



வடகிழக்கு மனித உரிமைகள் செயலகம்

North East Secretariat on Human Rights - **NESOHR**

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### **Convoy problem enters a new phase - 20 September 2008**

When UN and other international agencies left Vanni, fear of a humanitarian crisis unobserved by neutral presence was raised from several quarters. That predicted crisis started unfolding just as the UN agencies were leaving Vanni.

UN left Vanni on Tuesday 16 September. For three consecutive convoy days allocated for Kilinochchi, that is Monday 15 September, Wednesday 17 September and Friday 19 September, the convoys destined for Kilinochchi have been blocked by the SLA at the Omanthai checkpoint. In effect, 60 convoys of food that should have reached Kilinochchi have been blocked, further depressing the already low stock levels.

Food and non-food items are brought into Vanni through the Omanthai checkpoint. The “convoy problem” was created at the Omanathai checkpoint in January 2008 by the Sri Lankan Army (SLA). In effect, since January, SLA permitted a maximum of only 20 trucks to cross over per day where as an average of 70 trucks crossed over per day prior to the creation of the “convoy problem” in January. Since then, stocks of basic items like flour, lentils, sugar and milk powder were getting lower as the months passed.

When there was surge in the number of IDPs in 2008, the poor stock levels limited the relief given to the displaced people. World Food Program pitched in to improve the situation in August but it was ordered out of Vanni with the other UN agencies in September.

### ***IDP numbers increase further***

The offensive by the SLA to capture Kilinochchi created a further surge in the number of IDPs this month. The Kilinochchi District Secretariat sources say that 26,000 more people displaced this month.

The new IDPs have not received any relief to date. According to the District Secretariat sources, the available and the required stock for distribution to the 162,191 IDPs are,

Rice – required 913 MT and available nil.  
Flour – required 913 MT and available 45 MT.  
Lentils – required 274 MT and available 9 MT.  
Sugar – required 913 MT and available nil.

*The new phase of the convoy problem described above has just worsened the situation*

### ***Shelter for IDPs***

6500 IDP families are presently living without shelter under the shade of trees according to Kilinochchi District Secretariat sources. There is an urgent need to provide shelters for these families. In order to bring items like tarpaulins, more convoys must cross over. But these items are usually given by the international agencies that are not there anymore.

### ***Drinking water for IDPs***

The main problem faced in the provision of drinking water to the IDPs is the availability of fuel. Fuel shortage is created not only by the convoy problem but also by a direct restriction on fuel. No petrol or diesel is permitted into Vanni except for very strict and inadequate quota for the hospital and government offices. The only fuel permitted for other purposes is kerosene. The required amount of kerosene assessed by Kilinochchi GA is 700,000 litres. But the permitted amount was 600,000 litres until March 2008. This was then reduced to 500,000 litres. It has now again been reduced to 400,000 litres.

### ***The sad sight of the IDPs' homes***

The IDPs know that in the absence of international agency assistance and amidst the Sri Lankan Government's well known tactics of tampering with humanitarian supplies, they must do whatever they can to help themselves. The better off among the newly displacing Kilinochchi IDPs have gone to the extreme of dismantling their homes so that they can setup a home in due course in a new place. The sight of Kilinochchi streets with roofless, door less homes tells the sad tale of the IDPs who once lived in them.

