



வடகிழக்கு மனித உரிமைகள் செயலகம்

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

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## **Consequences of expelling international humanitarian agencies from Vanni**

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*"We do not need international agencies to provide humanitarian aid, we can do it ourselves."* These are the words of one of the leading Sri Lankan Government officials who have ordered all international agencies in Vanni to leave the area because they are no longer able to guarantee their safety. *"Stocks of food and other essential humanitarian supplies in Vanni are at dangerously low levels."* These have been the words of international humanitarian agencies working in Vanni. It is also clear that the people, who are being referred to in this tug-of-war on humanitarian aid, the Tamil IDPs in Vanni, desperately want the international humanitarian agencies to stay.

### ***Humanitarian supplies***

NESoHR has meticulously reported the IDP statistics and the level of humanitarian supplies in Vanni in several recent reports to raise alarm bells. The shortage of essential humanitarian supplies is caused by several types of blockades imposed by the Sri Lankan Government at the Omanthai checkpoint through which the supplies must reach Vanni. Insisting on permits to bring every item from milk food to medicines, limiting the number of convoys passing through the checkpoint, banning a long list of essential items completely and delaying other items are the various mechanism by which the blockade is implemented. Please see the following NESoHR reports for more details.

1. [http://www.nesohr.org/files/Siege\\_on\\_healthcare\\_services\\_in\\_Vanni.pdf](http://www.nesohr.org/files/Siege_on_healthcare_services_in_Vanni.pdf) on problems faced in meeting the needs of the health services.
2. [http://www.nesohr.org/files/Needs\\_of\\_IDPs.pdf](http://www.nesohr.org/files/Needs_of_IDPs.pdf) on the problems faced by the Government Agents in bringing essential supplies into Vanni.
3. [http://www.nesohr.org/files/Update\\_on\\_Vanni\\_Displacement.pdf](http://www.nesohr.org/files/Update_on_Vanni_Displacement.pdf) for statistics on IDPs and a description of the problems faced by convoys bringing supplies into Vanni.

The Table below is the update to an earlier Table, published in the third report above, on the amount of five essential items brought into Vanni by convoys in 2008. The Table below is updated with the quantities brought in during the months of July and August. It clearly shows the role played by the UN agency, World Food program (WFP), to improve the supply of some of these essential items - particularly the supply of lentils that was at dangerously low level prior to August. Indeed, the supplies of some items in the Table that are not handled by the UN agency are still dangerously low. For example the supply level of milk powder for the

year of 2008 is 86% below the amount requested by the Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu Government Agents.

International agencies also bring several other life saving items other than those listed in the Table; one which is tarpaulins to put up temporary cover over the IDP families living under trees. The international agencies also provide other assistance to the IDPs such as putting shelters for the IDPs with the material available locally. The international agencies have also helped with providing some medicines that have become unavailable in Vanni due to the blockade.

### ***Fuel***

Another cruel ban imposed in Vanni is the severe restriction on all types of fuel. Prior to August 2006, Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu districts consumed close to two million litres of diesel, one million litres of petrol, and an unknown large quantity of kerosene.

After the fuel ban was imposed, the two districts together were allowed just about 15000 litres of diesel, 800 litres of petrol. With this level of restriction on petrol and diesel being brought into Vanni privately, the only fuel that is permitted is restricted quantity of kerosene. As the Table below shows, even the reduced amount of kerosene that is requested by the two Government Agents has not been allowed in.

The ability of local agencies, facing this type of fuel restriction, to help the IDPs is very limited. Provision of drinking water to the IDPs is a life saving work for which fuel is essential. Indeed, the international agencies which were ordered out of Vanni had to also take all the tankers that they were using to supply drinking water to the IDPs.

### ***Eyes of the world***

No reporters are permitted into Vanni and this ban has been in place for more than a year. Communication lines have been cut and this limits the news about the actual situation reaching the outside. The phone lines have been cut by the Sri Lankan Government. Many people who used the dial-up phone lines to communicate through emails have also been cut off as a result. Death and injury caused by aerial bombing, shelling and claymore attacks are hardly reported in the outside media because no reporters are permitted in. In over 25 large scale massacres over a period of two years in Vanni scores of civilians including babies and children were killed. The international agencies often visit the site of such atrocities to confirm what is reported locally. Thus, the international agencies, though silent in order to maintain their work in Vanni, are the only outside eyes to what goes on in Vanni.

Given the above scenario, expelling the international humanitarian agencies during an intense conflict phase will further blackout as well as worsen the unfolding human rights and humanitarian crisis in Vanni. It is therefore imperative that the international community demand their presence and their safety in Vanni to avoid a human rights and humanitarian catastrophe.

### Five essential items brought by convoys into Vanni in 2008

Month	Quantity requested by Kilinochchi GA	Quantity requested by Mullaitivu GA	Total requested by the two GAs	Total approved by CGES	Total received in Vanni by the two GAs	Total brought into Vanni by WFP	Total shortfall for the eight months	Total amount requested by the two GAs
<b>Flour in Metric Tons</b>								
Jan-June	1400	1300	2700	2450	1695	1710	-705	
July	200	260	460	460	311	30		
August	200	260	460	460	434	370		
Total			3620		2440	2110	-930	
<b>Sugar in Metric Tons</b>								
Jan-June	2100	1565	3665	3315	2472	392	801	22%
July	350	313	663	663	1023	0		
August	350	555	905	905	924	0		
Total			5233		4419	392	422	8%
<b>Lentils in Metric Tons</b>								
Jan-June	1900	130	2030	1680	69	480	1481	73%
July	50	40	90	90	0	204		
August	50	40	90	90	8	135		
Total			2210		77	819	1314	60%
<b>Milk Powder in Metric Tons</b>								
Jan-June	800	1085	1885	1685	201.5	0	1683.5	89%
July	100	217	317	317	70	0		
August	100	217	317	317	82	0		
Total			2519		354	0	2165	86%
<b>Kerosene in 1000 Litres</b>								
Jan-June	3,700	47,000	8,400	6,900	6,600		1,800	20%
July	500	400	900	900	469			
August	500	500	1,000	1,000	849			
Total			10,300		7,918		2,381	23%