

Destruction of the Tamil Community in NE Sri Lanka

February 2009

The Sri Lankan Tamil community has been deliberately targeted by the Sinhalese-dominated government of Sri Lanka and its mono-ethnic armed forces since the beginning of fighting between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in 1983. Acts of genocide, including pogroms, ethnic cleansing and state-sponsored colonization of Tamil areas, against the Tamil population have taken place ever since independence from Britain in 1948.

The physical destruction of the Tamil community has included widespread attacks on the NorthEast's agricultural, commercial and industrial base, its civilian infrastructure, and its cultural and social institutions.

The NorthEast has been heavily militarized by the mono-ethnic armed forces, with High Security Zones restricting access to most fishing and a high proportion of the best farming land, and checkpoints, special passes, curfews, blockades and military administration restricting freedom of movement and expression for decades. A heavy military presence has allowed the systematic looting of timber and titanium, religious and historical artifacts, livestock and civilian belongings.

Tamils killed: 83,982¹, primarily youths. The young and the old have died from deprivation and are not yet counted.

Ethnic cleansing: The number of Tamils displaced one or more times since 1983 is approaching 100%. One third of the population has fled overseas. Entire villages have been razed to the ground and large areas declared High Security Zones with their inhabitants herded into IDP camps.

Colonization of Tamil areas, state-financed & under military guard, particularly notable in the East: "Tamil population increased...302%, Muslim population increased...289%, Sinhalese population increased...883%. The national average increase of Sinhalese during this period is only 238%.²"

Blockade of Tamil areas: A military blockade of Tamil areas, in place since 1990 except for ceasefire periods, has contributed to the impoverishment and isolation of the Tamil community. The blockade has prevented ordinary items such as cement and gasoline - and even chocolate and candles - from entering the Tamil areas, and prevented goods from the NorthEast from being sold in the rest of the island.



¹ 1958 – June, 2008 documented deaths from Tamil Centre for Human Rights, Paris

² 'Sinhalese of East' by M. I. M. Mohideen, *The Island*, 27 December 2007

Temples & churches destroyed: Over 2,000 Hindu temples.³ 300 churches were destroyed in Jaffna district over one 8-year period.⁴

Children affected: “It is estimated that 1 million children living in the North and the East of the country under the age of 18 are directly affected by a protracted ethnic-based civil war and one third of children have dropped out or never attended school.”⁵

Malnutrition among children: “The WFP survey found that nearly one in three children is "wasted" or far too thin for their height, in the north and east of the island nation where a civil war was fought for nearly 20 years. In these areas, malnutrition levels are at least twice as high as the national average.”⁶

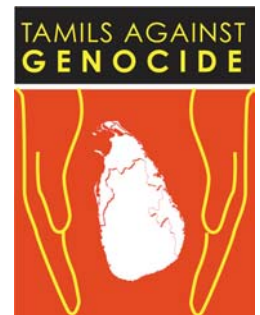


Church in Mullaitivu ruined by war with Sri Lankan army, NY Times, Jan.2009

Infant mortality: By 1993 infant mortality in the Jaffna peninsula had quadrupled since before the war and was twice as high as in the South.⁷

Maternal mortality: Twice as high as the rest of the island.⁸ 30% of deliveries in the East are at home, while in the rest of the island only 2% are, and access to emergency obstetric care is very limited.⁹ In Jaffna, the 1981 MMR of 0.3 is now 2.8; the rate increased from 2.7 to 9.7 in Mannar, and from 0.6 to 9.7 in Amparai.¹⁰

Poverty: 70% of the people in the NorthEast are below the poverty line,¹¹ while the average for the rest of the island is 23%.¹²



³ Sulekha.com, <http://unaruval.sulekha.com/blog/post/2008/09/state-sponsored-destruction-and-desecration-of-hindu.htm>

⁴ Tamil Information Centre, London

⁵ UNICEF (2003) At a glance: Sri Lanka - the big picture. New York: UNICEF from http://www.ineesite.org/core_references/SriLanka.pdf accessed 2/10/09

⁶ UNWFP, Oct 17, 2003. <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/AllDocsByUNID/cb64d0f8899c67dac1256dc200394bba>

⁷ *Jaffna infant mortality survey* by N. Sivarajah, MD, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Health*, London, Sept, 1994

⁸ World Vision, ‘About Sri Lanka,’ accessed 2/10/09

http://srilanka.wvasiapacific.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=16&Itemid=90

⁹ Dr. Shanthini Ganesan, IMHO, accessed 2/10/09. <http://theimho.org/publications/presentations/115-child-health>

¹⁰ Sri Lanka Department of Health Services, 2003 quoted in *Rural women in Sri Lanka's post-conflict rural economy*, Leelangi Wanasundera, Centre for Women's Research Sri Lanka, 2006

¹¹ Asian Development Bank's Country Director John R.Cooney quoted in *TamilNet*, Feb 14, 2002.

¹² MDG Sri Lanka, Statistics and Reports, accessed 2/14/09