. All our clothes will be pulled out”.
- “The SLA detained my husband for one day and then released him. He was not allowed to go to work. This went on for four or five days. We had no income. Then he started going to work in a round-about way, hiding from the SLA soldiers. Sometimes if SLA soldiers are standing there he comes back home without going to work”.
- “The SLA forced me to clean the bushes where there are a lot of broken glasses because it is next to a tavern. I had several cuts on my feet from the broken glass and could not walk”.
- “We were displaced from our own home because of the Palaly High Security Zone and we have lived in a refugee camp in Urumpirai for the last 12 years. My daughters have to go to work early in the morning, when it is still dark. At the refugee camp there are only common toilets, so I will take them to the toilets with the lamp and wait outside for them. One morning, they were getting late for work, so I told them I will go back to the house to make the tea, and I left them. Two SLA soldiers had been standing behind the toilet, but I did not see them. When my daughters took the water buckets and went to wash the SLA soldiers were there. My children came running and screaming without washing”.
- “We friends were talking in front of the shop. There was a grenade attack close by. Two SLA soldiers came on a motorbike. They said “Hands up” to us and we all put our hands up. They took us on a bus and beat all of us. They used the butt of their guns to hit us. They pushed us against the wall and kicked us in the stomach with the butt of their guns. Eventually they let us go. They said they are beating us because we were LTTE people”.
- “EPDP people (paramilitaries) come to our home to sell their newspaper. They usually arrive in the SLA’s pick up vehicle. SLA soldiers stand guard outside while

the EPDP men come in to sell the paper. We heard that the SLA has occupied our home after we have left”.

- “SLA soldiers told us to cut the fence short. Next day they came and kicked the fence with boots and broke the fence”.
- “The SLA would whistle and hoot when we go past. It has become worse in recent times. We just walk with our head down,” said many young women.
- “Once my 25 year old son and I were near a grenade explosion. SLA detained my son and told me to come back at 5.30 pm to collect him. I refused to leave my son and go. My son put his hands together and begged the SLA soldiers and said several “sirs” to the SLA. They let him go. We saw many other men also pleading and begging in front of the SLA to let them go”.
- “SLA is there for every few metres”.
- “We always wear our work uniforms out of fear and as a protection”.
- “I have two children aged 1 and 3. My husband was involved in organizing the Maveerar day event in Jaffna. SLA threatened him not to do that. He left Jaffna and escaped to Vanni after that. The SLA soldiers came looking for him after he had left. I was scared. I left Jaffna with my children at 2.00 am one morning without taking anything and came to Vanni”.
- “We are always scared. We do not sleep peacefully at night. If the SLA soldiers call we have to come out.
- “The SLA will stop us in 100 places and ask for the IC and will want to do checking”.

Thread 3: What the people of Jaffna are talking about

- “Three and a half year old child of Yogarasa in Urumpirai was bitten by a scorpion. Parents were too scared to leave at night. They waited till morning and took the child to hospital. Child was dead”.
- “I know two young men from my village, Sangaththani in Chavakachcheri, who were beaten by the SLA. The church fathers went and obtained their release”
- “I know one boy through my business. He one day came to arrange the hiring of the sound system. They took him soon after. He has disappeared”.
- “We hear a lot of stories of people coming in “white van” and abducting people. Nothing is heard about the abducted people after that. People have been abducted like this in Ilavalai, Point Pedro, Nelliady and many other places”.
- “One family in Pasaiyoor found a shopping bag hanging on their front fence. They checked it and found a grenade inside it. The home owner went to inform the Church priest about it. Before he could return home from the church the SLA has arrived. When the home owner returned he was beaten by the SLA soldiers and taken away. He has been handed over to the police and a court hearing took place”.
- “Our home is on the main road in Point Pedro. There was a bakery known as “Chiththappa Bakery”. One day around 2.00 pm they came on a motorbike with

black helmet so we cannot see who it is. They took the owner of the bakery to the narrow space near his bakery and shot him dead”.

- “If someone is dressed well the SLA soldiers will ask them to rip the posters of the LTTE pasted to the walls using only their saliva and fingers with no other tool or water”.
- “We cannot leave home after 2.00 pm. Men cannot go out. When we have to go we must carry a small child. We cannot go to work or shops. We do not know if they are Karuna group (one group of paramilitary) or EPDP (another group of paramilitary). They talk Tamil. They will come and ask all sorts of questions. They will then ask us to show LTTE people. They have a list and they will read from it names and ask if we know them. If we say we do know them then they will beat us”.
- “Until recently SLA soldiers would just go past by the road. Now they roam around the paddy fields between our home and the SLA camp. We have seen boot marks near our fence left by the SLA soldiers overnight. This has really frightened us”.
- “SLA soldiers will knock at the gate, they will stand at the gate and look inside. They cover their face with black clothes. All of a sudden people will close the shops and there will be no one on the road. It is scary to even get out of the house”.
- The chief of the “Kalikai” SLA camp talks to us in good Tamil. He never shows his face. His face is always covered with a black cloth. He told the people if there is a grenade attack on the Kalikai camp he will shoot several thousand Tamils in the area.

Thread four: What they are leaving behind

- “We couldn’t bring all our things. At the checkpoint the SLA asks us why we are leaving. We are frightened to answer them. So we leave most of our things and take just a few clothes”.
- “My eldest son was half way through a Higher National Diploma in Accounting Course in Jaffna. For this he needed to travel to Jaffna during weekends. He is too scared to travel”.
- “My daughter has left behind several of her chickens, goats, and children’s school uniforms. It is not easy to replace them”.
- “Always there are roundups. They threaten and beat randomly. We have not gone to work for one month due to these troubles”.
- “I have no father. My mother worked hard to bring us up and educate us. I have got good results for my GCE AL. I am certain to get admission to University. But the results will be sent to my home in Jaffna. There will be no one there to receive it”.

This report should have brought out to some extent the absolute terror in the minds of people that is forcing them to displace.

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(NESOHR Secretary)