

Resettlement of Northern Muslim IDPs: A Case Study of Marichukkati Village in Mannar District of Sri Lanka

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1. Background

The prolonged armed conflict which started in 1983 between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE has killed around 90,000 people and left over 1 million IDPs from three ethnic groups: Tamils 82%, Muslims 14%, and Sinhalese 4% (UNHCR Report. 2009). In 1990, the LTTE forcibly evicted around 15,000 Muslim families from the Northern Province in five districts: Jaffna 3,475, Mannar 8,200, Vavuniya 1,800, Mulaitheevu 1,000 and Kilinochi 525 (Ibid. 2009). The displaced Muslims moved mainly to the Puttalam district and have been living there as IDPs since then. The IDP camp life is very pathetic. The end of conflict in May 2009, brought a new hopes for the resettlement of Muslim IDPs, but the Sri Lankan government and the international community prioritized the Tamil IDPs and side lined the Muslim IDPs from the resettlement process. This has led some Muslim IDPs voluntarily to go back to their homes. The former Resettlement Minister Rishad Badiudeen was able to negotiate with some Islamic organizations and they agreed to provide some houses for this marginalized Muslim IDPs. In 2012 Muslims in Marichukatti began their resettlement process with the support of Qatar foundation (Al-JASSIM). Since then some Buddhist monks and media groups began to accuse their resettlement and claimed it was an illegal resettlement and violation of willpattu forest, though the Muslims hold their deeds to live in their own place. This research will employ the pluralism theory. Pluralism means “equal rights for everyone”. One community should enjoy the equal rights that enjoyed by other community. In Sri Lanka both the Sinhalese and Tamil IDPs were resettled or relocated by the Sri Lankan government, but no proper plan or attempt made by the government yet for the Muslim IDPs.

2. Research Problem

It has been 25 years since the Muslims were forcibly evicted by the LTTE from the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. However, until now there is no proper plan or durable solutions for the

Muslim IDPs to resettle them in their previous home. It is reported around 10,000 families still live in IDP camps and continues to suffer in their daily lives.

3. Objectives

The main objective of this research is to explore the resettlement of Northern Muslim IDPs and find out the hindrance which delays the resettlement process in Marichukati village in Mannar.

4. Research Methodology

This research will be a mix of qualitative and quantitative approach. The author has visited to the Marichukati village and conducted few interviews with respective leaders and beneficiaries of housing scheme. Both primary and secondary data will be utilized to strengthen this research.

5. Key Finding

(1) There is no proper plan either from the Sri Lankan government or International community over the resettlement of Muslim IDPs. (2) Muslim IDPs who went back to their previous home in Marichukatti faces lot of issues regarding the land and livelihood. (3) Pressures and accusations from some Buddhist monks and Medias over the resettlement of Muslim IDPs.

6. Conclusion

The overall conclusion of this research is that the resettlement of Muslim IDPs in Marichukatti was manipulated and miss guided by the media and some Buddhist monks. The Sri Lankan government which is responsible to protect its own people also overlooked and sidelined the Muslim IDPs on this issue. The tension and rhetoric is growing between the wild life authority and former Resettlement Minister Rishad badiudeen on behalf of villagers in Marichukatti.

Reference

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