



## வடகிழக்கு மனித உரிமைகள் செயலகம் North East Secretariat on Human Rights - NESOHR

கரடிப்போக்கு சந்தி

கிளிநொச்சி

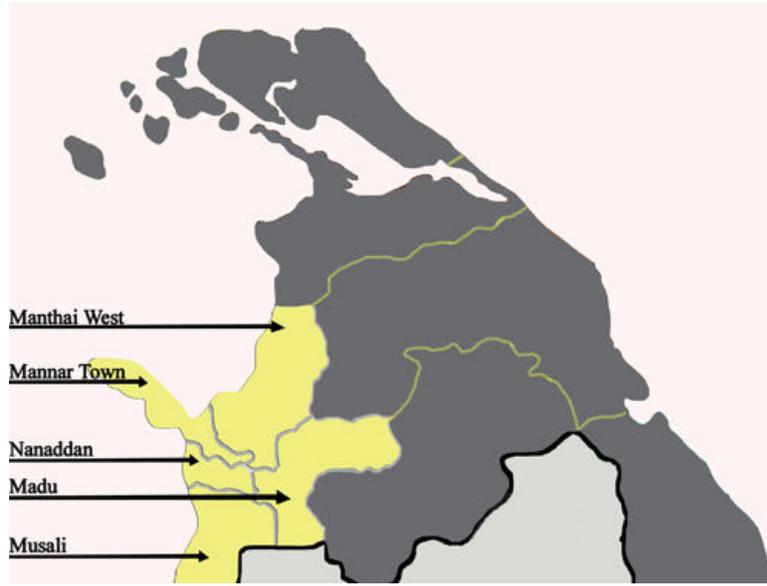
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### NESOHR report on Mannar civilians - May 2008



The people in Mannar are continuing to displace and have been doing so since October 2007, when the entire people in the Musali AGA division of Mannar (see map) were evacuated by the Sri Lankan military with the promise that they will be allowed to return in a few days. Eight months later they still remain displaced. The situation under which the displaced Mannar civilians are living is the subject of this report. We have produced this report by talking to a handful of people who entered Vanni from Sri Lankan military controlled parts of Mannar. They express very serious concern for the plight of the people.

**Checking:** Tamil people have lived with humiliating checking in the hands of the Sri Lankan military for decades now. The intensity of checking varies from place to place in this island. The checking around Mannar town is perhaps one of the most intense in the island right now. Vehicles are stopped at several locations and the same kind of humiliating checking is repeated. If the vehicle is a bus, the traveler, especially the Tamils are forced to get off and

walk with their bags and baggage for almost 500 meters to complete the checking. People walk and wait under the burning sun to prove they are innocent after all.

Recently, all of the people displaced from Musali and presently in Nannaddan have been ordered by the military to report to the military camp for interrogation. Families have been given specific dates on which to report to the military camp. Some of the people who have reported as ordered by the military have been put through intense interrogation and many have complained that they have been beaten by the military.

***All most all the people in Mannar who recently displaced from LTTE controlled parts of Vanni*** into Sri Lankan military controlled parts are restricted to their crowded camps and have not been allowed to join family or friends living in Mannar. The conditions in these camps are perhaps the worst in Mannar. Even seriously ill patients have been restricted denying them the needed medical attention. Reports of people arrested by the Sri Lanka military disappearing have begun to surface. People have reported at least four such disappearances so far from this camp.

Young students in these camps are not receiving education due to the restrictions on their movement. Salaried employees have not received their salaries and without any other income their families are in dire situation other than to depend on handouts for food and clothing. Similar fate also falls on other breadwinners who were self employed because they are barred from even trying to seek work.

***The military is also stopping outside people from entering Mannar*** causing a lot of heartache to people with close family links with people in Mannar. Indeed people from parts of Vavuniya such as Cheddikulam have very close family links with people in Mannar. This came about because people from both of these areas lived in the same refugee camps in Madhu for several years in the past and many marriages of people from the two communities took place during this time. The present restriction on people from outside Mannar entering Mannar has separated many nuclear families formed by such marriages. A similar separation of families occurred when the A9 highway to Jaffna was suddenly closed in August 2006. Some of those families remain separated even now.

***Due to unannounced exclusive use of the Vavuniya-Mannar highway*** by the military, people are also facing further unexpected delays on the roads that interfere with their work and private lives. This exclusive use of highways for military vehicles is a practice well ingrained in Jaffna.

*People displaced within LTTE part of Mannar* are facing incessant shelling from Sri Lankan military camps forcing people to displace again and again. Some of the people have already displaced three or four times and are presently in a situation where they have to displace again due to shells exploding within their makeshift refugee camps.

*The Kaddukarai water tank* in Mannar that irrigates 7000 acres of farmland has been allowed to almost run empty by the military disrupting farming in the district. Locals in the LTTE part of Mannar also say that more than 7500 livestock in Mannar that belonged to the displaced people have been killed by the military. They claim that each day offensive is launched 3 or 4 houses are destroyed. It is not hard to imagine how many houses would have been destroyed at this rate. One should understand this destruction in the context of more than 10,000 houses destroyed in Mannar prior to the 2002 ceasefire and the people trusting the ceasefire invested to rebuild their homes.

*The Need for closely watching the people's plight:* The travails of the people of Mannar is serious and goes on blocked from the view of the outside world. People have indeed started to sell their property at low cost and leave Mannar for good. The people themselves believe that the Sri Lankan Government intends to cleanse Mannar of Tamils as much as possible. For this reason, the human rights group should remain vigilant of the plight of the people in Mannar.