



வடகிழக்கு மனித உரிமைகள் செயலகம் North East Secretariat on Human Rights - NESoHR

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Remembering Mullivaikal May-09

When there is widespread attack on a people, the natural reaction is for the people to run to a place where they feel safer. When the people are attacked repeatedly, they move again and again to the places they perceive as safe. This is what happened to the 400,000 people in Vanni for two years, from the start of 2007 till end of 2008. Then came the Sri Lankan Government declared safe zones: one, two and three, from January to May 2009, asking the people to seek safety in these safe zones. These are the final killing fields, the last of which was Mullivaikal. In them 40,000 civilians were killed, the remaining who got out of the “safe zones” were then incarcerated in camps in appalling conditions. In the month of May we mark this history.

The two years, 2007-2008, in Vanni is a history of: building bunkers in every household; living with continuous displacement and digging bunkers again and again as we displaced; living on the roadside and under trees; living with Sri Lankan government imposed shortages of medicine and food; indeed living with shortages of all the basics of life. It is two years of studying the sky for Sri Lankan bombers that frequented the Vanni spaces. Civilian deaths during these aerial raids were common. Claymore attacks on civilian vehicles, ambulances, school buses, pilgrims' vehicles all became the norm. Dignitaries like NESoHR's chairperson and a TNA MP were among those targeted and killed.

January-April 09: The safe zones declared to concentrate the people into small areas so that the killings can be more efficient. Over crowded streets with displacing people were attacked with artillery shelling. Many were killed on the narrow traffic jammed streets. Dead bodies transported on tractor-trailers, bloodied and shredded tents where the displaced once lived were common sights. Open spaces became hospitals where the injured and the dead were dumped. Doctors and volunteers risked life to do their best. These too were attacked, killing the injured, the doctors and the volunteers.

Mullivaikal in May-09: bunkers in sand collapsing in rain, permanent sounds of shell explosions, venturing out a gamble with life that must be taken to ward off hunger, mothers holding onto dead children, dead babies delivered with shrapnel lodged into them, dead bodies just left where they fall, mass arrests, disappeared after arrest presumed tortured, sexually abused and killed.... This is May-09.

For the last one year, there has only been talk of war crime charges. Repeated attacks on hospitals; killing, torture, rape and sexual abuse of people escaping the war zone are some of the charges leveled against the Sri Lankan forces. But, except for the verdict passed by the Dublin Permanent People's Tribunal there has been no other concrete action. The Dublin verdict said,



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“Harrowing evidence, including video footage, was submitted by eye-witnesses of the use of heavy artillery and phosphorous munitions, and of the continuous violation of human rights by military activity to a panel of ten international jurors over two days”.

The 300,000 people who walked out of the war zone are witnesses to these war crimes. Each one of them would have narrowly escaped death at least once in those safe zones. Fear, extreme fear, prevents the 300,000 eye witnesses from speaking. Even those who escaped from the island to other countries are silenced by fear. So far, the world remains incapable or unwilling to implement its laws on war crimes.

Whilst remembering Mullivaikal May-2009, we at NESOHR would like to remind the Government of Sri Lanka and the mute U.N. and the International Community that Truth will triumph at the end.

We call upon the Human Rights Defenders and the Human race all over the World, flinch not until the perpetrators are brought to book.'

May justice prevail.

NESoHR Team