

Glimpse into Post-war Sri Lanka in 2009-2012

Sri Lanka: President appoints new *Task Force to rebuild north, 14 May 2009,

<https://reliefweb.int/report/sri-lanka/sri-lanka-president-appoints-new-task-force-rebuild-north>

*They have been preventing aid agents from helping war-ravaged IDPs – examples below:

'Over a quarter of a million Sri Lankans are now in camps for people displaced by the fighting, and over this past weekend, the government restricted access to some camps by UN workers and their partners.' - As fighting ends, Sri Lanka faces a critical moment, 20 May 2009,

http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sri_lanka_49737.html

"After visiting a displacement camp in Sri Lanka on Saturday and flying over the site of the last battle in the country's recently ended civil war, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called the sites "appalling." I have traveled around the world and visited similar places, but this is by far the most appalling scenes I have seen," Ban told CNN. "I sympathize fully with all of the displaced persons."

- U.N. secretary-general: Sri Lanka sites for the displaced 'appalling', 24 May 2009,

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/05/23/sri.lanka.united.nations/>

"It is just over a month since Asia's longest civil war in modern times came to an end, with the Sri Lankan government's declaration that it had finally defeated the Tamil Tiger rebels (LTTE) on the battlefield and killed nearly all their leaders.

Yet the army chief says he wants the army, already 200,000, to increase in size by 50%.

..... After decades of war, demilitarisation and a relaxation of security measures are not going to happen soon.' - Sri Lanka's expanding peacetime army, Charles Haviland, 29 June 2009,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8121385.stm

"The Sri Lankan government has told international relief agencies to cut back their activities in the country. ... But it(ICRC) says an estimated 300,000 displaced people still need food, medicine and help to return home." - Sri Lanka orders cuts in aid work, 9 July

2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8142550.stm>

"A senior official at the UN humanitarian agency, Unicef, has been given two weeks to leave Sri Lanka after expressing concerns about the plight of Tamils in government-run "welfare camp", the first UN official to be expelled from the island nation. The expulsion has been condemned by human rights groups who claim the state's actions were intended to "stop humanitarian relief and monitoring operations. UN officials said Sri Lanka's move was reminiscent of "North Korean diplomacy" and was aimed at "paralysing Unicef." - Sri Lanka orders Unicef official to leave, 6 September 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/06/sri-lanka-expels-unicef-official>

"Bishop John Rawsthorne of Sheffield and Bishop John Arnold of Westminster call for Tamils displaced by civil war to be allowed to return home after visiting camps in Sri Lanka Two English Catholic bishops have recently returned from Sri Lanka where they gained a rare insight into life in the post-conflict camps. Alongside CAFOD, they are calling for the end of forced confinement of nearly 300,000 Tamil survivors of the country's long and bloody conflict and allow them to go

home.” – Sri Lanka: Bishops say all must be allowed home, 11 September 2009, <https://reliefweb.int/report/sri-lanka/sri-lanka-bishops-say-all-must-be-allowed-home>

“It should be noted that the problem of accessing camps for humanitarian personnel persists throughout the country” - Mission Report: Visit of Major General (ret.) Patrick Cammaert, Special Envoy of the Special Representative for Children & Armed Conflict, to Sri Lanka, 05-11 December 2009, <http://www.un.org/children/conflict/documents/SriLankavisitReport09.pdf/>

“ Instead of opening space for continued presence and engagement in the conflict-affected areas, the quiet diplomacy approach employed by the humanitarian community has led to the state placing increased restrictions upon humanitarian actors. For instance, in Mannar all NGOs, INGOs and the UN have been instructed to obtain approval from the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on Northern Development prior to initiating programmes on return and resettlement. Hence, by adhering to the state’s concept of humanitarian assistance, namely only the provision of basic services, humanitarian actors severely diminished their ability and leverage to address protection issues.” – Civilian protection in Sri Lanka under threat, Refugee Study Centre, University of Oxford, Jan 2010, <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/wp58-civilian-protection-sri-lanka-under-threat-2010.pdf>

“The military presence in the country is enormous, much greater than when I was there in 2006 ... I was stirred by so many things. ... It took me four months to get authorisation from the Ministry of Defence to travel north.... It was clear to us that the government was not eager to have foreigners or NGOs up there. Strangely, it was easier to go there in 2005 than it was this December.” - The story of Sri Lanka, then and now, Prof Adele Barker(University of Arizona), 8 February 2010, <http://news.rediff.com/slide-show/2010/feb/08/slide-show-1-the-story-of-sri-lanka-then-and-now.htm>

"....The extent of shelter destruction appears to have been underestimated government restrictions on NGO access limited programming options, Movement along the A9 is also still restricted for international NGOs and UN agencies. ...since July 2009 they(ICRC) have not had access to the 11,000 people suspected of LTTE links held in rehabilitation centres.” - Banking on Solutions, A real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s shelter grant programme for returning displaced people in Northern Sri Lanka, March 2010, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/688DFD4C5975C6B6852576F700581B53-Full_Report.pdf

“With nearly 200,000 people still displaced in the North — some living in temporary camps while others squat with host families — international agencies are running out of money to meet urgent needs like water supply and resettlement grants, according to a report released last week. The funding crisis follows the government’s refusal to endorse the 2010 Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP), authoritative sources said. Produced annually through a collaboration of all major humanitarian assistance groups in the country (including UN agencies), the CHAP is a document listing out priority areas for donor funding along with estimates. This is usually released to the international donor community by way of consolidated or flash appeal and offers information about sectors that require injections of aid..... The last appeal should have been sent to Geneva in January - or earlier - but has not been endorsed by the government which feels the mechanism is useless. Consequently, there is still no consolidated appeal for humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka

this year a letter was issued to the OCHA by the presidential task force headed by Basil Rajapaksa saying the CHAP was no longer necessary. The government's contention is that humanitarian and other assistance for the North and East should be channelled through the task force and line ministries rather than via the OCHA.'" - State stubbornness leaves IDPs in a big fix, Namini Wijedasa, 15 Mar 2010, <http://www.infolanka.com/news/IL/1213.htm> (Preventing aid agents from giving assistance and channelling it through task force – PTF - will make sure tilting mindset towards the Military)

Here is reproduction of the speech (Prof) John Richardson made at Singapore National University in April 2010:

"The three elections prior to the escalation of protracted conflict when a new government was swept into power with overwhelming political support were the Parliamentary elections of April 5-10, 1956, May 27, 1970 and July 21, 1977. In each, the party previously in opposition gained decisive power on a platform that 3 promised fundamental change. The 1970 and 1977 general elections were followed by new constitutions. After each election, there were missed opportunities for initiatives that could have addressed many concerns of Tamil community members, while simultaneously respecting the concerns of all but the most radical Sinhalese nationalists. In each instance, however, Sri Lanka's political leaders chose not to expend their political capital in this way but instead, to accede to demands of the radicals." -

<https://groundviews.org/2010/11/05/prospects-for-post-conflict-reconciliation-and-development-in-sri-lanka-can-singapore-be-used-as-a-model/>

"... there have been reports of a deterioration of conditions in the Jaffna peninsula, including threats, extortions, kidnappings and killings. The government needs to take responsibility for any concerns about crime since the Police is presently a central government function." - Feeling of Deterioration in Jaffna Must Be Reversed Without Delay, Jehan Perera, Chairman, National Peace Council, 10 May 2010

*"..... Despite the end of the war a year ago and the dismantling of the separatist LTTE, the ratio of soldiers to citizens in the area is overwhelming. Driving through the Vanni, one loses count of the number of checkpoints along the route to the Jaffna peninsula at the northernmost tip of the island. There, the impression of being on a military base is reinforced by the soldiers, bunkers and signs welcoming you to regiments' buildings at every street corner.... Ministry of Defence officials told the reporter that clearance is required in order to prevent journalists from "reporting bad things on what is happening in Jaffna and Vanni" - Sri Lanka - fear and trauma, one year on, Nina de la Preugne, 19 May 2010, <http://www.thesamosa.co.uk/index.php/sri-lanka-special-report/49-news-and-features/358-sri-lanka-fear-and-trauma-one-year-on.html>

"On most roads inside the Vanni, whether on the A9 or interior roads, I felt as if we were travelling within a military camp. Military camps and check posts were along all the roads. One of the initial sources of livelihood when people went back to villages in the Vanni were the small tea shops that they set up along the A9 road and other roads.

But these were overshadowed by the bigger, better looking and better equipped "Janaavanhalas" (People's restaurants) put up by the military. Each and every time I go along the A9 there appeared to be more military run restaurants than before. In the small Paranthan junction, there were around 10 such restaurants, run by various divisions, brigades of the military." - Vanni in the year

after war: Tears of despair and fear, Ruki, 26 May 2010,

<http://www.groundviews.org/2010/05/26/vanni-in-the-year-after-war-tears-of-despair-and-fear/>

" It is more than one year since the war ended but the government from the end of June 2010 has introduced new restrictions on movement to the Wanni by staff of UN agencies, NGOs and INGOs. ... "At the end of June, no vehicles and staff were getting through," said an authoritative source in Vavuniya." - NGOs stung by sudden new restrictions, 18 July

2010, http://www.caffe.lk/NGOs_stung_by_sudden_new_restrictions-5-2214.html

"... Ragamwela villagers are Sinhalese; they can protest against the injustice done to them, still, without being labelled 'Tiger pawns'. But protests are an unaffordable luxury for the residents of three Tamil villages in Murukkundi, displaced from their homes when the state confiscated 4,000 acres in Kilinochchi to build 12,000 prefabricated houses for military families. ..." - Displacing Northern Tamils to set up Sinhala military cantonments would increase resentment by Tisarane Gunasekara, 1 August 2010,

http://transcurrents.com/tc/2010/08/displacing_northern_tamils_to.html

"...The A9 highway from Omanthai until Elephant Pass is dominated by predominantly Sinhalese soldiers, who even operate the small restaurants by the roadside. This military presence seems overwhelming and stifling.... They also without exception viewed the many roadside bunkers in the Jaffna Peninsula and soldiers guarding most junctions as creating a perception of an army of occupation. Our visit to Jaffna exposed and confirmed that all the conditions and discontent that led to the Tamil rebellion are still present today. The only ingredient that is lacking is the combustion of anti-Tamil riots such as in 1956, 1958, 1977, 1981, and 1983. ..." - Sinhala nationalist mindset seems incapable of comprehending what Tamils are articulating: Revisiting Jaffna BY Dushy Ranetunge, 14 August 2010,

http://transcurrents.com/tc/2010/08/sinhala_nationalist_mind_set_s.html

"Maryse Limonar, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) sub delegation in Vavuniya couldn't hide her feelings at a ceremony where her organization was distributing 400 two-wheel tractors to villagers in the Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts. She walked to the rear of an ICRC vehicle and cried after a minister allegedly overruled the list of beneficiaries the ICRC had chosen. ICRC officials allege that the minister distributed the tractors to people of his choice" - ICRC Chief weeps, 24 October 2010, <http://www.infolanka.com/news/IL/1420.htm>

Sri Lanka rejects UN panel report, 13 April

2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/sinhala/news/story/2011/04/110413_amnesty.shtml

"Even we can't understand the situation - it is so unnecessarily complicated and confusing," said Vinya Ariyaratne, executive director of Sarvodaya Movement, Sri Lanka's largest NGO. "This is retarding the recovery process significantly." - Analysis: NGOs question tighter access to Sri Lanka's north, 11 August 2010,

http://www.caffe.lk/NGOs_stung_by_sudden_new_restrictions-5-2214.html

"Bell Pottinger Group was recently hired to lobby UK, UN and EU officials." - Sri Lanka 'pays PR firm £3m to boost post-war image', BBC, 22 October 2010,

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11606899>

"..... The difficult access situation complicated humanitarian agencies' planning of activities and the delivery of services to IDPs and returnees in the north. Funding shortages during 2010 may have been due to reluctance on the part of international donors to fund programmes that were dependent on short-term approval and could be called off on short notice. It was also problematic that the GoSL did not endorse the UN's Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) for 2010 (UN OCHA, 14 July 2010, p.41). If it expects donors to cater to the needs of IDPs and returnees, given that its own budget has made return a very low priority, the GoSL must facilitate continued access for humanitarian actors to the areas where IDPs and returnees live. This is crucial if new grievances among this population are to be avoided and if these people are to achieve durable solutions." - SRI LANKA IDPs and returnees remain in need of protection and assistance, 14 January 2011, <https://www.refworld.org/type,COUNTRYREP,IDMC,LKA,4d3056122,0.html>

"SriLanka has severe social and economic Inequalities..... We would suggest that if hostilities do largely cease, five years after a war has ended, most economies are likely to have returned to near-normalcy and 10 years after, the post-conflict era can, in most cases, be regarded as having ended" - - A Typology of Post-Conflict Environments, Graham Brown, Arnim Langer & Frances Stewart, September 2011, <http://soc.kuleuven.be/web/files/12/80/wp01.pdf>

COUNTRY TRAPPED BY GOVERNMENT'S WINNING FORMULA, National Peace Council, 17 October 2011: "So far the government has shown itself unwilling to reach out to the ethnic minority voters to an extent that it might risk alienating its Sinhalese majority vote bank. However, this unimaginative and un-statesmanlike political approach, which is power-centered and not problem-solving, will not resolve the main problem facing the country."

"The nineteen person-Presidential Task Force implementing the government's "Northern Spring" program has not a single Tamil member and does no consultation with the local communities involved or with their elected representatives, (mostly TNA)" - LLRC report, an inconvenient truth? 4 January 2012, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/llrc-report-an-inconvenient-truth-15903.html>

"But that truth cannot excuse human rights violations that currently afflict the nation as a whole; or for that matter obscure the looming threat of the cultural and political colonisation of the north by the Sinhala Buddhist majority" - Biased and Prejudiced Collection on Sri Lanka, Gananath Obeyesekere (a Sinhalese Buddhist and Emeritus Professor of Anthropology), Economic & Political Weekly, VOL 47 No. 04, 28 January-03 February 2012

'President Mahinda Rajapaksa is to lead a campaign organized by the government to muster the support of the people against the Resolution passed at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva" - MR To Lead Campaign To Get People's Support, 1 April 2012, <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2012/04/01/mr-to-lead-campaign-to-get-peoples-support/>

"During my time working in Haiti after the January earthquake in 2010, several humanitarian workers from various United Nations agencies approached me regarding what they viewed as a parallel situation between ethical problems within the UN mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and what they experienced in the final months of the conflict in Sri Lanka. This report is a collective statement of individual experiences by twelve UN workers who lived and witnessed incredible abuses of the mission that they were supposed to fulfil in Sri Lanka. Ultimately this study reveals

repeated and corroborating testimony of those humanitarian workers and one press agent who witnessed and experienced an array of abuses which brought them within months of their missions in Sri Lanka to speak out. Each and every interlocutor has compared the abuses in Sri Lanka to various abuses they witnessed in Haiti. There seems to no doubt that changes need to be made within these agencies not to mention within the hierarchy of the United Nations which has demonstrated itself in Sri Lanka as an organisation which makes decisions that are often more political than in the interest of the people it ostensibly serves" - Independent Report on Sri Lanka and United Nations Human Rights Violations, Julian Vigo, 10 April 2012, <http://endoplasm.org/independent-report-on-sri-lanka-and-united-nations-human-rights-violations/>

"What this preliminary assessment of the action plan reveals is that the government is less interested in meeting the challenges of political transformation within Sri Lanka than in meeting the challenge of the international community in Geneva. " - LLRC ACTION PLAN AND TAKING LLRC REPORT SERIOUSLY, National Peace Council of Sri Lanka, 29 July 2012

'These independent experts serve as the eyes and ears of the UN human rights system. This book provides concrete evidence of why the system works and ways it can be improved" - Catalysts for Change: How the UN's Independent Experts Promote Human Rights, 13 July 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/books/2012/catalystsforchange>

"Density of military personnel in "peace" time in the Northern Province is much higher than during the peak times of activity in Iraq, Northern Ireland, Kashmir, Chechenya and the French occupation of Algeria" – Notes on the Military Presence in Sri Lanka's Northern Province, Vol – XLVII No. 28, 7-14 July 2012, <http://www.epw.in/insight/notes-military-presence-sri-lankas-northern-province.html>

"Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) today staged a protest in front of the UN office in Colombo urging the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner Navaneetham Pillay not to interfere with the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka." – Saying NO to interference, 20 September 2012, http://www.dailymirror.lk/caption_story/saying-no-to-interference/110-22086

More than 480,000 people have registered as returned (Government statistics as compiled by UNHCR, 31 December 2012), but many have not been able to achieve a durable solution but continue to face difficulties in accessing basic necessities such as shelter, food, water and sanitation, in rebuilding their livelihoods and in exercising their civil rights (IDMC interview, October 2012).

"Conflict-affected areas remain highly militarised, which has made progress towards achieving durable solutions more difficult. The military has become an important economic player and a key competitor of local people including returnees in the areas of agriculture, fishing, trade, and tourism. It has also been involved in areas that would normally come under civilian administration. It continues to occupy private land, thereby impeding IDPs' return. The government has failed to make durable solutions a priority, and humanitarian organisations have faced funding shortages and restrictions on programming and access" – Sri Lanka: A hidden displacement crisis, *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 31 October 2012,

[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/OF7746546306FCB3C1257AA8005845A6/\\$file/srilanka-overview-oct2012.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/OF7746546306FCB3C1257AA8005845A6/$file/srilanka-overview-oct2012.pdf)

Restrictions and intimidation on journalists covering resettlement process in the Vanni, 31/10/2012, <https://groundviews.org/2012/10/31/restrictions-and-intimidation-on-journalists-covering-resettlement-process-in-the-vanni/>

“The United Nations system failed to meet its responsibilities,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on 14 November 2012 as he released the report of the Secretary-General’s Internal Review Panel on UN action in Sri Lanka. “This finding has profound implications for our work across the world, and I am determined that the United Nations draws the appropriate lessons and does its utmost to earn the confidence of the world’s people, especially those caught in conflict who look to the Organization for help” - Following report on Sri Lanka war, Ban determined to strengthen UN responses to crises, 14 November 2012, <http://reliefweb.int/report/sri-lanka/following-report-sri-lanka-war-ban-determined-strengthen-un-responses-crises>

“In Sri Lanka, where many UN agencies and NGOs are phasing out their humanitarian programmes, it is unclear whether the development sector will include people affected by displacement in development strategies. Persistent insecurity, damage or destruction of housing, the slow restoration of basic services and infrastructure, unresolved land and property issues and a lack of livelihood opportunities were all major obstacles to returns across the region, and in many cases prevented them outright. In Sri Lanka, the military’s ongoing occupation of land in conflict-affected areas was a case in point. Hundreds of thousands of current and former IDPs in Sri Lanka remained in need of protection and assistance as of the end of 2012, more than three and a half years after government forces defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May 2009. More than 93,000 people were still living in camps, with host communities or in transit situations. Of more than 480,000 people who had returned to Northern and Eastern provinces, many are still to achieve durable solutions.

At the end of September 2012, the Menik Farm displacement camp, where around 225,000 Tamil IDPs were interned in June 2009, was closed. Of more than 1,300 IDPs still living in the camp in September, 560 were unable to return to their home areas because they were occupied by the Mullaitivu Security Force headquarters. Instead they were relocated, many of them against their will.

Military occupation of land is preventing around 26,000 people from returning across the north and east of Sri Lanka, and it is estimated that more than 3,000 people have been relocated, in many cases involuntarily.

Many returnees faced challenges in accessing their basic humanitarian needs such as shelter, water and sanitation during 2012. Displaced and returning communities also required livelihood assistance, social support, legal assistance and psycho-social care in recovering from the effects of the conflict. Sri Lanka still has no legislation governing IDPs’ protection. A bill drafted by the National Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka in 2008 had not been taken forward as of December 2012. At the end of the year, the UN cluster system was phased out as the international response shifted from humanitarian to development interventions, despite continuing humanitarian needs on the ground. International funding for both areas of activity was significantly reduced.” – Global Overview 2012, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, April 2013,

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/2012-global-overview-corporate-en.pdf>