The Quest for Redemption: The Story of the Northern Muslims

Final Report of the Citizens’ Commission on the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province by the LTTE in October 1990
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Second Edition
Introduction

Ethnicity-based genocide and pogroms have been recurrent features through millennia of human history across the globe. Little impact has been made by either advances in knowledge and awareness in the social sciences, the media, and information technology, or in the establishment of democratic norms and international laws and covenants designed to arrest such crimes. Our own little island has been witness to such cases, of which one is the LTTE’s expulsion of over 70,000 Muslims from the Northern Province—effectively the entire Muslim population in the area—in October 1990.

The nature, scale, and other features of violence vary from case to case. The expulsion of the Muslims was marked by extraordinary speed, efficiency, and utter ruthlessness, although it was bloodless. There was virtually no resistance from the Muslims, and no intervention by the State. It was the work of the same LTTE that previously had carried out a series of bloody massacres—of around 500 policemen (mostly Sinhalese but also Muslims); of Muslim worshipers in Kattankudi; and of many other Sinhalese and Muslims in different locations. In each case the design and the timing were clearly worked out to avoid or minimize resistance from the victims and interventions by the State.

The LTTE, which once had Muslim activists within its ranks, had become virulently anti-Muslim and, in particular, anti-SLMC, by October 1990. The expulsion only reinforced the case for the establishment of the SLMC. The belated “confession” by LTTE spokesman Balasingham that the expulsion was a “strategic blunder” adds insult to injury. How can such an enormous crime, meticulously planned and executed, be described as a “strategic blunder”?

The indifference of non-Muslim communities to this tragedy is a reflection of the ethnic compartmentalization of Sri Lankan society: to most Sinhalese and Tamils, it appears as a Muslim problem rather than a national one. Even Muslims holding influential positions in the UNP, SLFP, and other “national” parties, seem to be unable or unwilling to push hard on this issue. It is only those parties whose votes depend on the northern and eastern Muslim population, who regard it as their problem—in short, primarily the SLMC, the NUA and the ACMC.

The concept of Tamil-speaking people as a single ethnic group was promoted from the 1950s by the Federal Party under the leadership of S.J.V. Chelvanayakam. This idea then had the support of many Tamils and Muslims (most notably Mashoor Moulana); however, it did not get traction and become universally accepted because it was a political initiative without any grounding in social reality. Sri Lankan Tamils, Sri Lankan Muslims, and Indian Tamils remained distinct ethnic groups, at that time, as now, with only the most politically active perceiving Tamil-speaking people as one ethnic group.

This initiative yielded some electoral benefits in the East when it polled Tamil votes and Muslim votes for the Federal Party rather than for the UNP or the SLFP. This benefit was
short-lived, however, because some of these members of Parliament crossed over to the
governing party. Working together was easier in the multi-ethnic East than in the virtually
mono-ethnic North. Some Muslim youth continued to work with Tamil youth until the 1970s,
but this ceased to be feasible with the emergence of the LTTE as the lead militant group in
the 1980s. The LTTE developed anti-Muslim (in particular anti-SLMC) sentiments early in
their campaign. The LTTE’s massacre of Muslims deterred all Muslims from forming
affiliations to the LTTE, thus paving the way for the expulsion of Muslims from the North in
October 1990. For strategic reasons it was the northern Muslims and not the eastern Muslims
who were expelled. Any attempt to expel the eastern Muslims, among whom the SLMC was
already established, would have ended in failure.

The SLMC was formed with the objective of taking over the national Muslim leadership from
the southern Muslims. M.H.M. Ashraff, who began his career in the Federal Party, as did
Mashoor Moulana as well as thousands of other Muslims, maintained his links with the
Federal Party and, in particular, with Chelvanayakam, for a long time. These links weakened
in the course of time, and the death of Chelvanayakam in the late 1970s put an end to the
concept of Tamil-speaking people as one ethnic group. However, the leaders of the SLMC
and NUA were concerned to retain a relationship with the Tamil leadership.

Following the end of the war, as well as the defeat and elimination of the LTTE in 2009,
northern Muslims were presented with the real possibility of going back to their villages. As
this report reaches completion, many Muslim families have gone back to their original
villages while others wait to return. Return and resettlement are beset by a number of
challenges. The state policy framework on IDPs remains weak and has effectively
discriminated against northern Muslim returnees. There is inadequate support from the state
as well as from other stakeholders to facilitate the return of northern Muslims to their
villages. While there have been some positive development in 2011, much more needs to be
done.

Northern Muslims have lived in anticipation of an official government inquiry into the
expulsion; the Citizens’ Commission, of which we are members, was established in the
absence of such an official commission. This report is the culmination of a 2-year-long
process, initiated by the Law and Society Trust, to produce an authoritative document on the
expulsion, the two decades of displacement, and the experience of resettlement. We endorse
this report in our capacity as independent and impartial persons representing different
segments of civil society outside the northern Muslim community.

This report used a multi-faceted methodology, including substantial primary and secondary
research. The research was complemented by several visits we made to different locations to
meet northern Muslim communities and to hear first-hand accounts of their experiences. We
also planned to place the problems of the northern Muslims within the larger socio-political
context of Sri Lanka, while linking up with different groups working on similar issues around
the country. As expressed by Dr. Farzana Haniffa, the coordinator of this project,
Some of the issues that the northern Muslims faced while displaced were common to most Sri Lankan citizens affected by the conflict. For instance, the fact that the ration amount was not increased in two decades affected not just the Muslim IDPs but other IDPs as well. Additionally the language difficulties faced by northern Muslims while accessing health care facilities or when visiting government offices are those faced by Tamil-speaking people all over the country. Muslims, to date, have paid insufficient attention to articulating their issues as concerns common to the country as a whole (Chapter 11 of Commission Report, and Commission Newsletter of July 2010).

During our visits we were able to attentively listen to the concerns of northern Muslims while also highlighting certain common issues of concern that cut across communities.

Chapter 3 of the report outlines the social and political context of the displacement and highlights the following:

1. The specificity of Muslim politics in Sri Lanka.
2. Muslims’ shared language and difficult politics with the Tamil minority in the country.
3. Muslims’ marginalization within the discourse of the ethnic conflict.
4. Muslims’ recent assertions of religious exclusivity.

The conclusions and the recommendations are spelt out in the final chapter. While the report highlights the key issues to be addressed, the following critically important factors need to be kept in mind in providing relief to those displaced:

1. 21 years is a long time, and the young among the displaced population may find it hard to leave their present homes and neighbourhoods to “return” to the homes and neighbourhoods of their parents. While every inducement needs to be provided to encourage return, unavoidably, many families may become divided on this issue, with most of the older members returning and some of the younger members remaining in their new neighbourhoods.

2. The physical, economic, and other spaces vacated by those expelled 21 years ago may have been partly filled by others. These new occupants need to be induced or pressured to vacate. This needs to be done as tactfully and painlessly as possible to minimize the conflict between future Tamil and Muslim neighbours.

3. The sudden influx of an empty-handed population in its thousands, especially into the Puttalam region, would have been a drain on the resources of the region and reduced the standard of living of the original population. Some means must be found to supplement the local resources to compensate for the loss.

4. Sadly, pogroms and ethnic cleansing are frequent occurrences in our island, and Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and others have all been among the victims. The relief and corrective action provided in such cases need to be supported by all communities, and, for this to
happen, the package of relief and corrective action should also apply to other displaced populations elsewhere, irrespective of ethnicity. It is then that people will see this as a national problem and not just as the Muslim problem.

5. Displaced Muslims should have the major say in determining their future. A political solution to the national question should be developed to supplement the remedial action in this case. Several preliminary proposals have already been made, including one attached.

Finally, we hope this initiative of some leaders of civil society getting together, establishing a multi-ethnic citizens’ commission, and providing leadership and the necessary resources for that commission to work together and function effectively, will be a model to be followed in any similar situations in future.

Dr. Devanesan Nesiah
Acknowledgements

The Commission on the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province by the LTTE in October 1990 is an initiative that has been in the making since 2006, when the Law and Society Trust, together with the International Center for Transitional Justice, engaged in an assessment regarding its feasibility among the northern Muslims as well as the larger Muslim community in Colombo. The process found funding in 2008 and began work in January 2009.

The Commission investigations have been completed and the report is now written. The process has benefited greatly from the belief and hard work of a large number of persons. The Commissioners who accepted the brief and agreed to be a part of it have to be thanked for their commitment, engagement and confidence in the value of the process. Their engagement with the issues and their observations, including the many comments that they made during visits with northern Muslims, greatly enriched the project and also brought confidence to the northern Muslims who engaged with them. Each of the commissioners brought value to the commission on the basis of their particular backgrounds and expertise. Individual mention must be made of all commissioners. Dr. Anes was a great asset, both as a member of the host community and as someone who was familiar with the context of Puttalam and the changes that occurred in the lives of the Puttalam community. His experience, his standing in the community, as well as his own perspective on many of the issues we discussed brought balance and perspective to our meetings in Puttalam. He also was very supportive of the intention of the project and constantly endorsed the necessity for greater good quality documentation of the Sri Lankan Muslim community. Dr. E. Santhirasegaram took the process very seriously despite his extremely busy schedule as the only medical practitioner for a community as large as 50,000 persons in Kalpitiya. He spoke very evocatively about his experiences as a person from Jaffna who remembers when the Muslims were an undisputed part of Jaffna. He was also sensitive to his role as one of only two Tamil members of the Commission. Dr. Nesiah has a long history of writing about the northern Muslims and readily agreed to be part of this process. The commission benefited from his thoughtfulness as well as from his familiarity with the areas and people of the North. We are grateful for his generosity of vision and for agreeing to write the Introduction on behalf of all the commissioners. Chulani Kodikara engaged consistently at each stage of the process with great intellectual commitment and was a valuable sounding board for each of the Commission’s public interventions on northern Muslim issues. Dr. Gameela Samaranasinghe provided her time for psycho-social training of staff from local organizations in Puttalam under the Commission project. She also provided an important perspective on the psychosocial needs of the affected community – an issue that is not often highlighted in relation to the northern Muslims. Nimalka Fernando, when she engaged with the Commission, did so with great commitment, and the staff gained much from her experience and insight. She participated as the sole Commissioner at a sitting in the remote village of Nachchikudah, in Kilinochchi, and we thank her for braving the journey and for giving us a comprehensive and usable overview of the findings. Judge ULA Majeed-- also always very
committed and available for consultation—was an invaluable asset during the commission sittings, as he readily engaged with the northern Muslims who participated at the sittings. Catherine Brun met with the Commission when possible when she was in Sri Lanka and participated in three women’s sittings in Puttalam. She also engaged very usefully with the report writing process and provided much-needed intellectual support towards the completion of the report. Finally Mr. Javid Yusuf was a useful addition to the commission due to his knowledge of the history of Muslim politics.

The partner organizations virtually drove the project. They convened the initial meetings to inform the northern Muslim community about the project; led the planning of the commission sittings; helped identify the issues that needed to be addressed; and provided logistical support in the field. Their input was also invaluable in making sure that all segments of the northern Muslims were represented in the various Commission activities— from identifying the researchers to ensuring that testimonies represented all areas of the north to checking the comprehensiveness of the coverage of issues.

Moulavi B. Sufiyan was committed to getting the project off the ground and has been engaged with it since its inception. He was always useful in bringing people to engage with the commission and in organizing the sittings in Negambo, Jaffna, and Kilinochchi. Asghar Khan was extremely helpful throughout the project, giving logistical support when necessary in both Puttalam and the north, and providing guidance on where to go and whom to meet during our various field visits. Asghar Khan is responsible for the resounding success of the Commissioners’ first visit to Puttalam and for the most recent follow-up visit to Mannar. Mr. Khan’s familiarity with the geography and politics of the various areas that we visited, and the manner in which he shared that knowledge with the Commission, made the report richer. Juwairiya Mohamed planned the majority of the Commission sittings with women and ensured an excellent turnout. We would have missed some very important issues if not for Juwairiya’s constant and consistent engagement with the project. She rarely missed a meeting, either in Colombo or in Puttalam or in the north. Jensila Majeed, too, was consistently engaged and supportive and helped with the information provision from Mulaitiwwu. Shreen Saroor was an invaluable resource for the project. She planned the Commission visit to Mannar. The quality of the research and the report was improved overall by her keen awareness of the issues facing northern Muslims, her perspicacious criticisms of some of the positions taken up by the Commission secretariat, and the manner in which she pushed for more critical engagement.

The project was funded by the Cordaid Hivos joint program, as well as by the CCFD. Cordaid Hivos funded 70% of the first year of the project and the CCFD in fact stepped in at a time when the project was encountering some difficulties in raising the shortfall. The CCFD funded six months of the first phase of the project and a further year for the completion of the report. CCFD has committed to also fund another year of the project for the dissemination of the findings of the Commission. LST is grateful to the CCFD and especially to Sylvain Ropital for consistently engaging with the project, understanding its importance, and supporting the completion of the report through many delays.
The project benefited greatly from the skills of the staff. Kaneeza Fariz in Colombo and Haris Rashid in Puttalam coordinated the team of field researchers along with their desk research and testimony collection activities. Kaneeza was also very helpful in planning the logistics for all the Commission sittings and field visits. Anushka Fernando was with the Commission for a few months only but made an impact by helping draft many Commission documents. Nafiya Khalik joined the project late but has been invaluable due to her excellent Tamil skills and very competent handling of varied research, translation, formatting, and editing tasks during the completion of the report. The field researchers in Puttalam and the desk researchers in Colombo did an invaluable amount of work in gathering the data necessary for the investigation. Dilhara Pathirana kindly agreed to proofread and copyedit at extremely short notice and did an excellent job within a limited time period.

The project would not have been a possibility if not for the Law and Society Trust undertaking to support such an endeavor. Damaris Wickramasinghe, LST’s Executive Director during part of the project, B. Skanthakumar, acting Executive Director of LST for a period and now, Mala Liyanage, LST’s current Executive Director, have all been supportive of the project and recognized its importance. Special mention must be made of Mala Liyanage’s engagement with the project. She visited Mannar with the project staff and contributed to the current form of the report. Her support for the project has been of great value in the final phase of completing the report.

Finally, this report is written for the northern Muslim community. It would not have been a success if not for the hundreds of northern Muslims who spoke to us at the various meetings in Colombo, Negambo, Puttalam, Mannar, Jaffna, Vavuniya and Kilinochchi. We thank them for their time and attention, and we hope that this effort will be of some use in ensuring a future of peace, dignity and justice for them.

**Farzana Haniffa**
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Chapter One

Background and Methodology

Background

In October 1990, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) expelled the entire Muslim population of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. Within a period of 2 weeks the LTTE systematically chased out close to 75,000 Muslims residing in the districts of Kilinochchi, Mulaitiwu, Jaffna, Mannar, and Vavuniya.1 The LTTE’s expulsion of Muslims from five Northern districts has not been integrated adequately into any mainstream historical narrative in Sri Lanka. Most commentators routinely get the date of the expulsion wrong, and few give the expulsion the status it warrants, which is of a highly significant historical event.

Northern Muslim civil society leadership has worked hard to highlight the issue and has had to face numerous obstacles, including the disinterest of the larger civil society community in Sri Lanka. The Law & Society Trust, in partnership with three Northern Muslim organizations—Rural Development Foundation (RDF), People’s Secretariat (PS), and Community Trust Fund (CTF)—and an advisory group of prominent Muslim civil society actors, conducted a truth-seeking initiative in the form of a Citizens’ Commission. The objectives of the exercise were to produce authoritative documentation of the expulsion and its consequences in a record sanctioned by the community, and to list the community’s grievances in a document endorsed by a Commission consisting of eminent civil society actors. The Commission’s broadly defined terms of reference focused on a) the history of the expulsion, b) the experience of two decades of displacement, and c) experiences of resettlement.

The Law and Society Trust and the Commission

The LST’s involvement with the Citizens’ Commission project has a long history. The idea first emerged in 2003 with the transitional justice working group process. The peace process

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1 Dr. S.H. Hasbulla’s work has been the one exception. Hashulla a Northern Muslim himself and for a while, a member of the advisory group to the Commission participated in a survey of the expelled Muslim a year after the expulsion. The result was the invaluable volume *Muslim Refugees: The Forgotten People in Sri Lanka’* s Ethnic Conflict. This report and the Commission project itself owes much to the content of this book that provides invaluable information on the villages from which the Northern Muslims were driven out, and the journey away from the North under trying circumstances. It also provides information on the losses suffered by the community. The Work of Dr. Hasbulla and the more recent account by Dr. Catherine Brun are the only two comprehensive accounts of the Northern Muslim experience that can be considered to provide some significant insights into the expulsion and its consequences. While the Northern Muslim displacement experience is well researched it is unfortunately not done so in a manner that garners sympathy for the Northern Muslims within the Sri Lankan context. Section 2 of this report briefly engages with the reasons for this difference.
of 2002-2005 (which failed) still seemed to hold some promise at that time, and organizations were pursuing ideas of transitional justice with the assistance of the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ). Two issues that became clear during the failed peace process were the manner in which the Muslim community had been affected by the conflict, and the fact that this community had few fora, if any, to voice their grievances and expectations. The issues faced by northern Muslims seemed to be marginal, even within the discussion of Muslim issues that highlighted the suffering of Muslims from the Eastern Province. One of the ideas that emerged during that time was the possibility of engaging in some community-based transitional justice initiative for northern Muslims. In 2006, Dr. Farzana Haniffa, the current project manager and convenor, was commissioned by the ICTJ to conduct community consultations in Puttalam and to also hold some consultations with stakeholders in Colombo to ascertain if such a process would be useful to the community. A second round of consultations, undertaken with assistance from the Asia Foundation, specifically targeted women within the community. It is in the aftermath of these consultations that the LST began to seek funding for the project in 2007. The Northern Muslim Commission project was launched in 2008 with the assistance of CORDAID/HIVOS joint assistance program. While CORDAID/HIVOS provided almost 70% of the funding, the shortfall was covered by the French Catholic Committee Against Hunger & for Development (CCFD), a Church-based organization from France. CCFD also funded a second year of the Commission’s work, specifically for the report’s publication and dissemination, as well as for advocacy based on the report.

The Objectives of the Exercise

The northern Muslim displaced population in Puttalam has been the subject of a wide variety of research projects, MA dissertations, and a few PhD projects. Much of this attention may be explained by the fact that this group constitutes a displaced population that is accessible to local and foreign researchers because it is housed outside the conflict-affected provinces of the North and East. The North and East were often harder to access, sometimes even requiring clearance from the Ministry of Defence. While much of this work is interesting and valuable, it has not contributed significantly towards greater visibility for the northern Muslim issue at the policy level, either within Sri Lanka or internationally. This work has also not created greater state or civil society interest in addressing the problems faced by northern Muslims.

Much of this research, while otherwise excellent, is not sufficiently attentive to the manner in which Muslims’ position as a minority community, their marginalization in discussions about the conflict, have impacted the northern Muslims. Further, the manner in which the fairly recently asserted ethnic politics—while providing a platform from which to air Muslims’ grievances were also holding the Muslims politically captive—and are limiting the manner in which their issues can be articulated is not addressed in this literature. Additionally, most of this research overlooks Muslims’ history in the north and the politics between Muslims and Tamils in the history of the country. A Commission of this nature was expected to address these oversights. The further intention behind setting up the Commission was to provide a document that presents the expulsion and its consequences from the perspective of the
northern Muslims and has as its main focus the alleviation of the difficult conditions in which a majority of them live.

The purpose of the Commission therefore was twofold; first, to produce authoritative documentation about the expulsion and its consequences in the form of a report that is endorsed by a group of eminent activists and academics; and second, to produce this documentation through a participatory and inclusive process with members of the northern Muslim community in a manner that participating members of the community would feel a sense of ownership over the final report as well as the advocacy work that was done in their name. For reasons stated earlier, northern Muslims are all too familiar with researchers who come to meet them, few of whom have bothered to return and inform the community of the work done with their stories. The Commission was mindful of this problem and conducted all aspects of its work through a consultative process.

The Law and Society Trust worked in partnership with three northern Muslim organizations. Community Trust Fund (CTF), Rural Development Foundation (RDF), and People’s Secretariat (PS), were partners to the process and participated in almost all planning meetings held in Colombo and Puttalam. The Commission also called upon the expertise of an advisory group of northern Muslim activists including Shreen Saroor, Jensila Majeed, and Juwairiya Mohamed.

Methodology

1. Initial planning: Using funding from the International Center for Transitional Justice, Dr. Farzana Haniffa conducted consultations with the Muslim community of Colombo and with representatives of the psycho-social community on the feasibility and the usefulness of conducting a project of this nature with the northern Muslim community. Additionally Dr. Haniffa made several trips to Puttalam and met different segments of the northern Muslim community to ascertain their opinion on a truth-seeking project. The planning of the project was based on some of the findings from these consultations. In addition to the information gathered from these consultations, a further set of consultations was conducted with women members of the community to ascertain their perspectives on the expulsion and the return, and to find out if they considered a truth-seeking exercise useful. This process was funded by the Asia Foundation and resulted in the publication ‘Twice Removed: Northern Muslim women in Puttalam’ (LST Review Volume 19, Issue 250, 2008).

The ICTJ also sponsored Dr. Haniffa’s attendance at the launch of the Report on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Greensboro, North Carolina, which was itself a community-based truth and reconciliation exercise about an event in 1976 that had divided the community of Greensboro. The Greensboro process, as well as the community-based initiative that was conducted in Ardoyno, Northern Ireland, by the Ardoyno Commemoration Project, were both possible models for an initiative with the northern Muslims in Sri Lanka. However, upon reflection, Dr. Haniffa recommended planning the project with a slightly larger scope than those of either
Ardoyne (which consisted of a community of about 5000 persons), or Greensboro. Truth and reconciliation were fundamental concerns in the case of Greensboro. While truth and reconciliation were important in Sri Lanka, these concerns needed to be part of a larger national initiative and not confined to the limited purview of the current Commission. Therefore, the project in Sri Lanka emerged as a Citizens’ Commission of Investigation. However, the manner in which the Greensboro process was planned and set in motion, the staffing and logistical arrangements, the report writing etc., inspired the decisions made for the Citizens’ Commission as well.

In early 2007, Dr. Haniffa started initial discussions with groups in Puttalam about a possible partnership for a truth-seeking project. The informal meetings became the groundwork for the project. It was during this time that the document listing the Commission’s mandate was produced. (See Annex 2). The document broadly calls for an investigation into the expulsion, the displacement experience, and the experience of return. The document initiated at that time was maintained as an unfinished list of possible issues to be covered in order to permit the inclusion of issue that emerged while the Commission was conducting its investigations.

2. **Grounding the Project in the community:** One of the main intentions of the project was to ensure the involvement of the community in important decisions about its methods and its directions. The intellectual resources of the LST, as well as the international funding that the organization was able to harness, were utilized to frame the project and provide direction. However, all important decisions, such as the choice of which issues needed to be highlighted, and the manner in which data should be gathered to be representative of all Muslim communities of the north, were made by giving priority to the northern Muslim perspective. All project decisions were made at monthly planning meetings attended by the partner representatives and the LST Commission staff. An advisory group (comprising northern Muslim activists based in Colombo and Puttalam) was also consulted and invited for all planning meetings. After agreements were signed with the Commissioners, this group, too, was invited for the planning meetings. The logistical arrangements for the activities—for example, finding a rental space for the LST office in Puttalam, hiring northern Muslim staff in Puttalam to run the office, conducting the testimony collection etc.—were made with the partners directing the process. Interviews for the positions were held at the offices of the partner organization with the participation of partner representatives. All decisions were made by a panel consisting of the project convener and the partner representatives. Decisions about the location of Commission visits, as well as the identification of communities to be visited and invited to sittings, were made after consultation and in keeping with the needs identified by partner representatives and members of the advisory group. Planning meetings were held in Colombo throughout the duration of the project, and periodic visits were made to Puttalam by the secretariat staff to monitor the work of the Puttalam office and the data collection. In this manner, constant communication was maintained with the partners, the advisory group, the Commissioners, and the staff.
3. **Preparations for Data Gathering:** The Commission report is informed by three kinds of data: secondary data from newspapers and other publications; testimonies collected by researchers; and data from hearings at which Commissioners were present. As the project got underway, one of the first tasks was the collection of published information in all three languages. Three researchers were hired for a period of one month to collect all available documentation from Colombo-based research institutions, as well as to access the newspaper coverage of the expulsion in each of the three languages. This information was invaluable in politically and historically situating the issues covered in the report.

The testimony collection was done by 11 researchers based in Puttalam. It was decided collectively that the researchers would be educated young persons from Puttalam with—at a minimum—Advanced Level qualifications, some computer literacy, and work experience. It is expected that the skills and experience that they gained through the project will be of use to the community in the future. The researchers were expected to collect two testimonies per day for three days of the week and transcribe their collection on the remaining days. Dr. Hasbullah and Dr. Farzana Haniffa conducted three full-day training sessions with the researchers. The researchers were given exposure to the issues of importance to the northern Muslim community and to the importance of the task they were undertaking. They were also informed of ethical and psychosocial considerations, and instructed on how to administer the broad questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using (*Giving Voice—practical guidelines for implementing oral testimony projects*) published by the Panos Oral Testimony Program of the Panos Institute in London (See Annex 3). A broad format was utilized in order to capture not just Muslims’ expulsion and displacement experiences, but their impressions of the north in general and memories of their way of life. Researchers were asked to explain the nature of the project and the manner in which the information in their testimony will be used. The researchers were also instructed to obtain written permission to use the information in the testimonies; the interviewees were requested to sign a consent form. We also attempted to photograph each of those who gave testimonies. Many were happy for us to use their names but did not consent to the use of a photograph.

When considering ownership, the issue of representation also became important. The northern Muslim community consists of sub-communities from five different districts. Consequent to the expulsion some issues have merited representation on the basis of a collective northern Muslim identity. In some cases, this has led to the non-representation of the very different experiences of those from the different districts. Therefore, an effort was made to ensure that there was adequate representation of persons from all the districts in the composition of the research team, and additionally, that testimonies were obtained from as wide and representative a group of northern Muslim displaced persons as possible. The Commission collected 391 testimonies, interviewing and documenting 206 females and 185 males. Amongst this number were 26 individuals from the host community, 10 resettled people from
Jaffna, and one person from Mullaitivu. Four interviews were conducted with northern Muslim activists. Interviews were conducted with a further 12 individuals aged 12-15 years at the time of expulsion.

4. **Selection of Commissioners:** the composition of the Commission was of utmost importance to the success of the project. Therefore, a set of criteria was proposed at a planning meeting attended by the partners.

   The Commissioners should represent all ethnic communities

   Women should be represented in adequate numbers

   Commissioners should have a history of engagement with progressive causes

   Be sympathetic to the predicament of the northern Muslims.

   Represent a perspective that would enhance the findings of the Commission.

   They should not be politicians.

The names of possible Commissioners were suggested at a planning meeting. The following persons were nominated and accepted a place on the Commission.

- Mr. Javid Yusuf, Attorney-at-Law,
- Ms. Chulani Kodikara, Research Associate at ICES,
- Dr. Devanesan Nessay, former GA of Jaffna, Mannar & Batticaloa,
- Dr. M.S.M. Anes, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at University of Peradeniya,
- Dr. E. Santhirasegaram, Medical Doctor, Kalpitiya.
- Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Colombo,
- Dr. Nimalka Fernando, Attorney-at-Law and Women’s Rights Activist
- Dr. Catherine Brun, Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at University of Science & Technology (NTNU) in Norway
- Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Retired High Court Judge,

(See Annex 04 for a detailed profile of each Commissioner).

5. **Commission sittings:** Commission sittings were organized in keeping with the need to cover the issues identified as important in the terms of reference. One sitting was conducted in Colombo and another in Negombo to give persons in those areas a chance to meet the Commission. The rest of the sittings were held in Puttalam where a large percentage of the northern Muslims resided in displacement for almost twenty years. Some sitting were held in selected areas in the North.

The Commission process consisted of sittings conducted with the participation of at least one Commissioner. These included visits to Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Vavuniya,
6. **Writing the report:** A decision was taken at the outset that the work of writing the report—perhaps the most arduous task in the entire process—would be the responsibility of one person alone. The report of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, too, was written by one individual who worked as the Executive Editor of the project. In this case the report was written by Commission Convenor and Project Manager, Dr. Haniffa. This model was used to avoid the example of other local Citizens’ Commission initiatives that have petered out without a report as a result of not clearly demarcating the role of report writing. Therefore it was decided that while the Commissioners’ input would be sought at every instance, the major responsibility for the writing would rest more with the secretariat than with the Commissioners. In July 2010 an outline of a possible report was presented to the Commissioners, partners, and the advisory group. Feedback from this process was utilized and a second presentation was made nearly a year later to the Commissioners with a more detailed version of the report. The report, which incorporated feedback from the second meeting, was circulated to the Commission, partners, and the advisory group in September 2011, and a half-day seminar was conducted to incorporate their feedback into the report.

The Commission collected a wealth of information through testimonies, desk research, and Commission sittings. It was a challenge to do justice to this information in a manner that will shed light on the predicament of the northern Muslims as well as others, like the host community that was also profoundly impacted by the expulsion. The report, therefore, is long and consists of eleven chapters.

**The chapter headings are as follows:**

1. The Commission on the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province: Background and Methodology
2. Writing the Northern Muslims into History
3. The Social and Political Context of the Displacement
4. Life in the North during Wartime
5. Expulsion Stories
6. State Response to the Expulsion and Twenty Years of Displacement.
7. Specificity of Northern Muslims’ Displacement Experience
8. Host Community Perspective on Northern Muslim Arrival and Settlement
Chapter One

9. The Loss of a Way of Life

10. Return and Resettlement

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapters 4, 5, and 9 were drawn entirely from northern Muslims’ accounts of life in the north. These chapters illustrate the manner in which Muslim communities, too, were affected by the fighting between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan military, the clashes between militants and the Indian Peace Keeping Force, and the conflicts amongst the many militant groups. We also wanted to include expulsion stories from as many different locations as possible to illustrate both the uniformities – they were all expulsion orders – as well as the significant differences. For example, Muslims in Jaffna were allowed very little time to move out from the area. Information was organized in keeping with the terms of reference and the findings. Our aim was to articulate the very different experiences of people from the 5 districts from which Muslims were expelled. Therefore, in many chapters that deal with life in the north prior to the expulsion in addition to focusing on the expulsion experience itself, great care has been taken to represent as many perspectives from the different districts as possible. The more thematically-driven chapters are organized according to the issues.

7. Ethical considerations: as stated earlier, the testimony collection process included a consent form that was to be signed by interviewees. We recorded their basic information as well as their consent or refusal of consent on this form. Most chapters use individuals’ real names and places of origin. We have refrained from using real names in certain cases where we felt that the disclosure of an interviewee’s real name may have negative consequences for him or her. We have exercised our own discretion in assessing the possible risk to individuals despite being given permission to use their real names.

8. Some limitations: We chose the process of mobilization and of informing people through the community based groups, rather than using newspaper advertisements to recruit interviewees. The thinking behind the use of this approach was that it would reinforce the participatory aspect of the project. We wanted to enter communities by way of our partners, and also to save on the cost of newspaper advertisements. In retrospect, it may have been better to have employed both methods since, on some occasions, our partner representatives were not as effective in informing people about the project as we had anticipated.

The quality of the information and testimonies is not uniform, and some places may seem to be better illustrated than others. Many of the examples that illustrate the chapters were drawn from both the testimonies and the Commission sittings. The testimonies also varied in terms of quality, depending on the researcher collecting the testimony, as well as on the respondent’s own level of interest in the interview and skill at narrating the events of his or her life. Translation posed problems, not least because, due to budgetary concerns, most of the people who did our translation work were not professionals. Therefore some testimonies were clearer and seemed to offer
richer narratives than others, and these were used more often than others. Because this was a fact-finding exercise, we used people’s names when picking examples from the testimonies. Some of the same names appear quite frequently in the report, but this should not be taken to mean bias towards any one perspective over others. In our coding of testimonies we attempted to include as many different perspectives as possible on any given issue.

The Commission has not captured the perspective of the local Tamil community that witnessed the Muslims moving out and that also experienced the destruction of their shared community life. This community was also compelled to continue to live under the yoke of the LTTE. This important omission occurred as the issue did not emerge in any of the early discussions that were conducted with the relevant stakeholders. There was a call to capture the LTTE’s reasoning behind the expulsion, but not the experience of Tamil neighbours.

**Socio-political context in which the work was conducted**

While the project was in the pipeline for a very long time, the actual activities were not undertaken for various reasons until well into 2009. The country’s political landscape was changing rapidly during that time and a feeling of uncertainty prevailed. The war was close to being won by the security forces when the first testimonies were being collected, and a mood of cautious optimism prevailed among northern Muslims in Puttalam and elsewhere. The Commission sittings commenced in August 2009 when the government had claimed a military victory over the LTTE and many were anticipating the dividends of peace. The possibility of return seemed close and, for the first time since the expulsion, the LTTE was no longer a factor and the re-establishment of Muslim communities in the North seemed imminent.

However, many were soon disappointed. There was international attention and pressure on the government to resettle the massive numbers of people displaced during the government’s final military engagement with the LTTE. Nearly 300,000 people were confined to camps under extremely egregious conditions, and the government priority was seen to be the settlement of the “new IDPs”. The old IDPs, those displaced prior to the 2008 escalation of military activity, seemed to disappear from the government’s priorities. No government statement or policy directive seemed to take the old IDPs into account. This was true of both the government and international aid agencies. In fact, the UNHCR signed an agreement with the government to provide cash assistance to returning IDPs who were displaced after 2008. The northern Muslims, numbering close to 200,000 people, constituted the bulk of the old IDPs, although they were not the only community in this category. The High Security Zone of Jaffna --- that includes the areas of Manipay, and Tellipila--- and those displaced from the area also constituted an old IDP issue that the government showed little interest in addressing.

As a consequence of the above conditions, many of the northern Muslims who gave testimonies to the Commission researchers emphasized their problems within the current
context. What choices were they being compelled to make? What was the situation in the north? What were their rights in their places of origin? What were their rights in the place where they had been living for twenty years? Central to many narratives were problems concerning infrastructure, rations, and engagement with the Tamil community. Greater effort and more sustained engagement were required to elicit information about other issues. Northern Muslims’ testimonies were collected as responses to a set of questions, and this strategy helped bridge the gap in information.

Community Interventions by the Citizens’ Commission Project:

Three newsletters were produced in English and Tamil, and one in Sinhala, during the project period. The primary objective of the newsletter was to produce some information on Commission activities, mid-project, to share with the northern Muslim community in Puttalam and elsewhere. Later, we decided to use the newsletter as a wider advocacy tool to popularize the northern Muslim issue among the wider Sri Lankan society. The first newsletter was produced entirely in Tamil. The second was produced in Tamil and in English, and the third was completed in all three languages with selected articles fully translated into Sinhala. Commission convener Dr. Farzana Haniffa presented a portion of the Commission’s findings to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) in November 2010. This was followed up with a letter outlining more recent developments in April 2011.

The opening of the Mannar Puttalam road through the Wilpattu wildlife sanctuary was a very important development for the northern Muslims. However, its opening was contested by animal rights and environmental activists. The Commission made an intervention by releasing a statement asking for greater consideration of the rights of communities that have traditionally lived close to or sometimes inside the sanctuary and have a long history of coexistence with the environment without posing any danger to the animals or to the jungle (see Annex 6 for the statement).

Commission researcher Anushka Fernando (researcher with the Commission from May - August 2010) wrote an article on the importance of the road. The article can be found at: http://groundviews.org/2010/08/26/where-do-they-go-from-here/

The Commission Secretariat

The Commission Secretariat was located within the premises of the Law and Society Trust office in Colombo. The staffing of the Commission during its first full year of engagement with the community consisted of Project Manager and Convener, Dr. Farzana Haniffa, Project Coordinator (Colombo), Ms. Kaneza Faris, Project Coordinator (Puttalam), Mr. Haris Rasheed, and the Researchers, Ms. S.M. Ilmunissa, Mr. N.M. Imas, Ms. S.H.S. Janna, Mr. N.M. Rameez, Mr. M. H. M. Sabreen, Ms. A.H.S. Sifaniya, Ms. S.H. Zareena Begum, Mr. M.G. Jamees, Ms. J. Jamila, Ms. T.F. Jeneera, and M.S.M. Musthakeem.
Conclusion

One of the most striking features of almost all the meetings attended and the sittings held during the Commission process was the energy and the enthusiasm with which people engaged with the Commission. Some of the engagements were marked by undertones of impatience and frustration. Because many of those who spoke with the Commission had related their story to many others prior to this engagement, these interviewees were wondering why so little had changed for them, regardless of the number of people who had heard their stories. People uniformly had a lot to say, in addition to airing many grievances and sharing many memories and experiences. They demanded that we make the government pay attention to them. As one of the Commissioners stated in the aftermath of a hearing, it was clear that these people’s energy had not been mobilized much ineffective activism. It is within such a context that this project emerged. We hope that the report and the advocacy resulting from it will help to improve the lives of all the northern Muslims who contributed their time and energy towards this endeavour. We also hope that the report, which will be translated into Tamil and Sinhala, will help improve the community’s own strength and ability to conduct advocacy work.
Chapter Two

Writing the Northern Muslims into History

The Citizens’ Commission exercise was entered into upon the realization that the northern Muslim expulsion had received insufficient scholarly, critical and policy attention within the larger discussion of the country’s ethnic conflict. Therefore, the organizers felt that the documentation exercise of the Commission was an essential and urgent one. During the Commission’s work, members of the Commission and organizers routinely encountered instances where the documentation and references made to the expulsion were either inadequate or based on misinformation. However, the past twenty years has produced some stellar attempts at researching the expulsion and its consequences, and this work, which has contributed to the greater understanding of the event, merits mention. This report will be incomplete if the Commission does not make some reference to these seminal works.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive literature review; it attempts only to survey what the Commission considers the most important contributions to the field. The criteria for selecting the works mentioned below are scholarly rigor, documentation of the experience, and insight into the politics behind the expulsion. Some of this research is several years old. For instance, Dr. S. H. Hasbullah has been writing about the expulsion since the early 1990s, and it was in 1991 that he and his team conducted the Refugee Survey on which much of his writing is based. The English language publication of Dr. Hasbullah’s that is referenced here was released in 2000. Publications by Zackariya and Shanmugaratnam (2002), and Shanmugaratnam (2001) are slightly newer. Dr. Catherin Brun’s PhD research was published in 2008. The Commission, which commenced its activities in 2009, has observed since then the emergence of several other noteworthy reports and publications. Most notable among these are two chapters of Sharika Thiranagama’s forthcoming book, In My Mother’s House. As will be discussed below, Thiranagama produces a nuanced analysis of the manner in which the expulsion indexes the fundamental failure of Tamil nationalism to account for the expulsion, thereby addressing one of the most important calls of the Commission – to adequately integrate the expulsion into the narrative of the Sri Lankan conflict. The report of Musali (2010) produced for one of the Commission’s partner organizations (the Community Trust Fund) by Anberiya Hanifa and Mujibur Rahman is important because of the manner in which it highlights the specificity of the Musali experience and the contemporary needs of the returning population. In addition, a recent article by A.R.M. Imtiaz and M.C.M. Iqbal (2010) although containing some factual errors, provides an important point of reference for the latest occurrences since the end of the conflict in 2009. The authors flag some important issues about land in the north that the Commission too plans to highlight.

We will begin by recognizing the importance of Dr. Hasbullah’s research. His main English language contribution is titled, Muslim Refugees, The forgotten people in Sri Lanka’s Ethnic conflict. The slim volume, commissioned by a northern Muslim organization (The Puttalam-
Writing the Northern Muslims into History

based Research and Action Forum for Social Development—RAAF), aims to “record the history of the northern Muslims up to the present, tracing it from their origins in this country to the present where the abject conditions of their existence as refugees/displaced people within their own country speaks volumes about the crying need to rethink entrenched ideas about monolithic nations and communities” (Hasbullah, 1993, p. 2). In terms of a more specific goal, the book claims to be an introduction to the seven-volume study, Report on the Losses of Moveable and Immovable Assets of the Muslim Displaced Forcibly Evicted from the northern Province of Sri Lanka in October 1990. The book describes the 1991 Refugee Survey conducted by Hasbullah and others to document the lost assets of the northern Muslims, particularly the manner in which the survey collected information from nearly 9,000 households—almost two-thirds of the displaced community. This information represents a valuable archive of material that is worthy of further analysis. According to the book, a report utilizing part of this data was produced in 1992 and submitted to the Parliament of Sri Lanka.

The Muslim Refugees (Hasbullah, 2001) volume served as an important resource for the Commission activities since it offered valuable information, both about the villages in the north from which the Muslims were expelled and the manner in which refugee or IDP settlements were organized in Puttalam. The volume outlines the ancient history of Muslims in the northern province, providing information from records of the Portuguese administrators, and from later Dutch and British officials, that refer to Muslim trading, fishing, and farming activities, as well as to archeological evidence that points to Muslim settlements in the area. As for many other writers, for Hasbullah, too, the Baobab tree becomes an important marker of ancient Muslim and Arab presence in the Mannar area. According to oral histories, the Baobab served as food for camels from the camel caravans that were plying the ancient trade routes and carrying Arab traders—ancestors of the current Muslims—in the area. Testimonies from northern Muslims attest to the still-persisting Arab connections claimed by the northern Muslims.2

A section of the book attempts to delineate the socio-economic history of the five districts of the northern province from which the Muslims were expelled by the LTTE. It provides important reference information on the villages from which the Muslims were driven out, and, based on the Refugee Survey, provides some handy numbers (used by the current report) on the livelihood activities of Jaffna Muslims, for instance information on those who were concentrated in the Moor street area. In the section on Mullaitiwu the book provides information on the number of acres of fertile agricultural land owned by the Muslims, as well as some insight into the nature of people’s livelihood activities. Hasbullah provides an excellent detailed and nuanced account of the presence of Muslims in the Mannar Island—his own birth place. Some of this account is worth quoting at length.

2 The residents of Nachchikudah in the Kilinochchi district claimed that their village was one of the first Arab settlements in the country and many individuals claimed direct Arab ancestry.
Muslims of Mannar Island were engaged in trade and commerce, service, fishing and other sea and farm activities. About 90 percent of the total occupational activities of the Muslims of Mannar island falls into the above four categories of occupation according to (Refugee Survey), 1991. More than 50 percent of the household heads said that they were engaged in some kind of commercial activity. The activities included keeping groceries, restaurants and boutiques in a town or village, buying and selling, hawking, working as sales persons, transporters of both fresh and dried fish, agriculture and finished products. Commercial activities were mostly carried outside the village. (Hasbullah, 2001, p. 26)

Muslims had a higher percentage of engagement in the trade and commercial activities of the Mannar bazaar compared to that of the other communities. Mannar town and its bazaar served a large population of the people who hailed from the Mannar district and from parts of the Kilinochchi district. The Mannar bazaar was the business hub in the region for commodities of all sorts, both wholesale and retail. Muslims of Mannar owned about 61% of businesses in the Mannar bazaar before the expulsion. The Mannar bazaar functioned as a commercial Center from the early period of British rule. Muslims dominated the bazaar’s commercial activities for a long time. (Hasbullah, 2001, p. 29)

The Mannar district represents the area with the largest concentration of Muslims in the Northern Province. As such, the area is delineated as three specific locations: 1. Mannar Island, 2. Musali DS division located in the southern part of the Mannar district, 3. Nanadan and Manthai DS divisions where Muslims lived was located in the north western parts of the district. The account also features the presence of Muslims in the Mannar Bazaar and the fact that they controlled 60% of the businesses in Mannar town on Mannar Island.

The scattered but important population of Muslims in the Vanni region – the Kilinochchi and Vavuniya districts - are also discussed. The document is essential reading for insight into the nature of Muslim settlements and their geographical distribution in the north. Clear maps provide visual orientation to the Muslim settlements.

Hasbullah’s account is also useful in presenting a particular northern Muslim perspective on the relocation assistance provided in the early 1990s. The Ministry of Resettlement (under M.H.M Ashraff) provided a relocation package as an incentive for IDPs to move out of welfare centers into more permanent housing. Hasbullah does not comment on this, except to say that there is very little qualitative difference between the various differently labeled housing occupied by the displaced at the time of his research. It is important to note that elsewhere in the literature, the relocation assistance by the Ministry of Resettlement is uniformly praised (Shanmugaratnam 2000, Brun 2008). It is only in Hasbullah that we find

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3 A significant percentage of those displaced from Vavuniya, fortunately were able to return fairly early. The Kilinochchi population from the ancient villages of Nachchikuda for instance went back periodically according to the findings of the Commission but could not resettle until after the end of the war in 2009.
the necessary qualification that discusses the substandard environmental conditions. Hasbullah states that the majority of refugee resettlements can be found on land categorized as unsuitable for cultivation or human settlements according to the Puttalam District Land Use Map. (Hasbullah, 2000, p. 77) A majority of refugee settlements stand on either “marshy, barren or scrub lands” that get inundated during the rainy season and swept by dust deposits from the nearby cement factory (Hasbullah, 2000, p. 64). In an end note Hasbullah offers the example of Thillayadi which is a marshy area where the flood waters reach the sea. This is a malaria-infested area, and prior to the arrival of the IDPS, local residents of Puttalam made no attempt to settle there. Now it is densely populated with refugees (Hasbullah, 2000, p. 90).

The most significant contribution of Hasbullah’s slim volume is the documentation of northern Muslims’ loss of assets. Although this is the most significant aspect of the book and the work of documentation (the Refugee Survey) that was conducted in the immediate aftermath of the expulsion, it is also an issue that has received little recognition in later discussions of the Northern Muslims. It is often forgotten and rarely mentioned in accounts of the northern Muslim expulsion that the Muslims were forced to leave without prior notice and without the possibility of making any arrangements to transfer assets, close down businesses, change household addresses, and move household goods from one place to another. According to the testimony of one person who spoke to the Commission, the Muslims left “While the food was cooking on the fire.” There was no opportunity to either close down functioning business establishments or dispose of goods in business premises or sell off stored paddy stocks or harvest crops that were ready for harvesting or sell or transport livestock. People left, as many told us, with the clothes on their backs. It seems as if the expulsion was so sudden and so shocking that people had little opportunity to either process the enormity of the order to leave or to realize what most important aspect of their life they should take away with them. Additionally, as many of the expulsion stories indicated, the LTTE specifically told Muslims not to take any goods with them—that all that was earned from the land belonged to them (the LTTE/Tamils) since the land was theirs. The Muslims were not able to return to what they had left behind within a reasonable time frame in order to salvage what they could. They locked the doors on their assets when they left, often handing the keys to their neighbors or to LTTE cadres for safekeeping. Many stated in their testimonies that they had expected to return fairly soon—within a week, a month, or maybe 2-3 months. They had not expected to wait twenty years to return.

Hasbullah’s work documents these losses—entire lives of labour and toil reflected in the things that the Muslims left behind. Their assets and livelihoods which in large measure defined who they were had to be left behind. For instance, Muslims of the North left behind—among other things—514 small groceries; 64 large groceries; 14 beef stalls; 15 fish stalls; 24 grinding mills; 427 tea rooms; 91 eating places; 81 bakeries; 137 rice mills; 285 tailoring establishments; 152 textile shops; and 39 jewellery shops. (Hasbullah, 2000, p. 97).

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4 M.I.M Mohideen conducted a similar exercise of documenting land claims of the northern Muslims in 2004.
We can assume that most of these businesses were closed down suddenly in one day. The owners rarely knew what had happened to their businesses after they had left them—indeed, it is unclear as to what happened to those establishments and the valuables stored in them. One of the many tragedies of the expulsion was that few outside the community understood the enormity and the specificity of the expulsion experience, which was the complete and immediate destruction of a way of life. Few have given enough credence to the documentation of the loss of assets undertaken in 1991. This experience of loss can be equated to the devastation of the ethnic riots of 1983, when Tamil homes were deliberately targeted by organized Sinhala mobs; another comparison is the destruction of property and community that took place as a result of the Tsunami of December 2004. Unfortunately, the destruction that overtook the North since then—the havoc of two decades of incessant warfare—eclipses the tragedy of the Muslims. However, the fact that this country has been unfortunate enough to experience these multiple tragedies should not blind anyone to the specific suffering brought about through the expulsion.

N. Shanmugaratnam’s essay, “Forced Migration and Changing Local Political Economies: A study from North Western Sri Lanka” (2000), is excellent and well-presented research on the manner in which long-term displacement changes the local political economy. The article attempts to move away from an overly-ethnicized representation of the IDP experience, its title making no reference to the fact that it deals with the displaced northern Muslim community and with the location of Puttalam. This is unfortunate since the article is not easily discernible as one of the foundational works on the northern Muslim displacement experience. The article also does not draw too much attention to the specificity of the experience on the basis of ethnicity. Specificity is articulated in the distinction between displacement within the war zone and outside the war zone. This is an important distinction, particularly because it has significant material consequences. The case of Puttalam—North Western Sri Lanka—is defined by the fact that it is clearly a place outside the war zone and thus not subject to the deprivation and difficulties related to both security and livelihoods that are faced by those living within the war zone. For instance, Puttalam IDP experience is not shaped by either the limitations placed on movement for those living in the north or the difficulties of a strained economy impacted by the uncertainties and instability of the conflict. However, the article does not draw attention to an equally important distinction—the fact that displaced Tamils did not share (in the same way at least) the uncertainties about return that arose for Muslims with their expulsion. The expulsion undermined Muslims’ legitimacy as residents of the north, but the article does not make any reference to this fact. As stated earlier, this otherwise excellent article is similar to a lot of research that does not adequately situate the northern Muslim experience within the larger politics of the conflict.

As the title of Shanmugaratnam’s article indicates, the monograph maps the manner in which the presence of a large group of IDPs—who almost doubled the area’s population—transformed the local economy. Shanmugaratnam describes in minute detail the specific changes that occurred over a ten-year period in the village of Alankuda in the Kalpitiya peninsula. Shanmugaratnam’s extremely textured and nuanced description of the changing socio-economic conditions of both the IDPs and the hosts in the Alankuda area of Kalpitiya...
was recognized at the time as drawing attention to the fact that situations of displacement have implications beyond those of humanitarian emergencies (Bastian 2002).

The monograph explains in detail the manner in which the arrival of the IDPs contributed to the ongoing changes in the area, as well as the ways in which the IDPs’ integration into the local economy transformed both the local community and the IDPs’ situation. Due to the collapse of onion cultivation in Jaffna and the suitability of the crop for cultivation through lift irrigation in the Kalpitiya area, an “onion boom” emerged briefly in the Kalpitiya area. During that time many locals utilized cheaply available IDP labour to make their fortunes. Shanmugaratnam notes in fact that the presence of IDPs addressed the severe labour shortage in the area.

The article also discusses the change in land ownership patterns and land usage patterns after the arrival of the northern Muslims. Through an initiative of the Kumaratunge government, IDPs were given incentives to relocate to more permanent housing outside IDP camps. Shanmugaratnam recognizes the benefits that this scheme brought for IDP communities. However, it also brought about a substantial demand for housing land. This in turn led to the transformation of much agricultural land into housing land, the development eventually leading to changes in the area’s land usage and ownership patterns.

Relocation changed the status of the displaced from being ‘temporary guests’ to that of de facto permanent residents. It gave them the social anchorage to re-build communities and form group identities. It provided a more stable basis for social interaction and integration across group distinctions based on places of origin. At the same time, relocation became the major driving force of a land boom with mixed consequences to both IDPs and locals in Alankuda. (Shanmugaratnam, 2001, p. 33)

The land boom that resulted from the relocation scheme rendered many Puttalam residents landless, and the community lost the usage of valuable agricultural and grazing land. The land boom also resulted in many corrupt land sales. (Shanmugaratnam, 2001, p. 33)

The relocation program of the Ministry of settlement, in conjunction with some not totally legal capital accumulation activities such as the ration card pawning business and the land speculation led to the growth of groups of wealthy IDPS. Others pooled their considerable skills in fishing with the capital of local entrepreneurs to develop themselves. Through this process land became commoditized in new ways creating a great demand for housing land. Some of these developments led to the further marginalization of the local poor of the areas as well as the IDPs (Shanmugaratnam, 2001, p.36).

The displaced also started fishing in the lagoon, thus greatly increasing the numbers fishing in the area and compounding both the loss of income for locals and the threat of over fishing.

The monograph also describes in detail the distressing phenomenon of ration coupon pawning. Many displaced camp leaders and traders benefited from the practice amongst more
vulnerable displaced persons, of pawning their ration books for much-needed cash. The displaced themselves recognized that this was one of the most common ways in which some displaced people became rich after the expulsion. Shanmugaratnam describes the manner in which the most vulnerable people suffered from food insecurity during the time of his research. The poor locals lost out to the IDPs in terms of the cost of labour—IDP women worked for less, since their income was supplemented by dry rations from the government. The IDP poor lost out in pawning rations to fulfill severe cash shortages and the compulsion to utilize their labour to meet their food needs. Much of this remains true even today. The only difference is that the ration has been discontinued (Shanmugaratnam, 2001, p.44-46).

The article also discusses the fact that the community, although seemingly well integrated economically, does not have the right to vote in the area. There are many consequences to the IDPs’ inability to vote, including not qualifying for local jobs, and not being able to form organizations that are recognized by the state as local organizations because they are not registered as local residents. The article presents an interesting perspective on the issue of IDPs registering as voters of the Puttalam district. It mentions that the IDPs do not have the option of registering but does not state in what rule, law or circular this prohibition is contained.

The article also briefly mentions the manner in which women’s roles and the status of dowry have changed as a consequence of the displacement. The north placed a lot of emphasis on the education of girl children, but this was not the case in Puttalam, especially in the Alankuda area. The local community’s reticence about women’s education was echoed in the displaced community as well. The account also states that dowry practices which were more common in the north than in Puttalam spread rapidly to the Puttalam community as well.

The article also draws attention to and articulates issues that remain pertinent to date. One of these issues is the question of titles to the land that many IDPs bought in the Alankuda area. The land sold to IDPs was generally owned by the local community through either the Swarnabhumi or Jayabhumi state land grant schemes. Ownership of this land can only be transferred with the certification of the relevant District Secretary. These procedures were not followed in many cases, and the documentation of ownership held by many IDPs may not be legally binding. In fact, the findings of the Commission indicated that this was a widespread problem in Puttalam, and that it was not localized within the Kalpitya area alone.

As already stated, the article provides a useful account of IDPs’ integration within the local economy, but does not understand their predicament in terms of the possibility of return or the tragedy of the expulsion.

Zackariya and Shanmugaratnam’s essay, “Stepping out: women surviving amidst displacement and deprivation” (2002) is one of the earliest (and rare) articles dealing with the experience of women who faced the expulsion. It outlines the manner in which women’s lives have become transformed through the displacement experience. The spatial arrangements of displaced camps meant loss of privacy. Further, spatial regulations that existed in the places of origin—differently demarcated male and female spaces that facilitated
practices of purdah—no longer existed. The lack of a gendered spatial arrangement meant that traditional male spaces were no longer sacrosanct. For instance, because the mosque is located very close to the households, women can overhear matters discussed at the mosque and can respond to any of that information. Further, the limited availability of employment for men compels women to seek employment. In many instances, men in the families have no jobs at all. It is under these conditions that many of the poorest among the displaced—a significant majority—are compelled to live.

Dealing with the poorest and most marginalized Muslim women who are compelled to work as day wage labourers in the Kalpitiya onion fields, the article outlines the manner in which the experience changes the women’s own perception of their place in the world. Ironically, the proliterianisation of women creates the conditions for greater engagement with the outside world.

“I have had no formal schooling, and hence I am not educated. But I have learnt a lot by moving and sharing experiences with other women. I have come out into the world to work for a wage, to do things that I have not done before, and handle problems that I have not known before. All these have given me a real education.” (Zakariya & Shanmugaratnam, 2002, p. 6)

Additionally, the monograph discusses the manner in which women learned to both understand their common problems and consider the possibility of bargaining collectively, and thereby organize themselves. It describes one instance in which women were able to gain a wage increase from their employer. In another instance, it mentions women organizing in spite of the mosque committee expressing displeasure at the formation of women’s groups. Zackariya and Shanmugaratnam see this instance as women learning a new language to address their problems – the articulation of rights. According to the monograph, the presence of NGOs like the Community Development Organization that engages in gender awareness training and women’s development work also contributes to the development of women’s awareness as well as to the value of organizing.

However, changes in gender roles can result in great stress within families when men feel threatened and emasculated. This is recognized as such by the women. As one woman stated,

“I think men have become more violent after we came here, because they are frustrated with no proper jobs to do and their own devalued status here among the locals. Men have also started drinking after coming here. We never had this problem before.” (Zakariya & Shanmugaratnam, 2002, p. 23)

The monograph states that these women experience domestic violence—both physical and psychological. Further, men and the mosque committees often invoke religion, culture and tradition to undervalue women’s work. The article also demonstrates that male authority figures were routinely dismissive of women. This was true of the camp committee and the Mosque committees of the camps that were composed of male elders from the villages, and it occurred when the women approached them to solve domestic issues. This was also true of
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the GS whom they had to engage with for all their administrative matters, from collecting rations to obtaining identity cards, and birth and marriage certificates and other routine administrative certifications.

The article also points to the increase in female labour migration to the Middle East.

Catherin Brun’s publication, *Finding a Place: Local Integration and Protracted Displacement in Sri Lanka* (2008), also draws on fieldwork conducted during the same period as Zackariya and Shanmugaratnam above, although it was published much later.

Brun’s study focuses on the question of local integration – a pertinent one, given the lapse of time since the expulsion. Recognizing that a period of nearly ten years of displacement brings substantial changes, both to the lives of the displaced as well to the places to which they have been relocated, Brun poses the following questions – What is integration? And when does displacement end?

Brun documents the manner in which International Agencies defined the IDPs as integrated, chiefly the World Food Program in 2001 and the Danish Refugee Council in 2000. According to Brun, many of these organizations understand integration as economic self-reliance—when an IDP has a job and is able to survive on the earnings of that job, he or she is considered to be adequately integrated into the place of displacement. Brun states that due to government policies and IDPs’ and host communities’ choices about their administrative status, IDPs have neither the same political rights as the host community nor rights of access to fishing grounds nor government jobs. Brun sees this as indicating that IDPs are not yet integrated into the Puttalam community. The UN and NGO positions on IDP integration seem to be a response only to the aid-dependent status of an individual and not to the many other factors that contribute towards leading a life of dignity in the context of displacement. As Brun also points out elsewhere, the category of Internally Displaced Persons or IDP may itself be contributing to a limited access to such rights. In Sri Lanka to date, IDPs are considered residents of their places of origin and therefore not entitled to the benefits of citizenship in the areas of displacement (Brun, 2003).

Brun documents the IDPs’ dependence on the area’s Grama Niladhari to receive rations and to register deaths, births and marriages. Regardless of their status as residents of the north, the day-to-day lives of the IDPs were interconnected with the local administrative structures. When the Secretariat for Northern Displaced Muslims (established in 2006 and not mentioned in Brun’s work because it was set up after her main fieldwork period) took over these daily administrative tasks, it made the IDPs even less connected to the local area.

Brun also describes the manner in which representatives elected by the Northern Muslims were unable to do much for the welfare of the northern Muslims in Puttalam due to the fact that the Jaffina administration refused to release the money to him saying that it was for the
place and not necessarily for the people – it was for the development of the North and not for Jaffna.5

The settlement process that occurred in the mid 1990s—from 1995 onwards—is an event that changed the nature of the displacement experience for a large majority of IDPs. Brun’s work captures important elements of the larger politics of settlement patterns, as well as of the changing ethnic balance of areas that have also influenced the IDPs’ integration into Puttalam. The settlements uniformly occurred as a consequence of IDPs purchasing land and then using the Unified Assistance Scheme grant to build their houses. However, as already discussed in Shanmugaratnam (date), land purchasing occurred without the required consent of the administration to transfer Swarnabhumi and Jayabhumi lands. Brun’s material states that such permission would not have been granted if requested. One other issue singled out for comment by both writers is the fact that the settlements were not done on government-assigned land. All purchases were private purchases. Grants of government land would not have been made on the basis that grants for such a large community of persons would change the ethnic composition of the area. The 13th amendment to the Constitution in fact prohibits granting lands to persons outside their district of origin (CPA, 2003, P. 30).

In a related point, the Unified Assistance Scheme (set in motion under the Chandrika Kumaratunge Government when M.H.M. Ashraff was Minister of Resettlement) facilitated the formulation of settlements for the most part. However, Brun notes that the Scheme was suspended in 2000 on the grounds that hitherto it will be available only for settlements within the districts from which people were displaced.

In relation to the settlements’ spatial segregation from the villages of the hosts, Brun also notices that the segregation is not necessarily a bad thing and does not indicate a failure to integrate. The communities interact in some spaces and purchase goods in one another’s stores, and people pass through settlements instead of around them. However, the settlements remain unrecognized as entities in the Puttalam area and are unserviced by the local municipality, as we found during Commission sittings. To a large extent services such as roads, water connections and electricity are provided by the Ministry of Rehabilitation, not the local authority. This element is not sufficiently addressed by Brun in her analysis of integration and the administration.

5 Unfortunately there is very little documentation in any of the literature about the more recent years, especially those under the administration of Minister Risharth Bathiudeen. During his time a special administrative unit – the Secretariat for Northern Displaced Muslims (SNDM)—was established. This institution which was directly under the Ministry of Resettlement and essentially under the control of the Minister, took over the administrative functions of the GN. Additionally a significant amount of infrastructure construction from a variety of areas of the budget of the Ministry was spent in Puttalam. Additionally the World Bank housing project to build 6000 houses under the NIAPP scheme for the north was established. See Chapter 6.
As in Shanmugaratnam’s analysis, Brun recognizes that the settlements gave the displaced a much-needed sense of ownership and control over their lives. This did not necessarily mean that the dream of return was abandoned, but people were able to construct lives of dignity and meaning in a context of displacement and uncertainty about their future. In addition to pursuing the question of integration, Brun also provides a massive amount of detailed information on the northern Muslim displacement experience.

In relation to women’s work, Brun sees women’s labour in the onion fields as an indication of enhanced mobility for women who, when in the north, would rarely leave their houses or family compounds. However, few displaced women see this as positive; all lamented what they perceived as the loss of status, respect and dignity as a consequence of having to work for others. They preferred the manner in which they used to work—cultivating and laboring on their own lands (Brun, 2008, p. 208 & 209).

Brun also refers to the dowry economy, describing its greater inflation after displacement and deprivation. Dowry is considered one of the few avenues for restoring lost assets and, accordingly, reflects unreasonable rates of inflation. Brun also presents some evidence of certain displaced families that were very enterprising and planned strictly for the future educational and dowry needs of their children. The research includes an extensive discussion of the displaced using previously established networks to survive in a situation where they had lost their former status and economic endeavors were not successful.

Brun also discusses a perception amongst the displaced of a serious leveling process that took place with the expulsion when everyone lost everything. However, the hierarchies were re-established not long after—sometimes based on economic success and sometimes on other issues such as possessing valued skills like proposal writing. Migration, Brun notes, is considered one of the few options—like dowry—to restore lost assets.

Encounters between IDPs and hosts continue to be difficult and acrimonious, in spite of many good developments of integration. Recent host community claims regarding rights violations due to northern Muslims’ arrival and settlement, and the manner in which the community is organizing itself to present its concerns, are developments that merit greater attention. As the Commission also recognized in its findings, the hosts feel as if they have lost out through the arrivals of IDPs and urged the Commission to find some way of recommending compensation for host communities that feel unduly aggrieved as a consequence of the IDPs’ arrival.

In response to her initial question “When does displacement end?”, Brun suggests that displacement does not end, as some agencies feel, with achieving economic self-sufficiency in terms of food alone. Her work also flags as important the need for a place in society within the new context and the possibility of imagining a future with dignity in that place.

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6 See also Haniffa (2008) for further discussions on this point.
Additionally, she has rightly understood that the involvement of policy makers— at the level of the state and the local authorities— is important for integration. Also important is their acceptance and support of the displaced as possible local residents. Further, local acceptance of the people will contribute towards their own sense of acceptance of their place in Puttalam. However, the manner in which the displaced themselves keep the memory of their past homes alive is an impediment to integration. Brun therefore seems to be calling for an acknowledgement of the displaced as Puttalam residents at the level of the local community, the state, and the displaced community itself. People’s decision to change their status through registering as voters of the area, as well as the administration’s acceptance of their right to do so, are considered important for a more durable local integration.

In My Mother’s House (2011) by Sharika Thiranagama deals, as the subtitle states, with “Civil War in Sri Lanka” Two of the book’s six chapters deal with the northern Muslims, specifically with those displaced from Jaffna. Framing her narrative as a discussion of the suffering that minorities in general faced in the north of Sri Lanka, Thiranagama does what few have done before her. She presents the northern Muslim experience as an essential part of the logic of Tamil nationalism as personified by the LTTE. For perhaps the first time in a book that takes the Sri Lankan conflict as the object of analysis, the northern Muslim experience features as an essential part of the narrative and not merely a footnote. Thiranagama states,

I argue that Muslim minorities are not at the margins but the key problem for Tamil nationalism, crucial to understanding the polarization of Sri Lanka and the deepening ethnic identification. Muslims are the absent but pregnant emptiness in the heart of Tamil nationalism. The north, easily assumed to be a mono-ethnic Tamil space, was only created as such after the assertion of its mono-ethnic status through the expulsion of Muslims even though the LTTE tried to make the outcome “Tamil Eelam” the immanent cause. (Thiranagama, 2011, p. 108)

Describing the specific relationship of Muslims and Tamils in the north, Thiranagama states,

The often ignored relationship between Tamils and Muslims is at the heart of this chapter, especially since the violent breakdown of village level neighborly relations between Tamils and Muslims, as well as the more recent attacks on Muslims by Tamil militant groups. The Eviction has meant that these relationships can only be grasped through tropes of catastrophe and conflict, resulting in as I found, the idealization of Tamil Muslim relations by Northern Muslims and the embarrassed guilty silence of northern Tamils. (Thiranagama, 2011, p. 109)

She discusses the Muslim experience as part of the community spaces of the north. In doing so, she also presents the different consequences of the conflict for the two communities. Her naming of the Tamil response as an “embarrassed guilty silence” is also important here. The culpability of the larger Tamil community in the expulsion through their silence on the issue, and the lack of attention paid so far to the need for Muslim return to the north for instance, are points that are worth making.
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In the opening narrative of the first chapter on the northern Muslims, Thiranagama discusses with her informants the question of how they want their story told. Thiranagama finds instructive the ensuing debate on whether or not to use names, many stating that “The LTTE have taken everything away anyway,” tell her “use our names if you want.” Commenting on the discussion, Thiranagama states the following.

Such an open discussion about the LTTE or political events, or even that conclusion would have never been possible among Tamils. Living and working with Tamils meant that the LTTE and their actions were always spoken about with hushed voices after trust had been established. In the Muslim refugee camps I could interview people on doorsteps, on thresholds to houses, on roads walking in the camps and settlements. Even children would talk to me about their experiences. I and others could speak my heart and mind about politics as a matter of course……….Tamils feared the LTTE and each other; they had the right to belong to the Tamil nation but not the freedom to speak. Muslims evicted by the LTTE from their homes, by being outside the Tamil nation were thus not subject to individual internal terror by the LTTE. They did not have the right to belong, but they did have the freedom to speak. These sorts of differences are part of the new transformations in sociality and ethnicity in the last twenty years. (Thiranagama, 2011, p. 108)

One of the most important interventions made by Thiranagama is her delineation of the difference between the northern Muslim displacement experience and the Tamil displacement experience. For instance, for the northern Muslims, their right of return had been severed by the LTTE, and their right to belong in the North and East has been challenged. This has not been the case generally for displaced Tamils. For the northern Muslims—at the time of her research—belonging in the North “superseded” the then prevailing political possibilities. She suggests that there was a certain pathos to their invocations of home in a context where the legitimacy of it was severely under stress.

The fact that the northern Muslims were a Tamil-speaking people, most comfortable in a Tamil-speaking region of the north, has been something that the northern Muslims have found difficult to articulate in their twenty years of displacement. Thiranagama’s work opens up that possibility. Further, in the current context, there is little regard for the consequences of the LTTE denying Muslims their status as northerners, as part of the Tamil-speaking world. Even today, although the LTTE is no longer a factor, some of this thinking still remains. For instance, the Commission found that there was little sympathy among the local administration for Muslim return and, to date, there are no public calls from Tamil politicians supporting Muslim return. Those who spoke to the Commission stated that young people in the north are often surprised at the arrival of Muslims and are sometimes unaware that there were ever any Muslims in the north. Muslim return, to be successful, requires the administration’s support as well as the acceptance of Muslims at the level of Tamil society as well. There are signs of this happening in certain neighborhoods. However, it needs to happen at a higher level—at the level of Tamil politicians, activists, and civil society.
Much of the scholarly work discussed so far deals with the expulsion from material gathered prior to 2001. Sharika Thiranagama’s work on Tamil nationalism explores the expulsion as an essential component of the LTTE’s Tamil nationalist ideology. In addition to the important linkage with Tamil nationalism, Thiranagama also provides a scholarly perspective that takes serious account of the emotion generated from the expulsion experience in a manner that few scholars have been able to achieve. The following passage is a case in point.

The eviction is an event that has clustered around it dense physical, economic, social and symbolic consequences. The eviction is the reason, as refugees point out, that they became refugees and all their savings, property, homes, and livelihoods were taken away from them. They told me that, if Northern Muslims did not tell these stories, no one else would. While there was undoubtedly reticence on the part of parents to express fully their feelings to their children and me, I found that there was not a house where the larger story of the Eviction as personal and social loss was not narrated. (Thiranagama, 2011, p. 137)

From an anthropological perspective that takes “meaning” seriously, Thiranagama explores the different meanings accruing to “home” for the displaced northern Muslims. The anthropological perspective is useful in that it describes the manner in which Tamils – in this instance, by extension all those of the Tamil linguistic group—make meaning. Using Daniel’s delineation, Thiranagama says “One of the most important relationships to a Tamil is that which exists between a person and the soil of his ur…. (Ur is defined to approximate to 1. a named territory that is inhabited by human beings who are believed to share in the substance of the soil of that territory, and 2. a territory to which a Tamil cognitively orients himself to at any given time).” Thiranagama explores the manner in which home and home place have changed meaning during the protracted displacement, and the different ways in which the north figures in the lives of the older northern Muslims and the younger generation. For older people, 13 years is only a small part of their lives, and their self-making occurred at a time before the expulsion. As for the younger people, Thiranagama states that “without direct memories of their former homes, they are pulled towards their future, and towards performing ur and belonging in radically different ways from their parents. They see ur as an unknown past and a potentially deferred future, whereas for their parents ur was a real place that is now lost.” (Thiranagama, 2011, p. 142)

As many others have done, Thiranagama also looks at the settlement experience as a positive step. Moving away from the camps to more permanent housing demarcated by a fence, with some guarantees of differentiation and privacy—this is what constitutes the rebuilding of home place. Her work describes how the possibility of making a home place through purchasing land, and the manner in which an investment of some sort—in this instance, an investment of money—and perhaps the transformation of space, brings about a more complex understanding of ur or relationship to the past. Thiranagama also claims that for those who live in the camps the linkages to Puttalam are far more tenuous than those of people living in the settlements, and their own hopes and plans for return are stronger than those of the settlement people.
The importance of Thiranagama’s intervention cannot be overstated. The integration of the expulsion into a story about Tamil nationalism is long overdue, and it is to her credit that she has finally done it. As she rightly points out, Muslims have long valued their Tamil linguistic heritage and cultural practices. However, political circumstances in Sri Lanka and elsewhere have dictated that religion becomes a category of greater identification for Muslims than their Tamil linguistic connections. As Thiranagama too points out, these are the consequences of the thirty-odd years of conflict that Sri Lanka has experienced.

A recent essay by Imtiyaz and Iqbal “The Displaced Northern Muslims of Sri Lanka: Special Problems and the Future”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 2011 should be welcomed for highlighting the northern Muslim experience in an international scholarly journal. This essay also has some valuable information about the life of Muslims in the north prior to the expulsion, that not many others (with the exception of Hasbullah) attempt to address. However, there are also some serious errors that need to be highlighted. There is little or no reference to the available scholarly literature on the northern Muslims. We are honored to see Dr. Nesiah cited, but no one else is mentioned. There is an unsympathetic portrayal of a welfare camp and the aid dependency of the refugees, without proper contextualization of the problem. Further, there is no historical disaggregation of the data. For instance, the Saltern 2 camp fire occurred several years after the initial settlement and is mentioned in the testimonies that we collected as well. This article suggests that it happened in the immediate aftermath of the initial settlement. This is incorrect. Then there is also no understanding of specific events that occur with shifts in government policy. For instance, in the aftermath of the failed peace process of 1995, there was some realization among policy makers, specifically M.H.M. Ashraff who was minister of Rehabilitation and Resettlement, that displacement was probably of a longer duration than was initially envisaged; that the displaced needed assistance to live a life of dignity at that moment; and that this assistance should be made without the expectation of return anytime soon. Therefore the Unified Assistance Scheme was introduced, thus enabling people to move out of welfare centers and into settlements based on their villages in the north. This is completely absent in the article. It is hoped that the Commission report will provide the background information necessary to write such useful articles in the future.

**Conclusion**

The above review of literature on the northern Muslims covers a significant array of information on the expulsion and its consequences. Beginning with Hasbullah who provides valuable information on the North prior to the expulsion, as well as some indication of the staggering value of the assets left behind, we looked at the work of Shanmugeratnam, Zackariya and Brun. The three authors cover significant aspects of the displacement experience, albeit in different ways. Finally, Sharika Thiranagama makes the long-overdue intervention of looking at the place of the expulsion in the history of Tamil nationalism. The works addressed in this chapter have long provided the basis on which knowledge about the northern Muslims has been created. This work also provided the basis for constructing the
following chapters, and it is referenced often in the rest of the report as well. A question may be raised about the reason for writing this chapter and reviewing each book and essay. The reason is that the Commission felt it necessary to acknowledge these pioneering contributions and the manner in which they have helped to keep the issue alive.
Chapter Three

Social and Political Context of the Displacement

When discussing the northern Muslims’ expulsion and displacement and this history’s minimal presence in popular discourse and policy, as well as the poor mobilization of the northern Muslims towards bringing about significant change, a variety of factors need to be taken into account. These are

1. The specificity of Muslim politics in Sri Lanka.
2. Muslims’ shared language and difficult politics with the Tamil minority in the country.
3. Muslims’ marginalization within the discourse of the ethnic conflict.
4. Muslims’ recent assertions of religious exclusivity.

This chapter will attempt to address some of the above issues

Muslim politics in Sri Lanka

Muslims’ political history in independent Sri Lanka, prior to the change in the electoral system in 1987, was mainly about the non-assertion of Muslim specificity in the political arena. Muslims’ demographic conditions were such that they were unable to organize themselves as a political party contesting elections. They were a minority of less than ten percent, dispersed throughout the island with few population concentrations significant enough to elect a representative on the basis of ethnicity alone. There were often powerful Muslim members very close to the leadership of the two national parties. Bathiudeen Mahmood and the SLFP of the 1960s and 1970s and Dr. M.C.M. Kaleel and A.C.S. Hameed in the UNP in the 1980s, are the most prominent. M.H Mohamed was also prominent and was speaker in Parliament from 1989-1994 under the UNP regime. Muslim issues were represented in Parliament through the means of lobbying these ministers to speak on behalf of these issues. However, the parties of which these Muslims were a part were majority parties, and their articulation of minority interests was coloured by the interests of the majority as well as each party’s own form of majoritarian politics. Therefore, the space for articulating and addressing Muslim concerns was, arguably, limited. The Muslim MPs in the larger parties managed to bring about necessary, Muslim friendly legislation in keeping with the needs of the community as understood by the politicians. For instance, Razik Fareed brought about legislation recognizing Muslims’ need for time off to pray on Fridays, and instituted a special state Muslim education stream with holidays in the month of Ramazan. (Haniffa, 2009) However, when Muslim interest began to emerge in the area of ethnic politics, this sort of accommodation became more difficult. As Ashraff once stated of national party MPs’ articulation of Muslim issues—
The Muslim members of Parliament are representatives of their respective parties and not of the community. They only try to persuade the community towards their party point of view and never try persuading their party or the government to which they are attached towards the Muslim point of view. (Ashraff, 1987, p.66)

When Muslims became targeted in the conflict, their national party politicians were incapable of responding adequately. The Indo Lanka accord of 1987 was the most powerful indication of their failure and augured the success of Muslim ethnic politics.

The extensive scholarly work on the northern Muslims has only partially succeeded in placing the Muslim issue as central to either the search for a political solution or the resettlement of IDPs in the aftermath of the LTTE’s military defeat in 2009. This is because little of this work has located the expulsion within the country’s ethnic politics—an omission which is particularly evident in terms of the politics of Tamil nationalism.

The Muslim community of Sri Lanka is essentially a Tamil-speaking community that has eschewed a Tamil ethno-linguistic identity in favour of an identity based on religion and race. In terms of race, Muslims claimed Arab ancestry when under British rule, much to the skepticism of Tamil interlocutors who were convinced of Muslims’ Tamil ethnic roots. The first recorded instance of Tamils claiming that Muslims were Tamil and Muslims refusing such a label occurred under the British in 1889. Ponnambalam Ramanathan, a prominent Tamil intellectual, claimed in an article submitted to the Royal Asiatic Society, that the Moors were “ethnologically” Tamil (Ramanathan, 1888) Muslims responded nearly a half century later, claiming their Arab roots and Islamic heritage (Azeez, 1957). The political issue that gave rise to the debate was resolved by the British in favour of the Muslims, and since then the Tamil-Muslim difference has become institutionalized in the island’s politics. For a majority of Muslims, there has never been a question that Muslims are a distinct social formation with only a few shared political, social and linguistic interests in common with Tamils. However, for Tamil nationalism, the problem was more complex. The assertion of a Tamil-speaking homeland in the north and east depended on Muslim numbers as well—with Muslim concurrence, one would have imagined. Many generations of Muslims had common cause with Tamils, especially in the eastern province, albeit temporarily. The TULF and other Tamil parties have always had some Muslim representation. Mashoor Maulana was a close associate of S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, and M.S.M Ashraff started his political career as a member of the TULF. However, the literature emphasizes Muslims’ “self interest” over those periodic assertions of common interest and common linguistic identity (McGilvray, 2008).

The small moments of political commonality shared by Muslims and Tamils—although brief—are worthy of note. The idea of a “Tamil speaking peoples” and the “Homeland of the Tamil speaking peoples” are concepts coined by S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, the founder of moderate Tamil nationalism (Wilson, 1994, p. 21). Chelvanayagam was held in high esteem by certain Muslim politicians, including Ashraff, and his ideas too were considered useful. For instance, it was the concept of the homeland of Tamil-speaking people that enabled Muslim and Tamil opposition to the state’s colonization of the east with Sinhalese from the south. Further, the eastern Muslims’ own affinity with their Tamil linguistic heritage, as well
as the large number of Tamil literary figures who hail from the east, suggest a shared and greatly valued affinity to the Tamil language amongst sections of the eastern Muslim community. Therefore the notion of a Tamil-speaking people was not one that was completely alien to the Muslims. Further, as Thiranagama (2011) and McGilvray (2008) have noted, Tamils and Muslims of the north and east had more in common with regional neighbors than they did with co-ethnics from other places.

However, the differences between Tamils and Muslims were also very strong and, arguably, the leadership did not make sufficient efforts to bridge these differences so that the linguistic commonality could be politically viable. In its very narrow frame of reference, the LTTE could never come to terms with the idea of the Tamil-speaking people not having political purchase for both communities; and they seemed especially incensed by the SLMC’s assertion of Tamil-Muslim difference, and considered the Muslims ethnic traitors (Haniffa and Raheem, 2005). While Muslim-Tamil social and political differences were long accepted and established within local politics, the LTTE ideology consistently dismissed Muslims’ claims of being different. As stated earlier, the logic of a homeland of the Tamil-speaking peoples includes the Muslims. And it does not work so well in a context in which the Muslims stridently assert their difference.

The first political moments marking the crystallization of Muslims’ assertion of a separate and particular political identity were also very closely connected to the history of the conflict. In 1987 Sri Lanka signed the Indo-Lanka accord under Indian mediation whereby the provincial council system was introduced as a solution to the ethnic problem. One of the basic conditions on which the Tamil militants would not compromise was the concept of a contiguous Tamil homeland. This involved the merger of the northern and eastern provinces. Muslims felt left out with the signing of the Indo-Lanka accord and the merger of the north and the eastern provinces. Muslim communities of the east lost their majority status in the province. M.H.M. Ashraff, leader of the SLMC that was emerging as a political force in the East, vehemently argued against the term ‘Tamil speaking peoples’ that was used as a justification for the merger. He argued that this concept was a misnomer as far as the Muslims were concerned, and that it had served only to facilitate militant Tamil nationalist interests at the expense of the Muslims (Ashraff 1987, Haniffa 2008). The SLMC in fact grew into a successful party with a strong vote base in the east on the wave of Muslim sentiment against the merger.

The year 1990 had some historical significance in the calendar of events marking Sri Lanka’s troubled politics. The arena of conflict in the north witnessed the departure of the Indian Peace Keeping Force and the commencement of a round of peace talks between the LTTE and the Premadasa regime. It was also the time when the government was consolidating itself in the aftermath of the destruction of the southern insurrection that was set in motion by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. In relation to Muslim politics this was the time—since the Peace Accord of 1987—when the first electorally successful Muslim political party emerged under the leadership of the charismatic M.S.M. Ashraff.
Social and Political Context of the Displacement

As has been noted already, historically, Muslim political leadership has been concentrated in the South. However, after the change in the electoral system in 1978, there was a greater possibility of small parties winning seats in Parliament. This augured the arrival of a variety of parties with small constituencies; the SLMC was one of these.

It is perhaps fair to propose that, to an extent, the LTTE expulsion of Muslims was a reaction to the SLMC position. Tamil nationalist ideology, as personified by the LTTE, strongly rejected the assertion of Muslim difference—to such an extent, in fact, that the rhetoric around the expulsion (i.e. the language used by the LTTE during the expulsion and often repeated by the northern Muslims) was that Ashraff was responsible for the LTTE driving Muslims out, and, by extension, for the division between the Tamils and Muslims. Our testimonies have several versions of the Ashraff story. When people asked the local LTTE cadres why they were being told to leave, they said—“go and ask Ashraff.” In some cases they said – “go beyond Vavuniya; Ashraff will give you houses there.” The uniformity with which the Ashraff story appears within the narratives is curious and suggests an LTTE strategy to perhaps undermine the SLMC’s emergence as a political force. Of course, the expulsion only served to further strengthen the party’s claim that Muslims needed their own ethnic representation in the north and east.

Additionally, it must be remembered that the LTTE may have wanted to benefit from the wealth that the Muslims left behind. Testimonies recount whole fields full of tractors, motor bikes and other machines that the LTTE confiscated from the Muslims. The LTTE also confiscated all cash and jewellery from the fleeing Muslims and looted the homes of the expelled. This aspect of the expulsion should not be forgotten in critiquing the LTTE’s act. LTTE apologists argue that the expulsion is justified on the grounds of sound military strategy. They argue that it was a strategy similar to that which was practised by the United States government during the 2nd World War, when the US government interned all Japanese Americans in appalling conditions in camps for the duration of the conflict. In these arguments there is no discussion either of the grabbing of wealth and property from the expelled, or the lack of proper notice to leave, or the total absence of the possibility of compensation. The non-LTTE Tamil leadership’s lack of an adequate response at the time of the expulsion, the Catholic Church’s inability to stop the expulsion when it occurred, and its muted response at the time of the expulsion, still remain large questions that require an answer. Even today, Tamil nationalist politicians are inadequately prepared to respond to the question of the expulsion and Muslim return. As Sharika Thiranagama, too, has recently argued, the culpability of Tamils and Tamil nationalism in the atrocity committed against the Muslims by the LTTE is yet to be fully addressed (Thiranagama, 2011).


8 The University Teachers for Human Rights’ reporting of the event was an important intervention and should be noted as such at this point. Their report and analysis can be found at http://www.uthr.org/reports.htm
The larger political context in the country is also relevant for an understanding of the situation. In the aftermath of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, the Indian Peace Keeping Force was brought to Sri Lanka. Rather than putting an end to the fighting, this development resulted in fierce clashes between the LTTE and the IPKF that affected civilians in a manner that was far worse than anything that had happened previously. During this time many Muslims, too, were forced to flee. To a great extent, the southern Sinhala polity was opposed to the Indo-Lanka Accord and the presence of the Indian army in the north; and this opposition was successfully mobilized by the Marxist-oriented Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) into an armed insurrection. The JVP reigned with great brutality in the south, and the insurrection was finally stamped out with the government using counterinsurgency measures of equal, if not greater, brutality. The year 1990 saw the tailend of the insurgency with the capture of the JVP leader, Rohana Wijeweera, in 1989.

In 1990 the country was looking towards a new future, with the UNP government sending the IPKF home and entering into talks with the LTTE. Talks commenced in February 1990 in conjunction with the withdrawal of the IPKF from the north. However, the talks were not successful – both sides accused each other of arming themselves in the process.

The year 1990 also marked a moment when Tamil-Muslim relations had reached an all-time low. The massacre of Muslims in Kattankudi and Eravur took place in August 1990. There are also unconfirmed reports that the LTTE had asked the Muslims of Kattankudi to leave on threat of death. They did not leave, and the massacre of 3 August is probably a consequence of that. There were also reports that the LTTE had wanted the pockets of Muslims scattered throughout the north and east to vacate in order to consolidate the mono-ethnic nature of the Tamil homeland. While they were successful in their expulsion of Muslims from the north, it was not as easy to dislodge the larger, more powerful block of eastern Muslims.

As stated elsewhere in this report, northern Muslims stated to the Commission that they had informed the Ministry of Defense and others—especially through the MP for the Vanni, Mr. Aboobakr—of the LTTE’s threats to the Muslim community. They were given various assurances by the Minister of Defense, Ranjan Wijeyaratne. However, at the moment of the expulsion itself, there was very little that either the army or the politicians were willing to do.

We have quoted at length in Chapter 6 Ranjan Wijeyaratne’s response to Halim Ishak’s request for an explanation. Following the expulsion, the government took control of the Mannar island and urged Muslims to return. Muslims went back in small groups but refused to return en mass permanently due to fears of yet another expulsion. Testimonies recount that a few small clusters of Muslims went back to Puthukudiyiruppu and Erukalampidy, and also Uppukulam in Mannar town. Newspapers from the time indicate that Muslims were waiting for some military training and arms before they were willing to go back (Sunday Observer, 18.11.1990, p. 1).

Another factor that impacted the aftermath of the expulsion and Muslim return was the position of the SLMC on the northern Muslims. Commission interviews with an SLMC member who was close to Ashraff in the 1990s revealed that the party specifically did not
encourage Muslim return for political reasons. The party position was that Muslims could not return to the north with dignity until there was a political solution to the conflict that included a power sharing settlement for Muslims. Such a settlement included the Muslim administered South Eastern Unit (Kalmunai Sammanturai Pottuvil) with the non-contiguous administrative areas of the north, including Mutur and Musali. Therefore, even when the northern Muslims called for assistance to return immediately to the north, the SLMC was not encouraging and instead proposed a different settlement option in Puttalam. Community leaders from among the northern Muslims vehemently opposed the settlements in Puttalam, but the SLMC clearly had other ideas.

Muslims of the north have been languishing in refugee camps and settlements for the past twenty years with very little done to address their specific needs. For instance, no significant changes were made to northern Muslims’ living environments until Ashraff was made Minister of Ports, Shipping, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (see chapter 6). Ashraff’s death was followed by another hiatus in terms of assistance, until the emergence of Noordeen Mashoor as a Deputy Minister of Rehabilitation and the Vanni District in 2002. Several improvements to the area were made later with the advent of Risharth Bathiudeen as Minister of Rehabilitation. These included the 1000 houses scheme of Quassimiya city in Puttalam; the establishment of the Secretariat for Northern Displaced Muslims; the creation of employment opportunities for the displaced; the improvement of health care and educational facilities in Puttalam; and improved infrastructure facilities for resettlement villages. The World Bank housing scheme that proposed to build 4000 houses in Puttalam also commenced operations during his time in office.9

To a casual observer all of this might indicate inordinate attention for northern Muslims during the course of their twenty years of displacement. However, in practice, it means the following.

1. The fact that the northern Muslim issue has been ghettoized within the Sri Lankan context as something that has to be administered separately from the administration of the larger displaced population housed mainly in their districts of origin.

2. Assistance of any significance made only during the reign of Muslim parliamentarians – thereby further marginalising the issue as a Muslim-specific issue.

3. No understanding at the policy level of the specificity of the context of displacement and the different political dynamics that have come to bear upon it.

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9 The intention here is not to discount the contributions of other politicians like MPs Aboobakr, Douglas Devananda and Provincial Counselor Dr. Illyas. Their contributions are recognized in Chapter 6. The intention of this section is to highlight the absence of state policy addressing northern Muslims at moments when Muslim ministers did not hold powerful positions in government.
4. The settlement processes in Puttalam that were not sufficiently considered, and that maintained northern Muslims’ identity of being displaced without any opportunity for integrating into the Puttalam host community.

**Muslims’ place within the discourse of the ethnic conflict**

The northern Muslim issue received very little attention during the failed peace process of 2001-2003. Due to the fact that the main protagonists to the conflict were considered to be the state and the LTTE, it was sometimes difficult to convince any of the parties concerned (including the Norwegian facilitators) that the Muslims have to be included in discussions about a settlement. There seemed to be little or no awareness of the necessity to consult Muslims, even though they were a significant demographic presence in the conflict areas. As discussed earlier, Tamil nationalist claims for a homeland were based on the inclusion of Muslim numbers, and Muslims had suffered great violence at the hands of the LTTE. It was not just the expulsion of the northern Muslims, but the massacres in the eastern province, as well as the ongoing harassment of Muslims under the Ceasefire Agreement of 2002, that were significant moments of anti-Muslim sentiment on the part of the LTTE. Even in the face of all this evidence pointing to the necessity of including Muslims, Muslim leaders found it very difficult to get a hearing for their grievances. Therefore, it should be recognized that there was very little space for Muslim issues to be raised within the peace process as a whole. However, what little space that was available was also underutilized by the Muslim leadership. Arguably, neither the inclusion of Rauf Hakeem in the government negotiating team nor the later inclusion of Mrs. Ferial Ashraff in the team sent by the Rajapaksa regime were examples of capitalizing on opportunities to efficiently address the northern Muslims’ concerns (Haniffa 2011, p. 58-60).

According to McGilvray and Raheem, the Hakeem-Prabhakaran meeting was one of the highpoints of Muslim involvement within a peace process to which Muslims had to struggle to gain entry (McGilvray and Raheem, 2007, p. 32). However, in the agreement that was reached between the two leaders, the issues faced by northern Muslims were not sufficiently addressed. For instance, while the taxation of the eastern Province was addressed, what was not addressed was the taxation faced by the northern Muslims when returning and trying to engage in livelihoods. This put a stop to a successful Muslim return, as the LTTE effectively crippled the economic activities of the Muslims by taxing them exorbitantly. Also, while the meeting won an invitation from Prabhakaran for northern Muslims to return, assurances of security were not adequate. The member of the SLMC that we have referred to before also said that the agreement between Hakeem and Prabhakaran indicates a discontinuity between the thinking of Ashruff and the current SLMC leadership. Permitting the northern Muslim

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10 The LTTE did not keep to many aspects of the agreement. For instance, although the agreement also invited Muslims in the east to cultivate their paddy lands, the ground situation was different because Muslims were not given access to their paddy lands and were not given the security to cultivate.
The following reason may be attributed to the SLMC’s minimal attention to the northern Muslim issue. During the peace process, the SLMC position was concerned with attempting to get a foothold for Muslim issues, and, when achieved, to articulate Muslims’ ground-level grievances in the east (grievances that were escalating daily), and to present the Muslim version of a settlement. As discussed above, the SLMC plan for a Muslim administrative area was based on the South Eastern Unit of Kalmunai, Sammanthurai, Pottuvil as the administrative centre, and included the non-contiguous areas of Muttur and Kinniya in the Trincomalee district, and the Musali DS division in Mannar. The consensus among the community of Muslims from the north and east regarding the South Eastern Unit and the non-contiguous areas was not established, but the SLMC did not want to draw attention to any differences within the polity and thereby risk its representative position being questioned. And arguably, the increasing violence in the east made the party leadership more sensitive to the ground-level concerns of the east rather than those of the north at that time. Further, according to the SLMC insider from Ashraff’s time, the current leadership’s understanding of the importance of the northern Muslim issue for Muslim politics in general was not adequate, and is an example of the party’s failure to successfully strategize and capitalize on the available opportunities.

The Homogenizing Impact of the Piety movement and its impact on activism

One other issue that is of importance to the understanding of Muslim politics in post colonial Sri Lanka, especially to the manner in which the politics impact the situation of northern Muslims, is the piety movement. In keeping with the global Islamic piety movement, the Sri Lankan Muslim community, too, saw the transformation of Muslim dress and demeanor and the manner in which Muslims related to the world. The preoccupation of the Islamic piety movement was the transformation of Muslim social life towards more Islamic practices as defined by the various groups. The form in which the commitment to increased piety manifested itself in diverse Muslim communities across the world was closely connected to the social and political factors affecting their particular contexts. Haniffa (2008) argues that the piety movement among Muslims in Sri Lanka was a consequence of the polarization between the Sinhala and Tamil communities due to the violence of the conflict, and that the piety movement mirrored some elements of this polarization. For instance, the piety movement stressed religious exclusiveness at the expense of neighbourliness and other sorts of engagements with ethnic and religious others. The nationalism that Tamil and Sinhala groups espoused was reflected among Muslims through the exclusivity of the piety movement (Haniffa, 2008, p. 348). Therefore, religion and the transformation of religious practices within the Muslim community became the preoccupation of a large number of community youth. The radicalization of youth that was oriented towards politics within the Tamil community, for instance, did not take place within the Muslim community. Muslims’ reaction to the deepening ethnic tensions in the country was to embrace the piety movement. According to Haniffa
Muslims in Sri Lanka feel beleaguered as a socially, politically and economically weak minority within a context where interethnic relations have often been defined by violence. Religious self assertion has energized the Muslim community in ways that the idea of a Muslim political community—an extremely sensitive distant possibility as a second minority—has not been able to do....The dynamism of the religious revival within Muslim society transformed Muslims’ relations with ethnic others in ways that mirror and reinforce the polarization that has taken place amongst the different religious/ethnic groups in the country during the last twenty years of conflict. But it also made Muslims have a greater appreciation of their own social and political condition in a way that was not possible under a beleaguered minority sensibility through which the Muslim political elite has operated historically. (Haniffa 2008, p. 23)

During the early years of the piety movement, the attention was mostly inward towards reforming “straying” elements of the Muslim community. Today, too, the imperative towards piety remains, with different groups emphasizing different aspects of pious practice that are sometimes in conflict with one another. Many of these groups have assisted the northern Muslims; however, their assistance has been in the realm of humanitarian and religious interventions—they build mosques and toilets, distribute hijabs, and give IDPs their Zakath collections. Creating awareness about the northern Muslims’ predicament among a larger Sri Lankan community or within international institutions like the UN has been beyond the purview of piety groups. It is only recently that the Muslim community—at least the civil society elements within the community—have organized to effectively lobby their political representatives and other concerned stakeholders towards addressing the problems faced by the community. This new awareness is partly attributable to Muslims’ experience of exclusion in the peace process of 2002.

Northern Muslim activists have done work to raise the profile of the issue through organizations like the Community Trust Fund (CTF), the Research and Action Forum for Social Development (RAAF), the Rural Development Foundation (RDF), and more recently the Mannar Women’s Development Foundation (MWDF). The Citizens’ Committee of the CTF had a desk at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, in Durban, South Africa. A.M Faaiz of the RDF attended the meeting of the UN Working Group on Minorities in 2003 and made a presentation on the northern Muslim issue. And Dr. Hasbullah of Peradeniya University and the RAAF has written consistently on the issue. However, these interventions, as important as they were, became just a few scattered acts that lacked resonance against the overwhelming international presence of the issue of the Sinhala state’s discrimination against the Tamil minority. Even the state began to capitalize on The Northern Muslims’ Issue to undermine LTTE propaganda, but only very late in the day. Even in that process, the information on the expulsion that was used by the state was often inaccurate. 11 In some cases when the details of

11The state report to the ECOSOC made references to the northern Muslims. But much of the detail was confused. For instance this document also contained the fairly common mistake of referring to the expulsion

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the expulsion were not clearly articulated, it was interpreted in contexts outside Sri Lanka as an example of discrimination against another group of Tamils and not as the victimization of a local minority by a Tamil rebel group. The fact that Muslims are considered a separate ethnic and religious group in Sri Lanka also needed to be emphasized for a proper understanding of the expulsion, when viewed from outside the country.

Conclusion

The above account is a brief summary of Muslim political and social engagements with the rest of the country in post-independence Sri Lanka. It contains some of the elements that constitute the background and context of the expulsion. Any understanding of the expulsion as well as the reason for Muslims’ exclusion from any significant state policy on return or long term IDP resettlement requires this background. The Commission felt that the expulsion, the nature of assistance rendered to the community during displacement, as well as their marginalization in the peace process and current resettlement activities can only be understood if based on an adequate appreciation of this context.

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as happening only in Jaffna and not the entire Northern Province. 45th Session of UNCESCR 1-9 Nov 2010, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/cescrs45.htm
Chapter Four

Life in the North during War Time

The expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province took place in October 1990. Since then the Northern Province has seen twenty years of internecine warfare, terrible loss of life, the destruction of an entire community, and the deaths of thousands—mostly youth—in a long and futile war. The passage of twenty years, along with the continuing war in the north after the departure of the Muslims, has given rise to commentaries that the Muslims were in some ways fortunate to have missed the war. This is perhaps true, and at least one of the people who gave testimony to the Commission has articulated relief at not having to deal continuously with the stress of war in daily life. While this aspect of the expulsion is recognized, it is important not to forget that the Muslim community of the north too had to experience several years of war as well as the death and destruction of life and property that were the consequences of war. The war in the north had a history beyond the twenty years that the northern Muslims were absent from the area, and it is important to acknowledge the harrowing years in which Muslims had to endure the violence and the many dead and disappeared within the community.

Additionally, the northern Muslims were part of the community life in the north—a fact that many northern Muslims constantly state, and one which is also recorded in the literature. As such, in most cases, the LTTE cadres whom many encountered were also part of the communities that the northern Muslims remember. And just as much as the LTTE has been documented as compelling Tamil communities to contribute their money and goods towards the militants' cause, the Muslim community, too, was similarly compelled. This chapter will explore the many relationships that existed between the Muslims and the LTTE, as well as the exploitative nature of many LTTE interactions with the northern Muslim communities. There were instances in which Muslims were victims of violence inflicted by the military, and this, too, has been noted in the chapter.

Mannar

The testimonies from Vidathalthivu—one of the largest villages in the Nannadan area—indicate the general situation of unease and unrest that prevailed during a time of war. For instance, the testimony of Kachchu Mohamed Mahkooma evokes the general situation in the area, as follows:

The problem started in 1980. We were scared so we never slept alone; we went to the school and slept along with the village people after the problem. We didn't have peace of mind. We often heard gun shots and bomb blasts. We were scared to go out even for a bath. They come in helicopters and exploded bombs. After this problem, 15 families stayed together. My uncle was shot by the LTTE, he was a teacher. My uncle was having lunch; they came as his friend and took him along with them saying...
that they were going to watch a film. He never came home, everyone was searching for him. At last, we found him, he had been shot dead. He was working under a minister. He was like a head in the village. If there was a problem, he used to go and solve it. The LTTE used to order us so we had to do everything. If they ordered us to cook, we had to do that. There was no peace. (033)

K.M. Mahkooma was among those displaced to Erukulampiti because of the difficulties faced in Vidathalthivu. She recounts how, after moving to Erukulampiti for safety, they had been compelled to relocate when the LTTE had expelled the entire population of that place as well. Erukulampityi in Mannar Island was evacuated by sea, unlike the case of Vidathalthivu where people travelled over land.

Erukulampitiya was almost directly across from Vidathalthivu on the Mannar Island—across the Gulf of Mannar—and a testimony recounted the manner in which people could hear the fighting close to Vidathalthivu from the beach in Erukulampiti.

At the same time, there were many who stated that there were no substantial problems between the LTTE and the Muslims during that time. Community leaders had a more complex narrative that differentiated between the LTTE and the other militant groups, and spoke of the good relations between Muslims and the LTTE in the Vidathalthivu area. I. Feroskhan states, for instance, that there were no problems between the LTTE and Muslims. He acknowledges the LTTE’s killing of one person named Kaleel, and states that there were reasons for that. Additionally, he states that “At the time when there were problems for us from the other movements such as the TELO, EPRLF, it is the LTTE who provided security to us” (191).

Gafoor Raheem of Potkerni made the following observation with regard to relations with the LTTE in the Musali area

I started to work when I was eighteen years old. Later, I worked at a place far away from my home. At that time, I had (Tamil) friends from the workplace. We were very united. While we were working, the LTTE started giving trouble. When we had a vehicle or a bicycle they would come and take it away. They also asked for paddy. We had to give them at the price they fixed. Or else they threatened to shoot us. They also told us not to support the Army or to talk to them but we were asked to support only the LTTE. They also demanded that we cook food for them. (308)

The problem with the LTTE started in the early 1980s. With time, the problem became severe. At the time, the LTTE were shooting the people who attended government party meetings. They shot 2 - 3 people in our area. If we reported these killings, our farming would have been severely affected. The LTTE took away 400 cows when we were coming. They were all mine. They never allowed us to cultivate. Bulls and elephants destroyed the cultivation. They captured our bulls by throwing crackers. We were afraid to say anything. They threw crackers to capture about 10 to
20 bulls. Although the cultivation was done in 20 acres the LTTE would come and disturb us and we had to return without doing any work. No one could cultivate. All of it was eaten by cattle.

Hathun Beevi of Pichchiyavanin Kulam in the Musali area, has violent and frightening memories of the LTTE. She claims that the people of her village were not driven out so much as frightened away by the atrocities committed by the group.

I used to see LTTE cadres carrying weapons. We were scared during that time, many left their lands and came here due to the fear they had of the LTTE. During that period, we heard that the LTTE were abducting children and many had girls, and parents wanted to protect them from the LTTE. They did not ask us to leave the place but they gave signs. They were taking many villagers into woods and fields and shooting them. There were a few relatives too. Such as, Thasim son of Sahulhameed, Jayi Master’s father Afoul and Puttalam Shareef, were shot dead by the LTTE. They took around ten persons to a paddy field and kept them in a row and shot them. Many died on the spot, some escaped and some got injured and died later. (354)

M.M. Abdul Majeed of Adampan, Vattakandal (Manthai Nannadan area) describes his work as a cultivator and the time prior to the expulsion, in the following manner.

My main job was farming. My father taught me to farm. Paddy fields were cultivated using cow dung as fertilizer. We had ten acres of land. Those days cows were used in the harvesting process, tractors were used later. Even Tamils came to help with the harvesting. People used to come from Batticaloa during the season to reap the harvest. They stayed for nearly one month. For one acre of land they (the LTTE) asked for a sack of grain. Other than that they demanded a payment of tax. Even if we said the harvest was bad they refused to take our word for it. Even for vehicles, a tax had to be paid. After the LTTE was gone, another group used to come. There were five groups, namely the LTTE, PLOT, TELO, EPRLF and E-ROS. When the LTTE members came to collect our crops they said if anyone else comes, to say that we had already given to the LTTE but when we said so, other groups used to say ‘how could you only give to LTTE, you have to give us also’. Tractors which were used to do the harvesting process were taken by these groups and returned only after seven or ten days. We had to hire tractors and continue our harvesting process. They were constantly harassing us. We did have guns with licenses. But the government took it from us and promised to return them later. But if it was taken by the LTTE, they were never returned. We cannot oppose them as they were well armed; they posed a threat to our lives. (254)

Abthul Hai of P.P. Potkerni in the Musali area, remembers 1983 and the LTTE’s attack on the 23 army personnel as a starting point. Interestingly, this northern perspective recollection is not of the black July that resulted from the attack, but of the attack itself as signifying the moment that saw the ascendency of the LTTE. The testimonies given to the Commission also
included recollections of the existence of a Muslim youth group—a Jihad group—that was trained by the army in the Silawaturai Army camp as a means of providing Muslims some capabilities in ensuring their own security within the largely Muslim populated area of Musali. Unlike the home guards who are established legally under the Mobilization of Supplementary Forces Act of 1984, the training of young Muslim men in the use of arms, and the provision of weapons, were covert dealings carried out at great personal risk to them and their families, as will be clear from the testimonies.

When I was in the training school in 1983, 25 army persons were shot dead in Palali. This is how they (the LTTE) became powerful. I was in the training school for 4 years and then went back to my village and did not work for about 1 year and then the LTTE came there. They were shooting people and demanding taxes and ransoms and all the people were scared of them. Then there was a Jihad group against the LTTE. Two of my brothers went for it as well. The training was held in the Silavathurai Army camp. They also had guard centers in the villages and the LTTE got angry and shot 3 people for this. My brother was the leader so they came home and threatened us. He (my brother) had a gun for security. They pointed their guns at us and my parents, sisters all began to cry. So I told them we don’t have any weapons but my brother has a gun. Once he comes in a week’s time, I said I would give it to them. Then before they came, we left the village (171).

M.Y.M. Kassim of Vepankulam in Musali was a member of the group that received the training. He describes the problems faced by the people due to the presence of the LTTE; the need, therefore, for some security for the community; and the failure of that particular measure as a security measure.

There were a lot of hindrances from the LTTE. I had a vehicle once, but they took it away from me and they never returned it. Usually a Tamil boy took the money to deposit it in the banks but due to the fear of the army he left the job as he was unable to travel freely. So later, we had to take the responsibility for that work. One day while I was going to the bank with hard cash of rupees two hundred thousand, and a few cash cheques, the LTTE grabbed all of it away from me. The government later selected a few people from the village and gave special training to us to protect ourselves and to safeguard the villagers. They also gave us a few weapons, but the LTTE threatened us to return the weapons to the government. And if we didn’t they said that they would kill us, therefore, we returned the weapons. (093)

The government’s highly irresponsible and illegal handing over of security to the Muslim community of Mannar marks an abdication of responsibility on the part of the government; it also begs the question of what place Muslims had as citizens within a polity where their security concerns were interpreted as the need to arm minimally trained young men. Further, why were they armed covertly at great risk to themselves, under conditions where the home

guard example existed? This echoes the general stereotype of Muslims in Sri Lanka as requiring little, if any, state assistance on the assumption that the community will take care of itself. The evidence that the state was covertly arming young Muslim men indicates the oft-raised accusation by the LTTE during the peace process of 2002, that the government was fostering Muslim militias. It also provides fodder for LTTE apologists' justification of the expulsion.\(^{13}\)

Kulamkathar of Puduveli also provides some references to the arms training provided to Muslim youth by the army. His testimony recounts some other interesting facts about life under the LTTE and the involvement of the local administration in the maintenance of contact between the LTTE and the people. Just as much as the LTTE extorted money and goods from Tamil civilians to compel their support for their struggle, evidence collected by the Commission indicated that they extorted from the northern Muslims as well. This testimony also mentions the complicity of a GS or Gramasevaka (the Gramasevaka is the lowest ranking public official at the local level).

People of my age were very strong then and we were prepared to oppose the LTTE. During that time, an army leader approached the youngsters and wanted to create a Jihad group. It began but later it was ineffective due to several reasons… They (the LTTE) had attacked many army camps. They come to us for food and especially the GS would come and say “they are going to attack the camp so you have to provide meals…”. If we did not provide the LTTE will come and kidnap those who do not provide meals and they would beat them. (357)

Kulamlathar’s brief summary recounts many other interesting bits of information about life in the north as well. He mentions the extortion and kidnapping of the wealthy; the fact that the LTTE carders were people from the community; that Muslims too were victims of Army-LTTE military engagements; and that Muslims faced discrimination with regard to access to government jobs.

Tamil were given greater priority in employment. There were many Tamils who were appointed to the Divisional Secretariat instead of Muslim officers for vacant positions. We were not affected by the LTTE; they did not come and demand from us as they knew us personally and we were not rich. They kidnapped one of the richest men in the village and kept him for 2 years demanding money and released him later. There was an incident of a pregnant lady who was killed during the firing which took place between the Army and LTTE. (357)

\(^{13}\) LTTE apologists state that the expulsion was a wise military strategy similar to that used by the US government when they interned all Japanese citizens of the US during the 2nd World War. (Sri Kanthan, S. (2005), http://www.sangam.org/taraki/articles/2005/12-10_Expulsion_of_Jaffna_Muslims_A_Response_to_Cultural_Genocide_Claim.php?uid=1365}
The above accounts represent a fraction of the information gathered from the Mannar testimonies. These testimonies recount the manner in which the LTTE engaged with the community; the LTTE’s practices of extortion and robbery; and the violence perpetrated by the LTTE on the community. The section also recounts people’s experiences of the military training provided by the army; the manner in which this training threatened their lives; and the ways in which this measure finally proved ineffective against the LTTE. Certain testimonies—from Vidathalthivu for instance—recall that there were no major problems from the LTTE, and that it was the LTTE that provided safety from other groups. These relatively good relations contributed to the shock many felt over the expulsion.

**Kilinochchi**

M. Ameerkhan of Nachchikudah, a local community leader, described the manner in which he persuaded his community to negotiate with the LTTE in order to minimize the problems posed by them.

In our village no one could own a motor bike, a television or a generator because the LTTE would come to take it. Sometimes when we asked for our generator back, they would return it after months, but it was in many parts, no longer usable. So we came up with a solution for this and decided that if the LTTE wanted something it should come from the mosque authorities. But I told them they were not going to agree to any of these, the only solution was to join another group for safety. Everybody listened to me. There was a group called PLOTE at that time, which was a very good group and it was the most famous group in Kilinochchi. So we told PLOTE about our problem and the LTTE could not do anything. Later the LTTE came and asked for a television from someone, and they were sent to me saying ‘go to Ameer’. I would ask them when they would all return, and they said ‘tomorrow at 10.00 o’clock’ and they returned according to their word. Everything was well under control. Muslims properties were saved like this for five years. I had a good name in the village. Later the LTTE was looking for me because I had connections with the PLOTE. One day I was taken by the LTTE to be killed, and then I told them that they were all divided into 25 groups because they were not united, then I told them I was also born in this land so I too had a right to take part in it, and that I liked the policies of PLOTE, which was why I had connections with them, I said that I couldn't agree with their policies, and asked all of them to try and unite together, then we would support them too. However, I said that from now onwards, I would not support any group, and hereafer I would only look after my wife and children. With that I was asked to come to the LTTE camp. I came home. (099)

Testimonies recounted the difficulties of carrying out income generating activities in times of war, in other parts of Kilinochchi as well. The following account was made by K.M. Mansoor of Vattakachchi, who worked in the vehicle seat upholstery business.
Chapter Four

Fearing the Indian army, the people in Jaffna also moved to Vatakachchi in 1987, but left Vatakachchi a while later. When things were like this, it affected our businesses. It was very difficult for us to travel to Point Pedro and back. The LTTE had fights amongst themselves. During this time we cycled through the forests. I used to travel through Thandikulam to Yakkachcchi and through that to Kodigamam up to Savakacheri town where I bought the fabrics for my cushion work. (217)

As Sharika Thiranagama has pointed out, the expulsion has had the peculiar consequence of having Muslims reify the relationship that they had with Tamil neighbors, as one of great harmony, friendship, and brotherhood. The Commission has collected many testimonies that overwhelmingly support this position (see chapter 9). However, a few testimonies reflect different sentiments as well, and these too were worth recording as a reminder of the impact of ethnic difference on daily life throughout the country. While much has been made of discrimination against Tamil-speaking people, little has been noted of discrimination among Tamil-speaking people. While there is, arguably, some information on the effects of caste on the Tamil community, little has been written on the important point about the everyday coexistence of Tamil and Muslim communities in the north and east prior to the war.14 In the following account, M. N Rajab of Nacchikuda, Kilinochchi, responds to a question about return in the following manner. He notes that despite good relations between Tamils and Muslims, some issues did arise with regard to access to state employment. Reflecting the sentiment expressed by Kulamkathar above, he describes how there were no jobs available for a qualified young Muslim woman within a Tamil-dominated administrative service.

Even while we were living in Kilinochchi before the expulsion we did not get any kind of help from Tamils. For example, my sister was qualified in accounting but she did not get a job in Jaffna at that time. Then we met Bakir Makar and Mashoor Moulana about this matter, and they took her to Colombo and gave her a job, after which she was transferred to Muttur. We used to always come to Colombo to visit Ministers for any matter concerning our village because we knew that nothing would happen in our village as there were many Tamils in all our government departments. If that was the case 20 years back, imagine how the situation in our village would be now? Therefore, we do not want to go back in a hurry. We will wait until the Government calls us. (323)

It is important to note that, in Muslims’ experience, the difficulties of the conflict arose not just from the LTTE but also from the excesses of the military. The following account is a harrowing tale of a Nachchikuda Muslim being shot by the army without due process in the 1980s.

14 Dennis McGilvary’s account in his book, Crucible of Conflict (2008) is one of the few that maps Tamil Muslim interaction prior to the conflict. It is a good indication that peace does not mean the erasure of different but the location of mechanisms to prevent different from deteriorating into violence.
My brother died as he was shot by the army. He died when he was coming back from business, at Kalliyadi, Mannar. We knew about his death only after two days. He and another Tamil boy were taken out from the bus on which they were travelling. He had told them “I am a Muslim”, but they had not heeded him. They had taken all his money, wristwatch and other things, and shot him. The bus driver had refused to take off without him, but they had done it in front of them. They (the people in the bus) were the ones who came and told us that our brother had been murdered. It was a Ramazan period around 1985. My other brothers went searching for him, but the army did not agree to give a pass, and our house was surrounded by the military. When they heard us crying, the army people said they do not do such things, and it must be the work of the LTTE. And then they agreed to give us a pass to cross the sea and to search for the body. It was the second day. We failed to find him even on that day. Then on the third day everyone went in preparation to conduct the funeral rites. When they reached Kalliyadi, an acquaintance had inquired about the search and, when informed of it, had pointed to a garbage bin and said “there were two bodies in there, and very hard to identify, you can go and take a look …”. When we came to the bodies, we saw that they had put my brother down and the other boy on top of him and had poured acid over them. It was difficult to identify the body and very difficult to carry it, but later they did bury him with a lot of difficulty. After finishing all the customs, my other brothers came home saying that they had completed all the funeral duties but that we should not protest because it was too difficult for them to carry the body back home. The next day, we went to that spot and witnessed at that time that the other Tamil boy’s body was still lying there. Later, their relatives came and took him. My brother was married. His first child was just one year old, and his wife was pregnant at the time of his murder. (311)

Mullaitiwu

M.I. Rajab of Kumarapuram, Mulliyavalai, recounted the following story about the manner in which his cousin was arrested by the army in Puthukudiyiruppu, in 1984, in a raid which included the arrest of 40 LTTE cadres.

In 1984, the army from Puthukudiyiruppu arrested 40 LTTE cadres. My cousin was also arrested as he was there at that time. I cycled over and told them that my cousin was not one of them and should be released. They told me to leave, saying that they will take care of my cousin. I replied that my cousin has 6 children and that I could not leave. At that time a C.I. who knew the Tamil people arrived at that spot. Then the army told us to point out the Tigers, saying that they would chase us from there unless we did so. Then my cousin recited the Quran, and I told them that he was working for a Muslim businessman in Colombo. They called him and when they knew that my cousin was not one of the LTTE, they released him. (334)

15 For Muslims it is important that burial is done on the day of the death.
We heard a few reports of the Mulaitiwu Muslim population being harassed by the LTTE. Most of these reported incidents were about taxation. M.I. Rajab stated, for instance, that he had to pay taxes of Rs. 50,000/- each to the LTTE and the state, for one year, for his meat stall business. He also reported that the LTTE confiscated his motorcycle worth Rs. 20,000/- and demanded a second motorcycle from him. He described this in the context of relating how the presence of the LTTE undermined the economic activities of the civilian population. In one other instance, Junaid Salima of Neeravaipiddy also stated the following regarding the LTTE presence: “They forcibly entered our land, picked king coconut and drank it. They asked us to pay taxes for our cultivation, and if we said no because there was not much cultivation, they asked us to give even the little bit that we had earned from it. They also forcibly took away our people’s cattle from our village.” (048)

Rahma Beevi spoke to us of her journey from Mulaitiwu in 1987. It was an epic journey, and the account was less than clear. Therefore, we provide a summary, rather than a quote. In anticipation of the arrival of the Indian army, Rahma Beevi and her husband and two children had left Mulaitiwu in 1987, together with her father and some cousins. There was shelling at that time, according to her narrative—some shells even landing next to their house. She had persuaded her reluctant husband who had said that “no refugee meal should touch his mouth”, to at least accompany them on their journey out of Mulaitiwu. They had reached Nedunkerni in Vavuniya. Her husband, accompanied by two cousins, had been making a visit to the relevant government office to register the family, when a shell had injured all three. Rahma Beevi described how one of her injured cousins had asked for water but had died before she could give it to him. She then described the manner in which she went looking for her 2-year-old daughter because her injured husband was asking to see her, and how that journey took her, on the bicycle of an LTTE cadre, to another location. She next saw her husband only when a lorry transporting the injured was stopped. She discovered that her two cousins were dead and that her husband was being transported to the Vavuniya hospital. He succumbed to his injuries at the Vavuniya hospital, and was buried there. Rahuma Beevi has not returned to Mulaitiwu since 1987, but hopes to go back now.

**Jaffna**

The testimonies collected indicate that trouble had been brewing for some time between the Muslims and the LTTE, culminating in the expulsion order on 25 October. However, between the emergence of the LTTE and the expulsion order, there was a considerable period of time in which the Jaffna Muslim community had lived with the presence of the LTTE. This was a period in which they had been forced to engage with the edicts of the movement, and had faced the consequences of the violence that occurred in the area due to fighting between the LTTE and the Army, the Indian Peace Keeping Force, and inter-group rivalry amongst the different militant organizations. The history of the emergence of the LTTE and the “troubles” was understood differently by Jaffna Muslims, depending on their own personal experiences, their relationship with the LTTE, and the manner in which they were affected by the
increasing violence. S.H. Hairunniza of Kamal Lane Jaffna, one of the women whose family was affected early in the conflict, stated the matter in the following way.

I married in the year 1975. My daughter was born in the year 1976. My son was born in the year 1979. The LTTE crisis started in the year 1979; it started with small incidents. They killed my brother-in-law in 1980. They put him on a burning tyre and killed him. He was caught in the battle between the army and the LTTE. He was my elder sister’s husband. (218)

There were also narratives that spoke of the day-to-day engagement with the LTTE. Muhsin of New Moor Street, Jaffna, the owner of a bicycle shop, spoke of an LTTE member who was a Muslim. This story described the daily interaction that was inevitable in a context where the members of the movement were virtually from the community.

While I was managing on my own like this, the LTTE began to form in Jaffna. There was a Muslim person in the group. He visited our school many times and trained us in various educational activities. He rode in on a new bicycle each week, so he sometimes asked me to repair it or clean it. He was 19 at the time, and asked me to join him as well, which I did not. Sometimes I used to give my bicycles to the LTTE free of charge as I did not want any trouble, but my work was not that much affected by the LTTE. (018)

Another person, Mahmootha of Arali road, spoke to us about a period of serious fighting between the army and the LTTE, and the effect it had on Muslims. The LTTE occupied the Jaffna peninsula in 1986, and there was fierce fighting between the emerging military power of the militants and the somewhat disorganized and ill-disciplined Sri Lankan Army.

Though we knew the LTTE cadres were there, only at the end of 1986 did we feel the full effect of their presence. How we got to know this was when the army and the LTTE were at war, and attacks were coming from the fort. The army came into the village through Kakka Theevu (Karaitheevu). The LTTE saw that and attacked them with shells. Even our people were hit by shells.16 Intestines were spilling out of a person who was hit. Because we could not bear to see this, we took our child and we left the place, taking only whatever we were wearing, carefully concealing ourselves, and traveling through the fields instead of the main road, until finally we reached Usmaaniya (college). (213)

Yet another perspective is provided by A. Nagoor Meera from Jinna Road, a vendor of fancy goods in the bazaar, who talks of the beginning of the troubles in the following way:

I had a lot of problems from the Tigers. They would ask us to close the shop at times, and they used to impose curfews at will. They used to force us to give bribes, and

16 Please see map 1 (page 57) for an indication of the direction of the Jaffna fort in relation to the Moor street area.
they even ill-treated us if we didn’t give into their demands. They killed 2 youngsters and kidnapped many. If anyone spoke against them that person was taken away and never returned. The trouble started from the day they started the organization. (261)

Many spoke of the constant harassment of businesses and the extortion practiced by emerging militant groups. While many pinpointed the LTTE as the main perpetrator, others called attention to other militant groups, too, as practising such tactics on the civilian population. In many instances, it seemed as if, in retrospect, all militants were seen as the LTTE. Therefore, it is important to point out certain instances where groups other than the LTTE were named as perpetrators of offences. With reference to the beginnings of "troubles", M.A. Aseem, who seemed to have experienced constant harassment, saw a turning point to militant activities in 1983.

They (the LTTE) used to give me notices to be given to my boss, but I didn’t take them or give them to my boss. They just kept the notices on my table. They used to inquire as to why I did not give the notices, but I told them they could give it directly to my boss. They usually kidnapped all the shop owners or the bosses and demanded money. We usually had to pay Rs. 10,000 as ransom, and if we did not they would dig bunkers in front of our houses. Due to that fear, people paid that ransom. If there was a bunker in those areas, the army would frequently visit, and the LTTE would then attack these areas and seize vehicles if there were any. With time, it went from bad to worse. Initially, they were doing it on a small scale but they did it openly after the 1983 riots. (246)

Usuf Sameen from Usmaniya Road, the owner of a mutton shop and a hotel in Usmaniya Junction, states that the LTTE collected one-fourth of their earnings. He also stated that they had to pay the LTTE to move the cattle. He mentioned that the meat business also had "police problems", which meant that even the police demanded bribes. But he said that the LTTE generally paid for the 5 -10 kilos of meat they bought and did them no other harm. (097)

M.M. Issatheen related the context around the time of the expulsion, describing the extortion practiced by all the groups.

Certain groups like the Tigers, EPDP, PLOTE, E-ROS, TELO, and EPRLF were being formed. In 1987, the most important goods were restricted. Then these groups came to shops demanding 100 rice packets and 100 rotis. If they were not supplied with what they wanted, the shop owner would be in danger. It was very difficult to earn with them. They also made us pay taxes. (255)

The intense militarization in the area is indicated in the story of A. Salfeer who was a child in Jaffna when it was under the militants.

We played "kittipul", "kilithatu" and the games like "police and thief". I think we were eager to play this game as we were experiencing the fighting between the LTTE and
the Army. It was once discussed in the media- on TV. Therefore, we used to play, realizing it was a real battlefield. For example there was a small LTTE camp near our house those days. As kids we went into their huts, and they would give us the AK-47 after removing the magazine. Because the magazine was the important part of the gun, when they gave it, we boys would play with it. We saw many weapons while playing. (381)

S. Bathurudeen of Jumma Masjid road, a fisherman, related the following story of how he was compelled to stop fishing.

We couldn't go to sea to fish because one day they butchered a group of people who went to sea in a boat. There were about 40 who died and they were Christians from Karaiyur. I used to work with these people. I didn't go to work on that day. They said that this was done by the Black Tigers. I stopped going to sea after this. After that my wife and I used to steam 'puttu' and sell it to the shops to earn a living. It is during this time that the problems increased. We all stayed at the Velanai mosque at that time because we used to live in front of the fort. When we sought refuge in the mosque we would have difficulty finding food. It is when we were there that they asked us to leave within 2 hours. I was 41-years-old at that time. (013)

The arrival of the Indian Army in 1987 resulted in the displacement of a large number of Muslims from Jaffna and from elsewhere in the north. Many of our testimonies contained accounts of the manner in which Muslim families left the area to escape the constant shelling and fighting between the Indian army and the LTTE. M. Mansoora of Arali road mentions being displaced to Puttalam because of the fighting between the LTTE and the Indian Army. They stayed in Puttalam for three months and returned to Jaffna (226).

Hairun Niza of Kamal Road recounts that they lived a life of contentment until the arrival of the Indian army in 1987. She states that

We lived a happy life till 1987. The Indian army came here that same year. We suffered a lot at that time. In the morning we would cook and eat our meal, and then in the night we would run here and there to mosques and schools. We took rice in the night to eat in the place where we stayed. The war was at its peak at that time. The houses were bombed, and the army went on routine rounds. Even they were scared. That is the reason why we went and spent our nights in public places. My mother- in-law would never come out of the house. She said that she would rather die in the house than come out. I had a child in my womb, and I fell many times when I was coming. Once the war between the LTTE and the army became vicious, then my husband forcibly dragged his mother out. There were bombs falling in to the houses, so we had to bring my mother- in- law. We had to take her by force. She died on the spot after being struck by a bomb. (218)
Chapter Four

During the time that the fighting was most intense, Usmaniya College was a refuge for many Muslim families with young children. One woman, A. Sulthana of New Moor Street, Jaffna, recounted an experience of staying in Usmaniya College when the shells were falling, and another experience of a relative who would leave the shelter to go home to cook food for the children.

We had an elderly aunt. She would tell us to stay with our young children inside the school. She would collect money from us and go and cook food and bring it back in food containers. She could cook fast and bring the food by 12 noon. We had a lot of children. In total there were 3 families. So she would go with a few men and bring the food for us. In the evenings, we used to buy bread and give food to the children. Though we didn’t eat proper meals we had to feed our children. We suffered like this for a week. Then we lost everything and came here. (025)

The following account by R. Fayisa of Moor Street is a fascinating narrative of the problems faced by Muslim communities during the conflict, and the manner in which women were compelled to deal with the death and destruction that occurred routinely in their lives in a war zone.

My mother was not very interested in associations etc., but she was a popular person. She would help a lot in matters relating to young girls and others. She would come forward for anything. Once, 32 people died as a result of a shell attack, and she bathed all the ‘Janasas’ (all were female ‘Janasas’) alone. All the houses that came under this attack were destroyed. The army was on one side and the LTTE were on the other side, and shell attacks were happening here and there. It was my mother who bathed them in a hurry and buried them. It was a very difficult time. They were in the mood to shoot anyone they saw. (009)

While the arrival of the IPKF and the resultant intensifying fighting was one reason for the displacement of 1987, the increase in recruitment activities by all armed groups—recruitment that targeted Muslims as well—was a significant reason behind Muslims starting to leave Jaffna. Our testimonies indicate that the LTTE and other militant groups were then recruiting youth, including Muslim youth, into their fighting forces. Many women recounted the manner in which they had left for Puttalam in the late 1980s to protect their young sons. The testimony of A. Sulthana of Moor Street is one of these accounts. She states that they relocated to Erukulampitiya in the Mannar district for fear that their sons would be abducted. She also mentions that many whom she knew were abducted (025).

We were in Erukulampitiya in 1987 when there was the fear that the Tigers were taking boys. Four months after coming back in 1989 we were displaced again. A lot of children were taken and a lot of parents were very sad. They took them from our

17 The Arabic term for funeral rituals/death.
own relatives as well as from the others. Nothing was heard of those who were taken. They took many. (025)

S.H. Hairun Niza of Kamal Lane also mentioned that they had left because of the threat to their sons.

We left the village before 3 months. My children and my sister’s children left the village at that time. I had 5 children and my sister had 5. We left 3 months earlier to protect our children. Our duty was to protect the boys. We could not send the boys alone, so we had to go to Puttlam with them. The groups were blaming each other for the abductions of boys. They didn’t abduct boys under the age of 18. (218)

M. Meerana of Manipay road had the following description of life in Jaffna when the abductions were taking place.

If we had stayed in our home town we would have faced problems. We were scared to even make a trip to the shops. They started abducting all the children no! When my son went to the shops, my elder daughter would say that a child was being abducted. I would leave my cooking and go in search of my son. We lived there in fear with no peace of mind. (238)

We have one story of a person being abducted and harassed to join the militants. A. Mahroof of Kamal road, Jaffna, described how the EPRLF abducted him to force him to join their group.

When the elder one was 1 year old, the EPRLF started to kidnap people. EPRLF people chased after me, and I hid inside my house. EPRLF members came and banged on the door with his shoes. They came in and started kicking me. I was beaten mercilessly; they even climbed on my chest. I was also kidnapped and asked to join their group. I told them ‘I am married and I have a child’. Then they handed me over to the Sikh army, who returned me to the Sri Lankan army. (095)

The testimonies pointed to a steady trickle of people leaving the area during the time of the Indian army, due to the level of threat, the escalating conflict, and the abduction of youth for conscription purposes. Puttalam also seems to have been a receiving centre for people from the north, from before the October expulsion (001).

**Disappearances**

The Committee on Disappearances in the Jaffna Region\(^\text{18}\) mentions 35 Muslims allegedly taken by the LTTE. The names of the disappeared persons and the location of the family member who had made the complaint are mentioned below.

\(^{18}\) Report of the Committee on Disappearances in the Jaffna Region, October 2003, Human Right Commission, Sri Lanka
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of the Disappeared Person</th>
<th>Location of the Complainant (Family Member)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdeen Buslock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ramseen</td>
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<td>Rafee Khan</td>
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<td>Mohamed Rameez</td>
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<td>Ratmalyaya, Puttalam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nakeeb</td>
<td>Kurunegala Road, Puttalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najeeb</td>
<td>Mullipuram, Puttalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ainudeen</td>
<td>Palavi, Puttalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abubacker Ranook</td>
<td>not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badurdeen Barook</td>
<td>not mentioned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the families of the disappeared spoke to the Commission as well. The following accounts are excerpts from testimonies.

A.J. Sabeela of Jaffna told us of an abduction carried out by the LTTE that remains unresolved to date.

One of my younger brothers was captured by the LTTE. He and all the other brothers were tailors. They called and took him away to tailor their uniforms and he never returned. Till today he hasn’t come. By worrying over this my mother became hunched. (180)

J. Samsunissa spoke of the LTTE kidnapping her husband and five others in 1991 in Thandikulam and not releasing them.

My husband was kidnapped in 1991. He worked in several types of business. As poverty increased he went to Vavuniya. I told him not to go but he did not listen. He worked in Thandikkulam with five people but unfortunately while they were at work the LTTE kidnapped all of them. I even asked about this from the Army, but they told us that they are helpless and they also confirmed that it was the LTTE that had kidnapped them. I do not know whether he is alive and it’s been nineteen years since the kidnapping. They had kidnapped them because my husband and his colleagues
had entered the place of work from which the LTTE had restricted Muslims entering. (204)

S.H. Hairun Niza of Kamal Road also mentioned the disappearance of her husband’s brother.

My husband had a brother who was younger to him. They said that the situation had become better between the period 1989 - 1990. After that, we went to Jaffna. My brother-in-law’s younger brother lived there. By that time, the Indian Army had left Sri Lanka. There were groups such as the EPDP, EPRLF and the LTTE. One of these groups abducted my brother-in-law. We did not know which group did this. We had to go to Kilinochchi and back home several times. We couldn't find our brother-in-law. He was captured when he was 18 years old. He has not returned since. They also captured my sister’s son. He managed to escape, and he is very happy today. Although he escaped, his brother could not come back. We don’t know whether they shot him or whether they had him alive. (218)

Usuf Samin of Osmania Road told us another tale regarding disappearances (097). He spoke of the abduction of both his son and his brother.

I want to say something before I talk about the displacement. My son Niyas was 18 years old. He did not have any connections with any of the groups. At that time, the EPRLF group was taking on young boys. My son was studying in Nachchikuda at my brother’s place. My entire family went to Jaffna from there. We told our son not to come to Jaffna because the LTTE was in control of the area. But my son came back in the next bus. When we asked why, he said, 'We do not have to fear anything'. There was a small problem with my son’s friend regarding a rental property—a shop—that people could bid for. My son’s friend was a leader of the LTTE. One day his friend came and said, 'No one can take the shop except me'. Later, in 1987, my son was kidnapped. We searched for him. They had given my son to the Indian Army, and had left him. My brother submitted a petition. In 1992, my brother was also captured. We were searching for him everywhere. They said they had him, and that they would release him after the inquiry. But until today we have not found him. He would be 38 years old if he were alive. He was killed. (097)

In addition to the above testimonies, women who had lost husbands and sons spoke with the Commissioners during the Commission sittings.

Hussein Thalima spoke of the abduction of her third son, Abdeen, on 03/12/1990

Najeeba spoke of the abduction of her husband, Thansil, on 20/04/1991 in Thandiyamkulam.
Zareena spoke of the abduction of her husband while they were displaced to Mankumban from Jaffna in 1989. He was one of the 35 business people kidnapped by the LTTE.

Noorjahan spoke of the loss of two of her sons. One of them was abducted before the expulsion. When people were leaving in 1990, she and her family had stayed back because of the loss of their son. The other son, too, had been taken at that time.

The Committee on Disappearances in the Jaffna Region investigated 327 complaints of disappearances—mostly against the military. However, they also looked into complaints made by 35 Muslim families against the LTTE. The Committee's report stated the following about the missing Muslims:

The Jaffna political leader of the LTTE, Mr. Ilamparuthy alias Anchaneyer, gave evidence before us and made a general statement that arrests were made by the LTTE during the relevant period only for the purpose of investigation and punishment of crimes. When we asked about the 35 complaints regarding Muslims who had disappeared, he disclaimed any knowledge. This list of these 35 cases was given to him, and he undertook to check with their records and reports.

But no reply has been received in spite of several reminders over the telephone and in writing. There was no response to our attempts to reach the LTTE hierarchy at the Political Headquarters in Kilinochchi to get information about these disappearances.

(Report of the Committee on Disappearances, 2003, p. 27-28)

In Chapter three of the report, the Committee offers the following conclusions on their findings:

Since most of the Muslim complainants have been displaced to Puttalam, we held a sitting in Puttalam and another in Colombo to record their evidence. But information of the fate of the Muslims who disappeared has been just as difficult to come by, as in the case of the Tamil disappearances. It is only in respect of the manner of arrest that there was a difference. The Muslim arrests were done openly and in public, whereas several of the army arrests were not. But thereafter the transparency ended.

In the circumstances we have no option but to hold the LTTE responsible for the disappearances of 25 Muslim persons we inquired into. The transparency ended as the families had no communication from the LTTE, neither was any relevant information provided to us, in spite of reminders." (Report of the Committee on Disappearances, 2003, p. 33)
Chapter Four

Conclusion

This chapter described life in the north under conditions of war. The account featured multiple narratives--of coexistence with the LTTE; of harassment by the LTTE and other groups; of harassment by the army; and of abductions by the LTTE. The purpose of compiling these narratives was the need to document the experiences of the northern Muslims in the Northern Province and the manner in which they, too, suffered the consequences of the war prior to the expulsion. This record is meant to dispel the myth that the Muslims somehow missed the war due to the expulsion.
A MUSLIM CONCENTRATION
(MOOR STREET) IN JAFFNA TOWN

(Hasbullah, 2001, p. 21)
Chapter Four

MAP - 2

MUSLIM REFUGEE MIGRATION ROUTES (OCTOBER, 28-30, 1990)

(Hasbullah, 1993, p. 24)
MAP - 3

LOCATIONS OF MUSLIM VILLAGES IN NORTHERN PROVINCE

Mannar District
1. Thalaimannar
2. Karikal
3. Pudukudiyirippu
4. Thullukkadiyirippu
5. Keeri
6. Erulkalampiddy
7. Tharaparam
8. Mannar
9. Vidathaitivu
10. Petiyamado
11. Minakkan
12. Andankulam
13. Ullankulam
14. Vaddakkundai
15. Rasoolputhuvelli
16. Alawakkai
17. Puthdravankadai
18. Poomuravankalam
19. Murukan
20. Nanadai
21. Nachchikulam
22. Manakulam
23. Ilankulam
24. Pandaravelli
25. Poonochikulam
26. Sinukkulam
27. Puthuvei
28. Musili
29. Varivelai
30. Koolankulam
31. 4th Mile Post
32. Veliyankulam
33. Pichchaivaniyankulam
34. Veppankulam
35. Polikeni
36. Vannankulam
37. Ahahimurippu
38. Thammattammusikadu
39. Chillassorai
40. Kandachchi
41. Karadikuli
42. Palikuli
43. Manichikaddi

Vavuniya District
1. Poonestham
2. Pedianichchur
3. Pulliyankulam
4. Kakkayankulam
5. Sooduvandapalivu
6. Sambakkulam
7. Puvakulam
8. Nenyankulam
9. Chettikulam
10. Andiyappiyankulam
11. Manikulam
12. Vavuniya Town
13. Sippikulam
14. Aarevurthi
15. Vadavavana
16. Kayakankulam

Mullaitivu District
1. Mullaitivu Town
2. Mulliyaval
3. H感啊aram
4. Thanerurru
5. Neeravipity
6. Thanamurippu
7. Muthyanakadu

Kilinochchi District
1. Pooneeryn
2. Moenampiddi
3. Nachchikulada
4. Kilinochchi Town

Jaffna District
1. Jaffna Town
2. Moer Street
3. Chunnakan
4. Mannukpinni
5. Chavakkad

(Hasbullah, 1993, p. 23)
Chapter Five

Expulsion Stories

As the report has explored so far, the horror of the expulsion made October 1990 a watershed in terms of both Muslim identity and Tamil identity. The LTTE finally created a mono-ethnic north by driving the Muslims out of their homes. However, the cost of this act to the Muslim communities of the north and to the multi-ethnic nature of the province is still to be fully understood. The stories in this chapter will attempt to contribute towards a better grasp of the moment of the expulsion and its precipitation of a horrific mass exodus. As Thiranagama notes, “[t]hese stories have been rendered invisible not because of the traumatized silence of those involved—any visit to the refugee camps shows the desire of northern Muslims to speak about and narrativize their lives—but because of a rigidity of representation of the conflict and of who are considered its victims and subjects.” (Thiranagama 2011, 108). As we discussed in Chapter 3, it has been problematic for Muslims in Sri Lankan politics to ensure that their predicament is recognized as an aspect of the conflict that is worthy of record, comment, and discussion in negotiations for a settlement to the conflict. The primary intention of this project, as stated elsewhere, is to challenge this "rigidity of representation" and to broaden the general understanding of the conflict in terms of its many victims—including the northern Muslims.

During the consultative process in which the LST engaged prior to the project, northern Muslims urged the Commission to take into account the manner in which the LTTE used different tactics in expelling Muslims from the different districts. This chapter is constituted from the northern Muslim community's 375 expulsion stories collected by the Commission via researchers. It is disaggregated in terms of geographical location and consists mainly of quotes from the testimonies—quotes that describe experiences of LTTE brutality during the expulsion; the journey away from the north towards an often-unclear destination; and arrival in Puttalam and elsewhere.

The Mannar Experience

The Mannar district housed the largest concentration of Muslims in the Northern Province, and three different areas of Mannar underwent different experiences of expulsion due to their location, the population concentration, and communities' relations with the LTTE. Therefore the section on Mannar is divided geographically into three sub-sections: Mantai and Nanaddan, Mannar Island, and Musali.19

19 The practice followed by Hasbullah in Muslim Refugees. The Refugee People of Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict is utilized here.
Manthai and Nannadan Muslims

Located in the northern parts of the Mannar district, this area was home to a large population of Muslims. There were 33 Muslim villages in the area with a population – according to the 1981 census – of 26,161 (26.1% of the population). Some of the larger villages in the area include Vidataltivu, Periyamadu, Minnukkan, Andankulam, Vilankuli, and Vaddakandal. According to Hasbullah, there is an ancient history of Muslim habitation in the Assistant Government Agents’ (AGA) divisions of Nannadan and Manthai. Perhaps founded by Arabs engaged in trade prior to the advent of the Portuguese, these settlements are mentioned in the earliest commentaries. Later, the Muslims of that area engaged in diving for conch shells and in "sea transport." (Hasbullah, 2001 P. 33) During that time, Hasbullah speculates, interior movement could also have taken place due to persecution by the Portuguese. Prior to the expulsion, Muslims from these areas were mostly engaged in agriculture. According to the refugee survey of 1991, the Muslim communities of Vidataltivu and Periyamadu owned 5,700 acres of paddy land irrigated by 7 tanks in the area. This area is in the northern part of the Mannar district and includes the coastal village of Vidataltivu, as well as the more interior areas of Vaddakandal (Hasbulla, 2001, p. 33).

Testimonies indicated that, well before the actual event, rumours had circulated about the possibility of the LTTE chasing people away from the area. When the people of the area had asked the LTTE if there was any truth in this rumour, the LTTE had denied it and convinced them that no such thing would take place. Many seem to have been eager to accept the reprieve. M.C. Ithroos Marikkar of Vidathalthivu states,

We heard the rumour about a month before the event. As it was ploughing season, we asked the LTTE what we should do. They said 'Go ahead and we will not chase you away'. I ploughed 04 acres of land and prepared the field in 13 days. Then, as I was returning home, I met a friend who told me that we will not meet anymore. I asked him why, and he said that he had got word that they were going to ask us to leave. I came home with a heavy heart. It was raining heavily. Four days later, we heard the announcement in the mosque. We were asked to hand over all household things. We were not allowed to take anything; we had to give it all to the LTTE. We left all our things behind us. The house took us 5 years to build, and it was all my hard work and sweat --the things in the house as well. We could not bring anything with us. (302)

As the above excerpt indicates, there was some information circulating in Vidataltivu about the possibility of an expulsion; however, many people had accepted the LTTE’s assurances. It was on either 25 October or 27 October (the date is not clear in the testimonies) that the LTTE had made an announcement over loudspeakers ordering Muslims to vacate their homes by 31 October. Muslims were told that they first had to bring their valuables—everything, from their vehicles to wall clocks—and hand them over to the LTTE at a designated place. This process —of ordering people to hand over their valuables to the LTTE— had been very
disturbing for the population. They remember it with anger even now. Mr Ferozkhan states that:

    The worst thing they did was to take all our things from us by asking us to bring everything and hand it over to them. Even the wall clock was not spared. They asked for things, one by one. First they wanted us to bring our vehicle. Then they wanted us to bring the motor equipment. Most of the people in our area were farmers. Many of them owned watering machines. They wanted us to bring them too. They also asked for the sewing machine. At last we were left with only one cycle for ourselves- which we wanted to use to leave the area. On the last day they took that as well. Nalan was responsible for overseeing our area, and he told us to vacate. “Don’t scold us. We are “ambu” (only the arrows not the shooters). “We are only conveying what we were told to convey to you”. (191)

It is also noteworthy that Mr. Ferozkhan considered the intervention by the local cadre Nalan – Nalan’s statement that came close to an apology-- as worth recounting in his testimony to the Commission. It resonates with many other stories recounting how it was not the local cadre but others from “outside” who were responsible for administering the expulsion in many parts of Mannar.

Referring to the LTTE confiscating valuables, Abthul Raheem said, ”My brother unplugged the cables and wires of the lorries, knowing that the LTTE were coming to take the lorries away, but they still took them away” (211). Several testimonies mentioned these measures and other minor arrangements made by Muslims to prevent the LTTE from confiscating property. Few of these had any effect (see below for an account of burying valuables).

**The Journey**

According to the testimonies from the area, the LTTE assisted people with transportation up to Poonthotum. Several testimonies recount this fact. One states that people stayed overnight at Madhu church where they were provided with food. After Poonthotum, people had great difficulty in walking through the jungles to reach Vavuniya.

Talking about the expulsion, M.M. Abdul Majeed of Adampan Vaddakandal, complained about the Army’s inaction.

    None of the Army personnel stopped us; they did not even come to our aid. There was a huge Army camp called Thalladi next to the village, and there were nearly 3000-4000 soldiers, but none came to our rescue. There was another Army camp in Silavathurai. Even when the people of Silvathurai were leaving, soldiers just stood by watching. (254)

A.M. Abdur Rahman of Vaddakandal commented on the inaction of the Army camp stationed near the area.
When we were evacuated, neither the LTTE nor the Army was present. There was an Army camp at Thallaadi, Mannar. There were thousands of Army personnel in that camp. Nobody gave us shelter or security. All the economic resources of the Mannar Muslims were in the Mannar town. The Sri Lankan Army could not even secure that. (163)

Describing his experience of the expulsion, A.M. Abdur Rahman observed,

The LTTE asked us to leave in 3 days. Some of our villagers asked why they were sending us away. They replied by saying it was only for a few days, and then they could come back. Until then they asked us to count our belongings and give it to them (for safekeeping). They told us, 'Your coming back depends on the decision of your Minister, Mr. Ashraff'. After that we left. When we were evacuating they stole our vehicles. We had to get into the vehicles of Tamil people whom we knew, in order to reach Poonthotum, Vavuniya. We stayed at a school there. We stayed there for 3 days. We had to stand in queues to get food. It was a time filled with sorrow and heartache. (163)

Commenting on what his family had left behind, Abdur Rahman said,

We did not bring anything from our village. We left behind the pesticide shop, hundreds of cows, goats, hundreds of sacks of grain, the/a water pump and the furniture. We lost almost 8 - 9 lakhs of assets at that time. If we are to recover that we need at least 8 million rupees. (163 Vatddakandal)

Musali

The Musali Assistant Government Agent's division is the only Muslim majority AGA division in the Northern Province. According to the census of 1981, the population of Musali was 8705 persons. Located in the southern part of the Mannar Gulf, Musali is bounded to the north by the Aruvi River, to the south by the Modera River, and to the east by the Wilpattu forest; the western part has a coastline of 30 km. The Division comprises an area of approximately 500 square kilometers. The area is rich in natural resources. Paddy cultivation, livestock farming and fishing were its major economic activities. Prior to the expulsion, more than 75% of the total employed population among Muslims was engaged in agricultural activities. There was also a considerable population engaged in fishing off the coastal villages of Musali (Mohideen, 2004, p. 23).

A major irrigation system called Akattimurippu was the base for the agricultural activities of the farmers of Musali. This irrigation system had 65 minor sub-tanks supplying water through a 12 km stretch of major canals that irrigated a total of 5,800 acres of agricultural land. There is also another tank, the Viyayadi Scheme, which is used mainly by Muslims in Karadikkuli, Marichchukkaddi and Palaikkkuli (Hasbullah, 1993, 31). Both schemes have been defunct since the Muslims left the area. Historically, the Musali region has been noted for pearls.
Muslims (Arabs and Indians) are believed to have come to the Musali coast for pearl diving (Hasbullah, 2001, p. 31).

At the time of the expulsion, Muslims comprised 62% of the total population of the Musali Division (Hasbullah, 2001, p. 30). The rest were Tamils (both Christians and Hindus), and a few Sinhalese. Hanifa and Rahman estimate that the population expelled from Musali in 1990 was 12,000 (Hanifa and Rahman, 2010, p. 11).

At the time of the expulsion, there were 4 Divisions and 28 villages in Musali. Muslims were a majority in 21 villages in the area (Hasbullah, 2001, p. 30& 31).

At the time of the expulsion—as recorded in an earlier testimony—there was a fairly large Army camp at Silawaturai in the Musali DS Division. Many of those from Musali left by boat from Silawaturai, and some travelled by land to Anuradhapura and then on to places further south. In Musali, too, as in Manthai and Nannadan, people were asked to carry their valuables to designated areas and hand them over to the LTTE. In the Musali area, like in Jaffna, the Commission was informed about the LTTE abducting persons for ransom.

Describing his experience, L. Nayeem of Thammatta Musali in Silawaturai said,

> All of us were depressed after knowing that we were to be expelled soon. We did not know where to go. They did not allow us to take vehicles, and everyone was running here and there without a clue. It was raining heavily during that period. There was much land at that time and many assets. Most of the time people did not have hard cash in hand during that period. This is because people bought assets whenever they had money; they did not want to save in banks as it is contrary to Islam. We did not take anything with us when we left the village; we only had a few clothes for the children. The journey was very hard. We had to travel by boat, and, on landing, we stayed for a night on the seashore. We asked the Army for help after that, but they refused to help us and told us to continue on our journey. When boats arrived from Kalpittiya, we got into them and came to Kalpittiya. The people from that village helped us a little. We did not see any LTTE leaders at that time. We thought that we could return within two years. We thought we could return and restart our lives, but now it has taken two decades. (0131)

Following is a narrative of the LTTE’s abduction of Muslims for ransom—abductions that took place even at the time of the expulsion. Mohamed Sultan Ahamed Lebbe of Poovarasankulam, Murunkan, spoke about the manner in which he and some others were kidnapped and held hostage by the LTTE.

The LTTE kidnapped me and six others before the expulsion. Their names were Ahmed, Kareem, Mohammed, Kaasim, Abdul Kassin, Dawood and Wadood. We did not come during the expulsion. They locked us up in sheds and demanded fifty thousand rupees from each of our families to release us. We were released after four months and twenty days. At the start we did not know why we had been kidnapped,
and when we asked them, they said that the Leader would come and tell us the reason. When we were released we asked the LTTE where the Muslims were and they said that they had been chased to Vavuniya. We did not see the Leader, but we had seen the person called Kadir who used to come to the place where we were locked up. That place was well secured so that the Army men could not get in. Mr. Anthony Pullay arranged the money to secure our release and then I came to Vavuniya after they released me.

I left behind tons of cultivated paddy. I had 150 cows and a tractor and its parts, and I also had a rice mill and machinery in it. Whether we liked it or not we had to leave all of this behind. I even had 35 acres of land which I used to farm. Finally I reached Puttalam with nothing, wearing torn clothes. (189)

We learned from descriptions of the expulsion experience that in Musali, too, some of the tactics used were the same as in other places like Vidathalthivu. Gafoor Raheem of P.P. Potkerni had the following story.

Two LTTE members came and informed our mosque leader that they were going to evacuate all the people. They were told that everyone should leave the place without removing any belongings. Further, they gave instructions to announce this information to everyone by loudspeaker. Next, they ordered evacuation with instructions to leave sewing machines, tractors, cattle etc for their people who were in Veppankulam.

In another testimony from Musali- from a coastal village called Kondachchi in Silavaturai- M.S. Mohamed Ali gave the following reasons for leaving.

I was forty-five years old at the time of the expulsion, and I had eight children, all of whom were studying. They had informed the other villages to vacate, and those people were passing our village- that’s how we got to know that the LTTE was expelling people. We knew that we were next, and we could not continue living there as the village’s problems gradually mounted day by day. We, too, decided to vacate. We came together as one family. We did not carry any of our belongings with us; we had to leave behind all our valuables at home. The journey was very difficult. We had to go through a lot of hardship as the journey was by boat. We thought we would return to the village in a month or two, but unfortunately it has taken two decades. (129)

Another narrative from Kondachchi captures the mood of the people at the moment of leaving – the mood was that this was a very temporary move and that they would return soon. Almost every testimony that we read indicated this mood in some way, and we wanted to capture it. A clear expression of this mood can be found in the following narrative by J. Asma Umma of Kondachchi, Silavaturai.
Our thinking was that this problem would end in a short period of time, and that we could return to our village. That is why we left all the goods at home. We thought it would be like a journey to the neighbouring village. My father reminded us to take the mammoty and axe, because we would need them to cut through the forests. We came here with a belief in our heart that we would be able to return. (166)

**Mannar Island**

Mannar Island is considered to be one of the oldest and most important Muslim settlements in the country. According to Hasbullah, evidence of Muslim settlement on Mannar Island dates back 13 centuries. At the time of the expulsion, the main settlement areas in Mannar Island were Erukalampiddy, Mannar Town- both Uppukulam and Moor Street, Tharapuram, Puthukudiyruppu, Keeri, Karisal and Talaimannar. Most of the information that we present in this chapter was gathered from residents of Erukalampiddy and Puthukudiyruppu.

M. Rukiya of Puthukudiyruppu made the following observations.

I was 34 years old at the time and my husband was 35. It was 8 years after my marriage. I never thought we would leave our town. The LTTE announced that they wanted us to come to the mosque for a meeting. When we went there, they told us that we had to leave immediately and gave us 2 - 3 days to leave. They told us not to take many things as those things belonged to them now. At this time some even received death threats. I left everything behind. We left behind furniture, house, lands (I had about 15 acres of farming land), sacks of paddy, 100 cattle, 10 - 15 sovereigns of gold. The sad thing at our village was that when the Army came there was no LTTE to be seen, and when the LTTE came there was no Army on the streets. (107)

Sameena, also of Puthukudi Irrippu, has a narrative that is interesting for another reason. One of the stories that recurred in Jaffna in the immediate aftermath of the failed ceasefire agreement was of returning Muslims welcomed by Tamils, and also of them digging up their old gardens and re-discovering their buried gold.

We left on the 25 October 1990 at 5 pm. The LTTE came to the village and announced through the speaker that we had to leave immediately by the route they showed us. About 40 cadres came to our village, arriving at all our houses and demanding Rs. 10,000/- or 10 sovereigns or that we give up the house and leave. They came at the time my husband was having lunch. When they asked me where he was, I said he was not at home as I was afraid they would take him away; I did not let them come in. Then I heard from other people that they had robbed houses in the night, so I removed all my jewellery, put it in a tin and buried it. (085)

They came again and asked for my jewellery. I told them that I don't have any with me now. I asked them to take things from the shop and leave. They said, "It was there in the morning and how come it's not there now?" One of them got very angry, shot at the table in the shop, and smashed everything. They behaved in a violent manner.
From next door they took away all the sacks of paddy they had left. Then the mosque leaders gathered and decided that we should all leave together, and so we left. (085)

Sameena later stated that she was able to recover the buried jewellery on her husband's return in 1996.

Juwairiya of Erukulampidi offered the following narrative about the expulsion.

We heard from the other districts about this. By dawn there was tension among our people as well, in case they asked us, too, to leave, but we didn't know whom they would ask to leave and to which location. We felt it was very unlikely that the LTTE would say such things to us because they had got along very well with us all those years. We strongly felt that they would not ask us to vacate.

But around 4 in the evening, LTTE members arrived in a van and made a public announcement, giving us only 24 hours to vacate the place. It was only then that we realised how violent and dangerous they were.

We did not have a roadway at that time. Our only access out of the area was by sea. The roadway was destroyed due to the war.

Can you imagine the plight of a whole village of 5,000 families having to vacate? We didn't have any boats. We had to walk for 3 - 4 miles before reaching the seashore. There weren't any boats, and we had to wait there for some time. At that time, some Catholic priests spoke to the LTTE and requested them to give us another day. Afterwards the government heared about this; and some Muslims from other parts of the country sent boats from Kalpitiya to fetch us. At that time, we had to pay around Rs 1,000/- per person. (239)

Nawasdeen's story of expulsion is presented below.

When I was forcibly sent away, I was 23 years old. The Tigers came in vehicles and informed us both directly and through our religious leaders (they were given letters), that we should leave the area. It was like the Day of Judgment. In 4 days we left the area. We walked, some traveled by vehicle. We had to wait at Inthum Thennum Pillayadi, and our village leaders helped us a lot to travel from there to Kalpitiya. They were in Colombo at that time, but they discussed the situation, hired boats with their own money, and helped us to travel from there. Some families were given Rs. 2,000-5,000. Even in this situation, some people took advantage of things and profited by it. When we were travelling, some men with guns searched us and took away all our belongings. This affected people very much. The number of people in the boat was many more than the boat could hold. Allah saved us and nothing happened to us. It was raining at that time, and it felt like our last day. We reached our destination without encountering any problems. It took us 8 hours. We were very
thirsty and hungry, but we were not too concerned about it. We were more concerned about our safety. We had to carry our father who was paralyzed. We also carried pregnant women. We did not bring any of our belongings, we left everything behind. We thought at that time that we would be able to return soon. Some of the things we left behind are land, houses, radios, vehicles, shops-- the value of it was 15 lakhs. I left books which were worth 5 lakhs. We did not know at that time that it would take us 20 years to return. If we had known, we would have brought the money and the jewellery. (297)

Ramsiya of Erukalampiddy spoke of the sadness and shock of being asked to leave, as well as the good relationship that had existed between the people and the movement before October 1990.

I was 23 years old when we were displaced. I had 2 children at that time. One child was 2 years old, and the other was one year old. We heard that people were going to leave the village. They asked us to leave before Friday. We left before that. We came to Mannar and then reached Thirukkethiswaram from the Pallimunai Sea. We didn't expect that they would ask us to leave. They were very close to the people in the village. They would ask for food, and we gave them. We were very close to them before this incident happened. They stole all our things a few days before they asked us to leave. They stole things from the rich people. We left the place as soon as they asked us to leave. We cried when they asked us to leave. (231)

In his narrative, Sahul Hameeth of Puddikudurippu reflects some of the anger and frustration felt by the people over their inability to resist the LTTE and the expulsion order.

The LTTE cadres in Mannar asked us to vacate our village by saying, “cadres from Batticaloa have arrived 20 and before they come and massacre you, get away from this village.....” They wanted us to leave on the 27th. We were helpless at that time; we did not have weapons in hand. There was a Muslim youth group called “JIHAAD” but it was not recognized by the villagers at that time. So we could not do anything against them. The LTTE had also kidnapped two boys from that JIHAAD group in Erukalampiddy and Puddikudurippu. Both were very active chaps. All of their weapons were confiscated as they knew our weakness with weaponry. And then they chased us away. If those boys were there at that time they would never have allowed this to happen to us; they would have defended us to the death.

Our village, Puddikudurippu, had a relatively small number of residents; in the end there were only 6000 families in our village. There were 15,000 families residing in Erukalampiddy, which was next to our village. If these families consisting of large

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20 Other testimonies indicated northern cadres mentioned Karuna’s name when threatening northern Muslims with violence from the eastern cadres
numbers had put off their departure for a few days, we would have done something, but once they left, we were helpless, with smaller numbers, and began to vacate the village at the given time. (262)

**The Journey**

It was not common practice in the area to use the sea for purposes of transportation. However, people from Mannar Island had to use boats due to the destruction of the Thalladi Bridge and causeway. Furthermore, people from parts of Musali, too, traveled to Kalpitiya by boat. The journey by boat was difficult, alien, and seemed dangerous to many, especially in the heavy monsoon rain. Sahul Hameeth of Puddikudurippu provided the following description.

It was raining heavily in “Thawukadu”, on the seashore. With all my small children, it was a struggle to get a boat. Some asked for Rs. 15,000/-. Then I decided to give 600 and the boatman said that he could only drop us in “Vankalai,” Mannar, and refused to take us/come with us beyond that point. He was afraid that the Navy would shoot him. Then we came to an agreement and reached “Vankalai” Mannar near the coastal border where everyone left except for a few families. At that time another kind hearted person offered to drop us in “Kuthurimalai” near the big boat (supplied by the Navy). For this, too, we spent around Rs. 500-600. Then everyone got into that and came. There were a few elderly mothers whom we carried and managed to get into the big boat. Minister Aboobakkar provided food to those affected people who had traveled by sea in many boats. Some were alive during the journey, while others had fainted and vomited and suffered a lot until we reached the Kalpitiya Jetty at night. We were clueless about the place at which we were dropped off, but people from that village helped us and took us to a school. After a week, a few people including my family, were sent to Kurunagala by lorry; we stayed there for 10 months. We did not have jobs at that time, but the villagers were very helpful. The compensation that we received was insufficient for our needs. (262)

The following narrative was offered by N. Risana of Erukalampidi, who was a child during the expulsion.

Within/in 3 days we came to "Inthu Thennam Pillaiyadi" by tractor. We did not carry any items from home except for the clothes that we were wearing. They asked us not to carry any goods and jewellery, and they checked us at “Inthu Thennam Pullaiyadi” and permitted us to leave the place. From there we hired a boat belonging to a Tamil person for Rs. 5,000/-. Nearly three families got into that boat and it began to capsize halfway to our destination. In the middle of the sea, we were transferred to the other boats behind us. It was raining heavily at the time of our journey. That was one reason that the boat started to give trouble. The boatman was a known person. The LTTE did not allow any of the Tamils to come to the borders of Mannar. They took a
list of all the names, including that of the boatman, before people climbed into the boat. So he decided to give a Muslim name and we proceeded on our way. While on the way, an LTTE boat arrived and checked everyone again to find out if any Tamils were travelling with us. We thought the boatman would get caught but fortunately they did not identify him. So he dropped all of us safely at the Kalpittiya shore and came back. We started our sea journey at around 11 am and we reached Kalpittiya at 7-9 at night. It got very late due to the rain and also due to the transfer of passengers to the other boat. We had to keep the two boats very close while transferring people from one to the other. During that time, a woman placed her hand on the edge of the boat and it got jammed with the other boat. She was injured and bleeding. The journey was very frightening until we reached Kalpitiya. (389)

Many left all their belongings behind, mostly expecting to return within a week or some months at the most. Therefore, many found it painful to talk about the things that had been left behind to which they had not said goodbye. In answer to the question, "what were the things you left behind?", Juwairiya of Erukalampiddy made the following statement.

Those were unlimited. I don’t want to think about it. My father left behind a lot of things. Perhaps things worth millions. Also we left behind vehicles, as well as movable and immovable properties. Lots and lots of things were left behind. (239)

The Mullaitivu Experience

One of the five districts of the Northern Province, the Mullaitivu district came into the spotlight in the final stages of the conflict in Sri Lanka, and has, in fact, been deep within the LTTE stronghold for a greater part of the conflict. One thousand families of Muslims were expelled from the Mullaitivu district by the LTTE in 1990. According to the District Secretariat office, Mullaitivu district was created in 1979 combining areas that were previously covered by Mannar, Trincomalee and Vavuniya districts. This district occupies the Eastern part of the mainland of the Northern Province. The Mullaitivu district has Kilinochchi district on its northern border, Trincomalee district and Vavuniya district and part of the Mannar district in the south, Mannar district in the west, and the sea in the east. It covers a land area of approximately 2516.9 sq. km (including forest area, excluding large inland waters). This district accounts for 3.8% of the country's total area.21

The Commission collected testimonies from Mullaitivu Muslims who were from the villages of Thaniyoothu, Neeravippidi, Hijrapuram and Mulliyawalai. Many of the testimonies indicated that in the case of most areas of Mullaitivu, Muslims were collectively displaced twice--first in 1987 during the time of the Indian Peace Keeping Force, and finally due to the expulsion in 1990. Many of the testimonies recounted the intense fighting that took place in areas close to Muslim villages. According to our testimonies, almost the entire Muslim

population of Mullaittivu was displaced in 1987. Many stayed in places in Vavuniya and Puttalam during that time and returned at different intervals. The displacement to Puttalam in 1987 acted as a prelude to the arrival of the Mullaittivu Muslims in Puttalam in 1990. Many spoke about their familiarity with Puttalam in 1987, and the fact that many helped them during that time, as motivations for families to return to Puttalam when the expulsion happened. It should be emphasized, however, that the exodus of 1990 was solely on the directive of the LTTE.

In one of the testimonies collected by our researchers, Abdeen Mohamed Mustapha of Mulliyawalai offered the following narrative.

We left our native place once in 1987. Then we were put through the expulsion by the LTTE in 1990. When we left our native place in 1987 we stayed in Madurankuli and returned to Mullaithivu after 6 months. In 1987, there was fighting between the Indian army and the LTTE so we had to move in order to safeguard our lives, but in 1990 we did not come voluntarily. It was the LTTE that chased us. (029)

The events leading to the displacement of 1987 as well as the experience of leaving had been harrowing for many families. Furthermore, some Mullaittivu residents who were displaced in 1987 never went back and remained displaced in Puttalam under dire conditions. A.L.M.I Pakeer Mohitheen of Hijrapuram described the situation in his village in 1987, particularly the manner in which one of his cows was killed by a shell, and a soldier was killed in front of their house in full view of his children—all of this affecting them deeply, and compelling him to leave. He also claimed to have suffered from chemical poisoning used by the combatants (he did not specify who). He is still unwell as a consequence of that experience. In his case, the final departure from Mullaittivu was in 1987. M.L. Sultan of Neeravippidi stated that he left because he had heard that others were being driven out of the area. Abdeen Mohamed Mustapha stated that he left because of the threat of the Indian Army.

In 1987, we faced a lot of difficulties in terms of food. There was no food, so we moved from our place of residence for this reason. We returned after things became normal. The Indian Army was there and we returned only after they left; then the LTTE chased us away. (029)

Very different narratives emerged of people leaving from different places in Mullaittivu. For instance, Abdul Gafoor from Vannankulam stated that they left of their own volition in mid 1990, and that the LTTE had not pressurized them in anyway.

We knew it was going to get worse so people were scared for their lives. They began to leave slowly in 1990. The ones who did not want to leave stayed back, but the Tamil people knew what was going to happen and they arranged buses and made all the Muslims leave as well. We did not face any immediate threat from the LTTE. When we left in 1990, they asked us not to take any assets with us. We took what we could. At that time I was working in Omantai. The LTTE told us not to take the vehicle and there was a petrol scarcity as well. We walked from Mullaittivu to
Chapter Five

PuthukudiIrippu, then from there to Nedunkeni to Vavuniya on foot through the forest. People from other villages helped us a lot along the way. (082)

Subaitha Umma who lived in a small village (name not given) close to Hijrapuram also stated that they left of their own volition and not as a result of pressure from the LTTE.

When there was fighting between them, they said that if we wanted to save our lives we should leave. But they didn’t say that we should leave within a specific time period. When everyone was leaving, we, too, left and joined them. But the Tamils did not do anything. (028)

However, there were others whose narratives were very clear about the nature of the two moments of mass displacement—that in one instance, the Muslims had left of their own volition due to the increased military presence in the area, and that in the second instance, in 1990, they had left under compulsion by the LTTE. The following narrative from Abdeen Mohamed Mustapha recounts the manner in which those last moments before the expulsion were experienced.

How was it announced? Two people from the LTTE announced that everyone must come immediately to a meeting held at a school. We went to the school. There were a few LTTE members who said that all the Muslims in the north must leave immediately. They gave us two days to leave the place. At that time, my cousin Asim who worked as a manager had a tractor. He asked whether he could take 24 families in it. They agreed to this at the meeting, but the following day the LTTE took the tractor away. Then they said that no one could take any property/wealth that was earned on this soil. This was said by people who used to get along well with us at one time, people whom we knew well. When we questioned them, they said that they were merely carrying out orders from the top and that they did not have any answers to our questions. They were adamant about subjecting the Muslims to expulsion. Later, they announced over loudspeakers that the Muslims could not take anything with them or sell it to the Tamils. The Tamils were also asked not to take anything from the Muslims to safeguard it on their behalf. We were on good terms with them before this, and they, too, were like that with us. During this time, there were 1000 Muslim families in the Mullaithivu district (Neeravippiddi, Thaniyoothu, Hijarapuram and Mulliyawalai). There were Tamil villages around us. When they loaded us on to the buses and asked us to leave, the Tamil people were very upset. Even they were unable to reason with them. When the LTTE wanted us to attend their meeting, we had to go whether we liked it or not; otherwise we would have been shot and hanged on lampposts. (029)

Abdul Gaffoor provided the following description of the manner in which the expulsion took place in his area of Mullattivu.

First the LTTE held a meeting for the Tamils in our area and warned them not to accept any of the belongings of the Muslims there. Then the next day they held a
meeting for us. They told us to evacuate within 24 hours. They also told us that Muslims in Batticaloa had formed a Jihad group so we are asking you to leave our land and go beyond Vavuniya. We were 35 families in all when we left, and could not bring many things. We asked them to give us a vehicle as there were many children. So they hired a CTB bus for us to go to Omantai. Then some of the people who knew Sinhala spoke to the Army there and they took us to Vavuniya in the Army vehicle. (082)

The narrative of Sithy Kamila who lived in Hijrapuram also recounts the fact that the two instances of leaving were different. Her story expresses intense feelings of grief and anger over having to leave behind the life that she had built in Mulaitiwu.

I was 30 years old when we were subjected to expulsion in 1990. I was pregnant with a son at that time but I already had 6 children. Furthermore, we were displaced in 1987 before we were subjected to expulsion in 1990. Then we came to Puttalam and to Kadayamodai. After 1 ½ years we returned to our native place. All 6 children were studying during the expulsion. People were talking about how everyone had started moving out of the area. Later, they (the LTTE), too, announced this. When we learned that we had to leave, we were very upset. How do you think we felt when we had to leave behind everything that we had saved, little by little, for our children? I locked the door and threw the key into the bush. We didn’t take anything with us and left with a lot of anger. I took only a set of clothes. We travelled with our fellow villagers. We brought our children’s school records, as well as land deeds and clothes. (032)

As already recounted, the cadres in the different areas seem to have used varied approaches in telling people to leave. There were also certain similarities in their approaches. As was evident in some testimonies from Mannar, in Mullattivu, too, the threat of cadres from the east—both Karuna and Karikalan are named—was raised. Cadres frequently referred to the massacre of Muslims in Kattankudi and Eravur earlier in the year, when asking people to leave. Kamila of Hijrapuram stated, “The LTTE told us that there is a Karikalan group in Batticaloa and they might come here and kill you and that is why we are asking you to leave.”(062)

The Journey from Mullaitivu

The journey from Mullaitivu to Vavuniya was harrowing, and many stories of the horrors that people encountered were recorded in the testimonies. One narrative recounted how people had encountered two male elephants fighting and had “run for their lives.” Many unfortunately recounted the manner in which local Tamil people had seemed cross with the Muslims for leaving and had refused them even a drink of water. Ummu Kulthum from Hijrapuram made the following statement.
We asked for water from Tamil people but they refused and told us to drink our own urine if we were thirsty. They were angry because, once we left the village they were the ones who would have to bear the harassment of the LTTE—that is why they scolded us in that way. We were very hurt. Finally we were so thirsty that we drank water drunk by bats and crows. (036)

Kamila from Allampil (5th mile post) offered the following narrative.

We walked about 65 miles. We did not have clothes to change into from the ones we were wearing. There was no water to drink. We went begging for water and they said they will not give water to Muslims. Then we travelled in a lorry and stopped at a Tamil house— they gave us water to drink. Then we stayed there for a night. All of us were crying as we did not know what else to do. (062)

Sivathamma from Thaniyoothu provided the following description of the journey.

We prepared food on the way and ate once. We did not stay in one place because we did not feel safe anywhere. We walked continuously and our legs were swollen and wounded at the end of the journey. We packed what we could on the cycle and brought it along with us. We could not walk fast as we had to see that the children were doing alright. On the way, one of my sons developed chest pain as we had walked a long way. We got water from another family. We could not ask the Tamil families who were in that area as they refused to give us water; they said they would invite unnecessary trouble because of it. (176)

Sivathamamma recounted the manner in which a relative of hers had to give birth while on the journey.

One of my sister's daughters was pregnant and had labour pains on the way. We stopped at a Tamil house and asked for help but they refused. Then we almost fell at their feet and asked them to at least give a small shed for her to deliver the child. So they gave us the goat barn. After she had the baby, they asked us to leave immediately. The daughter who had just given birth had to carry the newborn and walk with us. We reached Kakaiyan Kulam and stayed there for 5 days and then came here. It was a hectic 3-day journey which we will never forget in our lives. (176)

The choice of Puttalam

Puttalam seems to have been known as a place with a sizeable Muslim community. Therefore, the choice of Puttalam as a place to seek refuge seems to have been quite clear and simple for most Muslims. In fact, most had naturally gravitated to Puttalam in the 1987 displacement, and the same pattern seems to have been adopted in the wake of the expulsion of 1990. Many of the testimonies (057 and 062 for instance) referred to Rahim, a person who
had come to Puttalam in 1987 from Mullaittivu, who had organized transportation for expelled Muslims to travel from Vavuniya and had provided relief assistance in Nuraichcholai. As S.M. Ismail of Neeravippidi said, “They got us to settle down in a place near Nuraichcholai called Lanka Rani Gardens that was owned by the government. Nuraichcholai locals got us food by seeking help from everyone possible. In that way we must show our gratitude to the people of Nuraichcholai” (057).

The Kilinochchi Experience

Kilinochchi district had one of the smaller concentrations of Muslims in the northern province. Located in the sparsely populated Vanni region, the Muslim communities of the district consisted of ancient villages, like those of the coastal Nachchikudah, as well as the more interior recent government settlements like Vaddakkachchi. Hasbullah names three other locations from which Muslims were expelled in 1990. These are Pooneryn, Moonampiddi and Kilinochchi town. The people of Kilinochchi engaged mainly in fishing and agriculture. The village of Nachchikuda had a significant fishing industry and was famous historically for pearl and conch shell diving (Hasbullah 2001,37). The stories from the smaller communities of Kilinochchi are a little different from those that emerged from Mannar and Jaffna. The size of the communities was much smaller, and there seems to have been a lower level of threat brought to bear by the LTTE on the communities in order to make them move. These communities were far more vulnerable than the others. While the fairly widespread practice of abduction for ransom was evident in Kilinochchi, the LTTE had refrained from confiscating people’s money and jewellery in some communities. The rules seem to have been relaxed further away from the Movement’s administrative centres and when applied to poor and vulnerable rural communities.

Nachchikuda

S. Safiya Umma of Pallawarayankaddu, Nachchikuda, described her expulsion experience in detail. It is quoted at length here since it is a textured story that gives us an idea of life in Nachchikuda at the time. For instance, it refers to the Jaffna Muslims being displaced there at some point; the close interactions between the Nachchikuda people and the LTTE; the harrowing experience of being told to leave; the kidnapping of her husband for ransom; and having to leave in lorries “like animals.”

I was forty three years old when I was expelled. I had eleven children and a few grandchildren. Two of my daughters and sons were married, and my other children were studying. During the troubles, people from Jaffna and Chavakacheri came to our village. Around eight o’clock one man told us that the LTTE had expelled people from such places. Therefore, the next day our men asked the LTTE whether they had any such plans for us but the LTTE said there wasn’t any such problem. I even told my father about the incident but my father did not believe me. But the very next day, in the morning, the LTTE announced to us that we were not to worry as they would
give us a fair decision, but at the same time, they asked us to surrender our cattle and other valuables so we were really not sure. They took away all our cattle and fishing equipment. We gave a lot of stuff to them and they also ordered the Tamils not to take any of the valuables of the Muslims. On Friday, after Jummah they announced in the mosque that Karigaalan had asked to cut the Muslims into two, but they told us that they didn’t want to do so because they had taken food from us, so they asked us to vacate the village before six in the evening. The Tamil villagers were very happy to know that we were vacating but they did not show that they were happy. All villagers, including us, had to suffer in a lorry like animals. We did not bring anything except clothes. We had the house keys and a few other valuables, but they took everything away from us by setting up checkpoints. They sent us out by taking everything away. Everyone was screaming, and most were very depressed to leave the village. It was a night journey and it was raining heavily and many places were flooded, so we suffered badly. We first came to Periyamadu—that’s where we first stopped. The LTTE had kidnapped my husband and some of the other people, so we told them that we would not leave until they released our people. All these people were kidnapped due to money and other property issues, but since we protested they released them in Pallamadusanthi. No one helped us during the journey, but after we came to Vavuniya, the men from the Army helped us. The LTTE told us that we will be able to return within one or two months. It is with that trust that we left the village. They even told us that they will take care of our valuables and belongings. We were happy because we could all leave together, but the journey was horrific. Now it’s been twenty years since the Expulsion. (134)

Some of the same elements are in the story told by Masoona who is also from Nachchikuda. This story also mentions assistance given by Tamil neighbours.

I was 35 years old when this event took place. My children were studying. We got to know that all the villagers were leaving, and they informed us too. Before this incident took place, people from Jaffna came to our village and settled here with their belongings. Then they announced that we should leave in 2 hours, and asked us to give them all our cattle and other valuable goods. So we gave all to them. We gave a lot of our belongings, and they promised us that they would return them. When they asked us to leave, we didn’t know what to do. We had to protect our lives and our children. It was the rainy season and it was raining heavily. This happened in the month of October. With the idea of saving our children, we took all their certificates and two or three other things. Since the Tamil people stayed back, we gave them some of our belongings. Those Tamil people behaved in a very decent manner. They were concerned as well. What could they have done? Who can they worry about? Us or them? They could not stand up to the LTTE. (M. Masoona, 232)

A different experience emerged in Vaddakachchi, another settlement village in Kilinochchi from which the Muslims were expelled.
I was 42 years old. My life there was only for 42 years. All my children were born back in the village and my wife was expecting my youngest daughter at that time. My wife was 9 months pregnant. My daughter was born eleven days after arriving here.

They chased us out from there on the 25th of October 1990. They chased people away from Jaffna on the 30th. They gave us only 2 days' prior notice. The LTTE told us that if we don't leave the place in 2 days, they could not guarantee our lives. They said that they would give us a vehicle to travel in, but they didn't. We hired a vehicle from our own money and left that same night. We had to leave before 12.00--that was the reason we had to leave in the night. The LTTE told us to travel beyond Vavuniya and not return. I used to travel to Jaffna and back during that period. The people in Chavakacheri were moving out. They left all their houses and lands, and took only a small bag with them. I was afraid, looking at them. I wondered whether they would ask us to go as well. And then they chased us out. (217)

They asked us all to come to the mosque. There were 3 LTTE cadres there. They told us, "all of you have to leave this place and we are giving you 2 days' time for you to leave." When we asked why we had to leave, they told us "you go and ask Ashraff this", and they also added another sentence. They said that all the things for which we had toiled and earned in this land now belonged only to them. So we were asked to leave everything and go. They told us to only take our clothes and depart. They wanted us to lock our houses and hand over all the things and the keys to them. The LTTE stayed in one house and started collecting all the things. I went there to see what was happening, and they asked me if we had any money or jewellery. (217)

We left all our furniture, house, land and 15 hens back in the village. We didn’t have vehicles. We had a new bicycle, and, since we didn't have money to travel, we sold that to a Tamil man. He gave us Rs. 3,000/-, he was a good man. This man also asked me to take the bicycle up to Vavuniya and to return it to him later. He was such a good man. After I had taken the money from him how could I take the cycle back? That was the money thathed helped us. (217)

M. Jasmin's story emerged from yet another location in Kilinochchi – Iranamadu. The LTTE did not confiscate people's money and jewellery in this location, and this place was the exception. This was probably because the community was small – only 18 families.

I was thirty two years old when I was expelled. I had three children then, two sons and one daughter, and all three were in school. My husband's relatives lived in Chavakacheri, and the LTTE had asked the people of Chavakacheri to move out. My husband’s brothers told us to find another place to live as there were lots of problems. My husband said that there would not be any problems as such, but within fifteen
days of the warning, they expelled us. At that period there was an organization named RDF and I was a member of the women’s association of that organization. I asked them about this problem, and they told us that there was a problem in Batticaloa. However, they told us that they did not know the exact issue. We asked some of the known LTTE cadres, but they told us that they would not do such a thing to us. But on the fifteenth day, LTTE cadres came to the village. They called all the men and women and checked them. They told us that Karigaalan had asked us to meet him. They also asked us to vacate the village as it belongs to them. They told us that they need to redeem their lands. They did not allow us to take any of our valuables or other belongings; they promised to give our valuables to us as soon as they redeem their lands. They told us that they didn’t have any problems with us but the leaders of the LTTE had issued stern orders for us to vacate the village. Initially the LTTE had planned to kill us, but fortunately they spared our lives. There were only eighteen families in that region at that time. They ordered the Tamil families not to take any of our belongings. They took away the ration coupons as well. They told us that they would give the coupons back to us when we return to the village. Some of them were sad to see our departure from the village because they had a good relationship with us. They told us that they would guide us up to Vavuniya. They did not grab our jewels or money. All the families came together, and we did not bring anything except the money and the jewellery. We were expelled on the 25th of October 1990. Our journey was not too difficult as we had money, but after we came here it was difficult. We met some of the LTTE cadres but they did not put any hindrance in our way. However, no one helped us as they knew we had money and jewellery with us. We thought that we could go back to the village within six months or a maximum of one year because the LTTE had promised us that they would call us back to the village, but it did not happen that way. (133)

Expulsion Stories: Jaffna

According to our testimonies, the local Tamil people in Jaffna had been aware that the LTTE had plans to expel the Muslims. In early October, there were meetings and discussions about the possible expulsion. Muslims had even visited the LTTE offices in Jaffna and inquired about the imminent threat of expulsion. They were told that they had nothing to worry about, but the expulsion took place in Jaffna on 25th October.

The expulsion was described in the following manner by M.S. Muhseen who ran a bicycle repair shop and lived on 8th Cross Street in the new Moor Street area.

I was 24 at the time. My family had moved to Puttlam only six months before our departure, and I was not married at the time. The LTTE office was just in front of my shop and it was a friend there that informed me about the plan. At 7 in the morning they made an announcement, requesting all the Muslims to gather in the Jinna
playground. By 11 a.m. Anjaneyar22, the leader of the LTTE group there, arrived on a motorbike. He climbed on it and told us that we need to evacuate within 2 hours and that we can take the money we have and 'go to the land that Ashraf is giving you'. The LTTE had kidnapped some people at the time and we asked them what they were going to do with them. "We will release them later" was the answer we received, and they commanded us to leave. I gave away all my cycles to the people who were leaving as I knew it would help them. Most left on the same day, hiding their money and in the cycle bars. Those who did not leave were taken to the Manohara theatre and kept captive there, and I was one of them. (018)

On 25th October 1990, the Muslims of Moor Street (Sonaha Theru) in Jaffna were asked by the LTTE to gather at 8.00 am at the Jinnah grounds, a place that was part of Jaffna's foremost Muslim school, Osmaniya College. At that meeting, the LTTE leaders stated that Muslims should leave that place within two hours. According to our testimonies, people were told to either leave or stay and hand over their children to the LTTE—in other words, to commit themselves to the struggle for Eelam. Our testimonies also referred to the fact that they said the people of Jaffna were allowed to leave, whereas the people of Batticaloa were not given that option—they were killed.

In his testimony, Hameem (of Manipay road) quotes LTTE eastern area leader, Karikalan, especially the manner in which he announced what he called the shocking news.

He stated, 'due to some reasons we are going to send you out from your places..... If you fail to leave your area, we are not responsible for your young girls, your belongings and your lives'. (090)

In his testimony, Nazeem (of New Moor Street, Jaffna) told us of a section of people that had been asked to gather at the 5th junction (Ainthu Sandhi) and were addressed by Anjaneyyar, another LTTE leader. He had told them that Karikalan wanted them to leave. Anjaneyyar had also stated, "Your minister Ashraf will give you a land and a house to live there". (141)

Usuf Sameen of Osmania road mentioned how the LTTE had given them the choice of staying and contributing their children to the struggle. He stated, "they told us that if you choose to stay, give your children to us and stay." Said Sameen, "they also said, 'if all of you do not leave, later do not say they slaughtered you and they killed all of you like in Batticaloa'"(097).

As stated earlier, we encountered many stories of multiple displacements. A. Subaitha of Kamal Lane, Jaffna, described the reason for leaving Jaffna before the expulsion.

22 Some testimonies refer to Karikalan as also being present here.
Our house was located near the fort so my husband was unable to bear the sound of shelling. He had a heart attack as well, so we left very early. We stayed in Karaitheevu for some time and then returned to Jaffna. The evacuation happened soon after that, and we left Jaffna once again in July 1990. (0314)

M.S. Muhseen, quoted above, also recounted the manner in which he had handed over his house keys to an LTTE cadre that he knew.

I had given my house key to an LTTE cadre whom I knew. He refused to give it (back) but he did return it later, and then I took whatever I could and gave it to my neighbours. I asked for the key again since I had forgotten to take the documents, but they refused to give the key. I travelled on my own to Puttalam in a lorry and did not bring anything with me. (018)

Muhseen’s account illustrates a variety of points that have achieved the status of folklore on the expulsion-- that Muslims handed over their house keys to the LTTE for safekeeping, and that they handed over various valuables to their Tamil neighbours. It is also a poignant point of reference for two moments: when the LTTE cadre whom Muhseen knew could not find the compassion within himself to let Muhseen collect his documents from the house before he left; and the point at which Muhseen perhaps encounters the reality of the expulsion with the sense that his home no longer belongs to him.

M.T. Saleem of Jinnah road offered a similar account of being asked to leave. Saleem was already almost 50 years old at the time of the expulsion. He had spent most of his life in Jaffna, and having to leave at that time was a harrowing experience. His testimony reflects his state of mind.

When this happened I was 49 years old and had been married for 22 years. They announced this over the speaker. They asked us to gather in the Jinna playground. When we went there, the LTTE were heavily armed. They asked us to leave within 2 hours. Then we said, “We associated with all of you like brothers, so why are you doing this to us?” They replied by saying that we had been given Ampara and Puttalam, so we should go there. They wanted us to leave behind all our belongings with them. They said if you have two things of the same kind, take one, and leave the other. We took what we could and walked to the 5th mile post. (249)

In Mankumpan, the people were not aware of the tensions brewing between the Muslims and the LTTE, and of the fact that some in Jaffna had expected the expulsion. Therefore, they refused to leave when asked to do so by the LTTE. At that point the cadres had threatened them with weapons. In one of our testimonies from Mankumpan, K. Jameela provided the following account.

When we were asked to leave, we stood strongly opposed to it. Then they came equipped with bombs and guns, which scared us. We had never seen such things in our lives. (257)
There were many accounts of money being confiscated and jewellery taken off women and girls. A. Sulthana of New Moor Street said, "They were very unfair to us as we left. We were not the only ones, there were many others with a lot of jewellery, and they confiscated all of it. The people were scared so they mixed milk in a bottle and put the jewellery into it and fried adai with bangles in them, but they took those away from them too. (025)

Usuf Sameen of Osmaniya Road also mentioned the manner in which the LTTE took goods away from him and his family at the checkpoints.

Portable things were allowed to be taken. We took our cycle, mat and the clothes we were wearing. I had 6000 rupees in my pocket while travelling; they took that money, returned 500 rupees to me and said it would be enough. They had lorries and asked us to leave in them. They locked us in a theatre called Manohara. They allowed us out only the next day. We were allowed to go the next day after we had been checked. It was raining. Even my children's earrings were removed. Female Tigers checked women personally to see whether they were carrying anything inside. We had bought an Indian sarong for the son who was kidnapped, in case he returned; even that was taken away. (0097)

An account by A.R.M. Mansoor of Mankumpan contained a report of some Muslims complaining to LTTE leader Niresh about this while at the Manohara theatre. Niresh had said that the cadres were not instructed to do this. The people then say that they realized this was a form of looting by the cadres, perhaps without the consent of the leadership. This report was just one instance. (094)

M.S. Isatheen's narrative described the rushed manner in which the expulsion was conducted in Jaffna. While the men were at the meeting at the Jinna stadium, cadres had already entered houses and were compelling the women to leave. The narrative also mentions how the Tigers had even taken the children's milk powder.

I was 35 years and married with 3 children when it happened. That morning I had gone to the shop. While I was in the shop I heard the announcement made on speakers that all Jaffna Muslims were to go to the Jinna stadium. We were very disturbed about the reason they called us, and also by what they wanted from us. When we went there, a person called Anjanayer, an LTTE head, conducted the meeting and asked us to leave within two hours. Some of us asked them why they wanted us to leave, and their reply was that they don’t need to answer such questions. As the only hope, we asked for more time, but they refused. Unable to do anything but make up our mind to leave, we returned home to collect our things. Unfortunately, even before we had left, Tigers had begun occupying our lands and houses, screaming at everyone to leave. Since our children were small, we did not know what to take. So we took only the milk powder for the children. When we were leaving, we were checked once again at the 5th junction, where they grabbed the
children's milk powder. I asked them to return the little ones' milk powder at least. They said you can take it from the other side, but they never returned it. There was one guy screaming at everyone to get in. (255)

Some narratives of the moment of expulsion gave off a palpable anger at the LTTE for the expulsion order and at the government for taking very minimal action to facilitate the movement of people. J. Samsunnisa of Jinna Road in New Moor Street, Jaffna, offered the following account.

None of the LTTE is alive today. It is our curse that destroyed them and made them vanish. We came with my whole family, and all were brought in the lorry like animals. First we were dropped at Karaithheevu, and from there we took buses to Vavuniya. Later, the Army checked us and then settled us in Poonthottam. There were many diseases caused by overcrowding in Poonthottam, and the government of that period did not take any action on these issues. (204)

J. Samsunnisa's testimony also describes another unfortunate consequence of the expulsion--for many, having to abandon the lives that they had painstakingly built, in this instance through working overseas.

My husband was working in Iraq. All the valuables which my husband had brought from abroad had to be left behind. And even the van which my husband bought had to be kept there. We did not have our own house, but we bought three acres of land. We lived in a rented house. (204)

The Journey

The next section of the chapter concentrates on narratives of the harrowing journey out of Jaffna to Puttalam, and, in some cases, to stops in Vavuniya and even in Colombo.

M. Mansoora of Arali Road describes the journey and encountering armed cadres in the following narrative.

While we were walking, we heard the Army on the side of the road say that this is a good lesson for us. Some soldiers were worrying about our state. Some were saying let them talk these matters with Ashraff. We didn't utter a word. We were scared. They had weapons. We couldn't really figure out whether they were the LTTE or the Army. (226)

It seems likely that these were LTTE cadres and not the military. The statement is, perhaps, prompted by the fact that Mansoora, like many women of Jaffna, left the house only rarely and therefore was not in a position to encounter either the LTTE or the military on a regular basis—at least not enough to distinguish between them in an encounter that took place during a highly stressful and very threatening situation. It seems also likely that they were speaking
in Tamil and, therefore, were LTTE cadres rather than the military. This also indicates the general harassment meted out to expelled Muslims by the LTTE.

The following account by M.S. Isatheen is full of pathos and one of many such that we encountered. He spoke of being unable to provide water for his young children; being compelled to ask a "sherbet shop"; being refused water; and then finally of a young Tamil who bought them soft drinks.

One incident that I should recall is there was a sherbet shop in Sangupitti. All my children were small at that time, so they were thirsty, and so we went and asked for water and they refused to give any. Then a Tamil boy came running and bought Soda and fed it to the children. That was unforgettable. (255)

The rest of M. Mansoora's narrative provides an illustration of the nature of the journey by foot undertaken by many of those expelled from Jaffna, as well as the manner in which the military assisted in managing the problem of so many people.

We suffered incomparable problems while we were walking. It is not easy to bring small children when having to travel such a long distance. It was very difficult. My eldest daughter carried my second daughter. I carried my youngest son. We took turns with carrying the children on the way. A Tamil lady saw me suffering with my child, so she asked me whether she could help me to carry the child. I was reluctant to give the child to her. She took the child and went in front. I was dead scared at that time, and only God knows how afraid I was. I hurried towards her and took the child from her. I had only one boy, I just took him from her and walked away. We didn't even feel that our feet were on the ground. That is the amount of distance that we walked. We started our journey after praying in the morning (before dawn). When we made it to Vavuniya it was 10 in the night. You can imagine how much we walked. My elder brother's wife was pregnant when she was coming with us. She was going through great difficulty, but continued to walk. Even my elder brother broke his leg in Jaffna. He suffered a lot. Somehow we made it. I would say that God helped us to get a room there. The Army showed us a room to stay. They asked everybody who came here to stay there. They asked us to wash ourselves. Later they asked the people who came here yesterday and the day before yesterday to gather in a certain place. Then they asked them to get into the bus. I was a bit scared after they said this. I thought about what they might do to all these people. At that time, we were scared even if people were kind or tried to help us. One soldier told us that there was a lorry waiting for us, and he asked us to get into it. We didn't even stay there for one day. They sent us away pretty soon. We should thank God, somehow we managed to reach Madawaachchi. We took another vehicle. It was loaded with a lot of people, so the people would step on our hands and feet. Some started to shout in pain, saying someone's stepping on my feet. Some cried saying someone's stepping on my hand.
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We got off at Ikrikollawa after being crushed like that. We got there on a Friday. (226)

The account of Meerana of Manipay Road in Jaffna captures the experience of two women who left with their children without the company of a male. Her description of the journey is worth noting.

My sister was close by. We left with them. When we left, they snatched all our belongings. It was very sad. We did not bring anything when we left. We brought only the children’s Birth Certificates. Even those got soaked at Vavuniya. We left on the 10th month. It was raining and the BC was soaked and torn. When mentioning about our travels, it must be noted that we endured much hardship. We were loaded into a lorry like cattle, and the children were howling and crying. They soiled their clothes with urine and all their clothes were wet. We suffered and faced many difficulties. What could we do? We had to get somewhere somehow or the other; that was our plight. (238)

The testimony of M.S. Jowfer of New Moor Street presents a much more harrowing account of the suffering of the journey, including mention of many deaths.

When we were coming here my cousin’s wife delivered a child in the jungle. It was a difficult experience. For our bad luck the child died. The elders were the ones who helped in delivering the baby. We didn’t know how to conduct a proper burial. What could we have done? We were helpless and we suffered so much. The people who passed away were buried there itself. They performed our rituals and buried them. I knew of such an incident. Then there was this elderly person- he was struck by a bomb right in his chest. We were resting when this happened. He died on the spot. Since they could not bring his body, they buried it behind the mosque. They performed all the rituals. The other person was a friend of mine. He had no problems, it was his wife. She was traveling in a lorry. She was pregnant as well. Suddenly a bomb hit the top of the lorry and pieces of the bomb fell on her stomach. Blood started pouring out. She fainted and died on the spot. I can never forget this incident. (225)

Usuf Sameen’s account is also of death on the journey.

The LTTE said they had arranged lorries from Poonakary to Pandivirichchan and they asked for money. We gave them 7500 rupees. While coming my mother-in-law got caught in the flood and drowned. So we buried her there and came. We were so scared, and we feared for our lives. (097)

M. Sareefa of Azath Road has a different account of a long journey that took them as far as Akbar Mosque in Colombo 2. It also makes reference to illness during the journey due to masses of people being confined to small spaces, and the manner in which individual
Muslims were mobilized to help the northern Muslims arriving at a time when state services were notably absent.

We got into a lorry and came to Vavuniya. It took days to reach Vavuniya and it was raining heavily. With the greatest difficulty we came to a school in Vavuniya, and there all of us got sore eyes. The army gave us medicine. After that they sent us by train to Colombo. We came to the Akbar mosque in Colombo 2. Then we were given meals, tea, and a place to sleep. In Colombo, we got down at the Fort railway station in the night. When we were at the station, young three wheeler drivers came and asked if we had come from Jaffna, and when we said yes, they asked us to get into the auto, saying that they will drop us at the mosque, saying that it is a safe place. It was 8 or 9 p.m. that night. We got into the trishaw, with the help of Allah, and the drivers did not charge any money. They had come to the station to help the displaced people. They took us to the Akbar mosque in Colombo 2. (315)

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the different harrowing tales recounted by northern Muslims about the expulsion in October 1990, including the journey towards an often-unnamed destination, and finally the arrival. It illustrates both the LTTE's proximity to the everyday lives of the northern Muslims, and the shock that people experienced at the moment of the expulsion because of this closeness. Statements like "we moved like brothers" and "we ate from you," that are attributed to both the LTTE and the northern Muslims, reflects the closeness. However, the expulsion itself, together with the confiscation of goods and money, the kidnapping for ransom, and the cruelty in the way in which the expulsion was administered in Jaffna, indicate the LTTE's final betrayal of the northern Muslims. The expulsion of close to 75,000 people, their mass movement affected the places through which they travelled and caused a stress on resources and facilities. The fact that the expulsion occurred within a war zone with ongoing fighting, and the fact that it was raining and flooding in certain areas, meant that the journey was harrowing. The chapter attempts to illustrate this aspect of the expulsion as well.

Due to space constraints, the chapter has used only some of the narratives collected by the Commission in order to provide just an indication of people's experiences. However, the Commissioners are also aware that, perhaps, the chapter has more narratives than it merits. Another one of the intentions of this exercise is also to give expression to the stories of as many people as possible. This chapter, the longest in the report, straddles its two intentions with some difficulty. We do not have sufficient information or expulsion stories from the Vavuniya district. At the time that this work was conducted a large percentage of those expelled from the Vavuniya district had already returned. In fact, Dr. Hasbullah's 2000 publication claims that, at that time, 60% of those expelled from Vavuniya had returned. Therefore this chapter does not have a detailed exploration of those displaced from Vavuniya.
Chapter Six

State Responses to the Expulsion and Two Decades of Displacement

In the northern Muslim community’s understanding of the expulsion, the government’s inability to protect the Muslim community from the LTTE looms large. The government’s inability to stop the expulsion, even though it was aware of the possibility – northern Muslim actors had brought the emerging difficulties between the LTTE and the Muslims to their attention – is something that northern Muslims often raise in discussions about the expulsion. Further, in the aftermath of the expulsion, the state was late in taking over the responsibility of providing assistance to the displaced population, and the larger Muslim community, especially the host community of Puttalam, was compelled to step in. Commission investigations indicate that the state apparatus was in disarray and completely unable to cope with an emergency of this magnitude that spilled outside the conflict-affected area of the north and east. As a consequence, the northern Muslims were compelled to depend on the goodwill of their fellow Muslims resident mainly—but not only—in Puttalam. While it is commendable that common community feeling is able to mobilize assistance in this manner, it is also noteworthy that the state’s inability to step in to ease the community burden can be a problem for good relations between different Muslim communities. As the Commission noted, relations between the northern Muslims and the host communities in Puttalam are under severe stress. This chapter is devoted to understanding the state’s provision of assistance to the northern Muslims prior to and after the expulsion.

The state provided dry rations to the northern Muslim community, periodically and somewhat unsystematically, for 20 years. The ration was discontinued early in 2011. Other than the rations, state assistance for the northern Muslims was provided periodically by Muslim parliamentarians and provincial councillors in power like Dr. Illyas, Douglas Devananda, and M.Ps Abubakr, Noordeen Mashoor, M.H.M Ashraff and Rishard Bathiudeen. As the list shows, the ministers concerned with the northern Muslims were mostly Muslim-- Devananda being the exception. The Commission observed that the northern Muslims were somewhat captive to the ethnic politics experienced by the country in the past several decades.

The Immediate Aftermath

According to the Commission's findings, the 1990 expulsion was marked historically through a parliamentary debate on 9 November 1990 entitled the Plight of Muslims in the North and East. The Muslim parliamentarians’ articulation of the problem is very clear; also noteworthy is the call—especially from Muslim members of the opposition – for an explanation for the government’s failure to act. Furthermore, the Commission felt that the government response
was inadequate to the questions posed by Muslim ministers. The responses indicated that the security of the Muslims of the north was not a priority for the state at that time.

A senior NGO representative from the northern Muslim community who spoke to the Commission on the condition of anonymity, stated that the leadership of the northern Muslims met with officials in Colombo when the situation was getting somewhat tense between the Muslims and the LTTE. He stated that the LTTE had confiscated valuables—not just household goods and jewellery, but also broadcasting equipment like radios. The LTTE had also begun to restrict the use of motor vehicles so that no one could use a vehicle without their permission, and also begun “borrowing” Muslims’ vehicles and generally disrupting Muslims’ day-to-day life. He said then that Muslims were beginning to realize that “their homes were not safe.” The educated leadership had then visited Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeyaratne in Colombo. Later, the Minister had held discussions with the Muslims at the Silawaturai army camp. Minister Abubakr also mentions during the parliamentary debate of 9 November 1990, quoted below, that the Defence Minister had committed to take all measures to ensure Muslims’ security. However, for reasons that are not clear to the Commission, the army was not able to intervene to stop the expulsion, not even in the case of Mannar Island. And additionally, as the information collected shows, the ground-level response to the expulsion was also insufficient. The testimony from NGO representative indicated that the army did not permit certain groups of the expelled northern Muslims to enter Vavuniya after the regular checkpoint opening period between 10 am and 3 pm; at that time, according to the testimony, the army compelled those people to spend the night in the jungle. There was heavy rain at this time, and, according to this and several other testimonies, many people were infected with conjunctivitis or “eye diseases”.

People also complained about the fact that, due to the LTTE blowing up the Thalladi Bridge three months prior to the expulsion, the people of Mannar Island were cut off from the mainland. People were marooned on the beaches of 'Inthu Thennam Pillayadi', waiting for some form of transportation. In this instance, too, although the government claims that the navy provided assistance, our testimonies indicate that people were compelled to pay for their own passage by boat to either Silawaturai or Kalpitiya (see below). Navy boats were available to transport people from Silavaturai to Kalpitiya, but none were seen off of Mannar Island. The deserted beaches of Einthum Thennam Pillayadi offer scant shelter and no jetties or natural rock formations of any sort that would assist the approach of boats or make it easier for people to board. People were compelled to walk into the water and clamber on to the available vessels (see Chapter 5).
Excerpts from the Adjournment motion: Plight of Muslims in North and East.  
Friday 9 November 1990.

Quoted below are excerpts from the Parliament discussions as illustrations of the conducting of the debate in the immediate aftermath of the expulsion as well as partial evidence of the state’s negligible response to the issue.

Member of Parliament Al-Haj S.S.M. Abu Bakar, MP for the Vanni electorate, stated matters as follows.

We are going through a dreadful period. Approximately 60,000 Muslims lived in Northern Districts before October but there are none today. It was an unfortunate situation for Muslims as they were expelled and as citizens they could not live wherever they like in this country.

On the 23rd of October 1990, the LTTE had ordered the people to vacate the place within five days. When I highlighted the situation to this house earlier the Hon. defense minister said the people would be provided with security. Regardless of his assurances our people were expelled without any proper security.

LTTE had not only expelled around 20,000 Muslims from Mannar they had also ordered them to hand over their shop keys before they left the village. Therefore they were unable to buy food from the 23rd to 31st. LTTE had forcibly entered their homes and taken all the properties and jewelry at gun point. LTTE had warned Muslims to leave before the 1st or that they will have to face dire consequences. Muslims were fearful when they also heard the killings in Eravoor and Kathankodi. Therefore they left all their belonging and came to Erukkalampitti seashore and stayed there for seven days. During that time they suffered a lot in the sun and the rain without food to eat.

They spent Rs. 200/- to Rs. 500/- for boats to cross approximately 40 miles by sea. I was there to welcome them and looked into their wellbeing in Kalpittiy. LTTE had given false promises: they had stated that “Jaffna Muslims do not want to vacate and we will not ask them to evacuate, but they have done just this since the 28th of October 1990. They had ordered them out over the loudspeaker from Usmaniya College. They said “you all have to leave Jaffna within two hours or you will be destroyed”.

Muslims from Mannar, Vedathalteewu and Periyamadu had come to Vavuniya through Madu church and Pandriwerichan road. Now they were travelling to Puttalamp through Madawachchi and Anuradhapura. Musali is the biggest AGA division in Mannar District. Musali Muslims were expelled after all their properties, nearly 50,000 paddy sacks and the cattle were taken away by LTTE. Hon.
Educational Minister said Muslims were ruined like this because they had asked for a separate state.

I left C/Zahira College after I settled them properly with the help of Jabir A. Carder. The President also made a statement after his visit to Mannar saying that Muslims will be resettled in their native places with the help of the navy.

All the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims should be able to live peacefully in this country and this should be politically stabilized forever. Steps should be taken immediately to resettle the 60,000 Mannar Muslims safely.

Everyone should notice carefully that State leaders are hidden servants of LTTE. Two thirds of the Muslims of this country are living outside the North-East Province. The steps taken by the state to protect the 60,000 Muslims are not enough. They should take steps to send these displaced persons to the Muslim settlements in other parts of the country and help them to live a normal life forever.

(Adjournment motion: Plight of Muslims in North and East. Friday 9th November 1990, Hansard pg: 1445)

Following is an intervention of Mr. Haleem Ishak, member of the SLFP, on the expulsion.

I am only sorry about one thing that the Government could not do. The bridge there was broken for three and a half months. There was an army camp in Thallady, but very unfortunately the army that was eight miles away could not go to Errukkalampitti and Tharakulam (Tharapuram) because the bridge was broken. I would like to ask the government, what action did you take for three and a half months without repairing this bridge? If the bridge was repaired I am sure the armed forces would have been able to go and assist them. Also, one of the newspapers reported that they had asked for naval boats but these were not given. I do not know the reason why boats were not given for them to be transported to safer places when their lives were in danger. (Mr. M. Haleem Ishak, Adjournment Motion: Plight of Muslims in North and East, 9th November 1990, Hansard pg: 1519)

Minister of Defence Ranjan Wijeyaratne's response to Abubakr, Haleem Ishak and others who raised the issue is as follows.

It is unfortunate, Sir, that the Muslims have been treated like this in Jaffna and Mannar. We would have taken over Mannar Island but we knew that a lot of people will die as a result of our trying to take over Mannar Island. That is why we put an army detachment at Thalady and we were watching the situation. They knew that we were going to advance and they broke the bridge, damaged the bridge—both the railway bridge and the causeway bridge. They were waiting on the other side for us. We could have taken over Mannar Island, but we took a decision, which I conveyed to this house, that we were going to create a refugee camp in Mannar Island because the exodus from Pesalai to Tamil Nadu had to be stopped. Pesalai is in Mannar
Chapter Six

Island. We were asking the ICRC to take over and create a refugee camp there until they can go to their homes. That is why we did not take Mannar Island.

When these LTTE criminals came from the Eastern Province and treated these Muslims in the manner they did in Mannar Island, we did not have enough forces to go in. Even if we had enough forces to go in, there would have been a blood bath. The Muslims of Mannar Island, when I met them at Silavathurai, told me, “Please hold your horses, do not operate just now. Take us away. Take all the Muslims away. Then operate”. I had to heed to their advice too, because a lot of deaths would have taken place. (The Hon. Ranjan Wijeratne, 9th November 1990, Hansard, Adjournment Motion: Plight of Muslims in North and East, pg: 1532-1533)

What was clear to the Commission from the questions posed and the responses given was that the government was only minimally prepared for the expulsion, even after being warned of its possibility. It is evident that the state did not anticipate the scale of the event, and it also seems clear that it did not anticipate having to intervene to protect the Muslims. The damaged bridge at Thallady and the lack of personnel at Silavaturai are all indicative of the fact that the army’s strategies and attention had been elsewhere.

We also found evidence, however, that certain state services had been provided by some state functionaries as soon as they had heard news of the expulsion; we want to make a note of that here. We heard that in the case of the Mulaitiwu Muslims, CTB buses were provided from Vavuniya.

We requested and asked helped from the Commissioner in Puttalam Social Service Department whom we knew during our 1987 displacement, “….as we could not stay there and we wanted to come out of the Vanni…” He helped us by sending 12 CTB buses belonging to the Sri Lanka Public Transport Service. By those we were able to transfer people from Vavuniya and Ikkirigollawa to Puttalam. We do not forget those people who helped us a lot (379, Thanthai Raheem).

There are many reports of the army organizing to provide both food assistance and some basic shelter facilities in public buildings for displaced people arriving in places like Anuradhapura and Vavuniya. However, the northern Muslim leadership also constantly reiterates the fact that although Muslims took 9-10 hours to reach the various destinations like Vavuniya, Anuradhapura, and Puttalam, and the exodus occurred in waves during the ten day period from 20 – 30 October, the state was not well prepared to receive the Muslims and provide them with even the basic facilities of water, sanitation and food. They also mention the fact that they had passed the offices of the UNHCR and the Red Cross on the way but that no one there had attempted to help them.
The following excerpts from M.H.M. Ashraff’s interventions during the parliamentary debate are also telling in their condemnation of state functionaries who did not help the northern Muslims.

On Wednesday the 7th of November, a group of 46 refugees from Jaffna who arrived at the refugee camp at Maligawatte Community Centre were not given shelter by the police who claimed to be on duty there. Later they were taken charge of by the people of the area and housed temporarily at the Maligawatte YMMA building. A party of policemen from Maligawatte Police Station had arrived there and ordered the YMMA officials not to accommodate any refugees in that building. This is a gross violation of the rights of the freedom of assembly and free movement guaranteed under the Constitution. (Mr. M.H.M. Ashraff, 09th November 1990, Hansard Adjournment motion: Plight of Muslims in north and east, pg: 1510)

In Puttalam, on Wednesday 7th, the Puttalam Police had entered a refugee camp housed at a government Christian school and forced them out of the school. The Muslim volunteers in the area had escorted these refugees to a Sinhala Maha Vidyalaya, but there again the police had arrived and ordered the refugees to leave. They were on the road in the pouring rain and there again the volunteers had provided alternative accommodation and meals for the refugees. Reports also indicate that all the police stations in the Puttalam- Colombo road are checking not for terrorists but for refugees. They are preventing the free movement of refugees.”

(Mr. M.H.M. Ashraff, 09th November 1990, Hansard Adjournment motion: Plight of Muslims in the North and East, pg: 1512)

The Commission, too, encountered an instance in which northern Muslims from Mulaitivu had been chased out of a government-owned coconut estate a few days after their arrival in Nuraichcholai. Several testimonies of persons from Mulaitivu referred to the following incident.

Lanka Rani Estate featured in many accounts as the place to which most Mulaitivu Muslims were taken in the immediate aftermath of the expulsion. However, the narratives around Lanka Rani Estate spoke of the state's abdication of responsibility and the manner in which the state officials even worked to undermine the efforts of the local community. For instance, both S. Suhara Umma of Chavakachcheri (075) and Abdeen Mohamed Mustapha of Neeravaipitty, Mulaitivu (029) recount the following incident. According to our testimonies, approximately 100-150 families had taken up residence on the state-owned Lanka Rani Coconut Estate. The people of Nuraichcholai had placed those families there temporarily in the immediate aftermath of the expulsion. However, on the 10th day, the GA had arrived with the police and chased them off the coconut estate. As stated in one of our testimonies, “we ended up under the trees.” Abdeen Mohamed Mustapha mentioned that they had had to carry the food that they had just cooked in the temporary conditions and walk off the estate (029). The testimony also goes on to say “The mosque leaders and the people of the town
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contfronted the police and got us that place back. The government did not help us in any way. It was the people of the village that helped by giving us food and other things” (029).

The initial establishment of camps was the work of the host community. Prominent persons like Dr. Illyas took the lead in establishing camps in various areas according to the manner in which IDPs arrived. Camps were set up in Kalpitiya, Nuraichcholai and Alankudah for those who arrived in Kalpitiya by sea, and in Thillaiyadi and Pulichakkulam for those arriving in Puttalam over land.

The incident at Lanka Rani Estate and other incidents that occurred, as described by Ashraff, in Puttalam and Colombo, are an indication of the state's failure to adequately recognize the threat to the Muslims (even after having been informed of it in early 1990 by people from the community), and of its inability to respond to the emergency situation when it moved out of the confines of the north and east arena of war.

**Government-sponsored Dry Rations for the Displaced.**

By January 1991, state assistance seems to have become somewhat better organized and a system was in place for the delivery of dry rations to displaced persons. Many displaced persons claim that dry rations was the only assistance offered by the government, and this is true for many who were not able to take advantage of the Unified Assistance Scheme which provided housing assistance (to build different types of houses) to those that owned land. While it is commendable that the state provided assistance to the community for nearly twenty years, it has to be noted that the administration of the ration led to a great deal of corruption, and that the ration amount itself was neither changed nor revised for this entire twenty-year period.

Following is the dry ration provided to the displaced persons under the government assistance scheme and the World Food Program (WFP) scheme. The WFP provided dry rations from 1992 and continued until February 2001\(^23\). The state took over the provision of dry rations after that, and continued it, rather irregularly and haphazardly, until late 2010. The ration provision in Puttalam has since been discontinued.

Dry rations were provided through the Commissioner General of Essential Services. Following is a description of the package of items (quantities are per person per month)

1. Rice 12 kg
2. Lentils 1.5 kg
3. Sugar 600g
4. Salt

Supplementary food items were also issued for pregnant and lactating mothers, as well as for children under 5 years of age.

Amounts given in terms of food stamps are in the following values:

- Family of five – SLR 1200
- Family of four – SLR 1008
- Family of three – SLR 840
- Family of two – SLR 616
- A single person – SLR 336.24

Most northern Muslim IDPs with large families complained of the lack of provision to offer extra supplies for families with more than 5 persons. We encountered many northern Muslim families that had more than three children in the nuclear family---in fact, a family with only three children was a rarity. Also, many households included extended family members---aunts or grandparents or married children---who were unable to access the ration within that particular household. Further, the ration amount translates to barely 8 rupees per person per day, which is inadequate under current living conditions. Therefore, the stipulated rations provided by the WFP and the government decreased considerably with time. The calculation was based on the cost of living index of 1987, and was not revised since. The following excerpt from the testimony of a Mannar resident, A.M. Abdur Rahman, contains many of the most pertinent issues raised by northern Muslims regarding rations.

We came to Poonththottam, Vavuniya. Muslims in that area helped us. Neither the government nor any private organizations came forward to help us in that situation. The government gave us a coupon worth 630 rupees only later. That was given in 1991. Our family had 11 members. All of us had to be satisfied with only one coupon worth 630 rupees. At that time one kilo of rice cost 10.50 rupees. So we could buy close to 50 to 60 kilograms of rice. We still get the 630 rupee coupon, but we can only buy 6 kilograms of rice from it today. The value of money has depreciated. (163 Vattakandal)

Another problem that the northern Muslims often complained of was the low quality of goods that they were compelled to buy at a higher price at the ration dispensing co-operative. For instance, a 2006 petition by the People's Secretariat mentions that "[t]here is a vast difference

24 Extracted from Shanmugaratnam 2000 and from the Petition on Dry rations formulated by the People's Secretariat in 2006 and the report on Improving Service Delivery to Internally Displaced Persons in Puttalam (SLFI 2001): section on the WFP. It is worthy of note that the ration amount even in 1990 fell below the standard stipulated by the UN Guiding principles on Internal Displacement. http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/GuidingPrinciplesDispl.pdf accessed on 10th October 2011
between the prices at the co-operatives and that of the private retail outlets. (e.g. High quality rice is sold by the private retail dealers at Rs. 28/- while at a co-operative shop the price of a kilo of poor quality rice was Rs. 35/-)\(^{25}\).

Due to the poorly organized and corrupt method of ration delivery, and due also to the extreme cash shortage faced by many of the most vulnerable members of the northern Muslim community, the ration card pawning business became a lucrative enterprise within the entire Puttalam area. Many northern Muslim families pawned their ration cards as security against cash loans taken for various health related emergencies and other cash needs. The demand for cash was so high that many pawned their ration cards for less than the face value of the ration amount. The card was then utilized by the lender—as interest on the loan—for an agreed upon period of time. Research on the subject includes a number of commentaries on the exploitative nature of this practice (Brun 2008, Shanmugaratnam 2001). In instances when the ration distribution was delayed, the ration card worked as guarantee of payment for loans taken to buy food items. In some ways people saw the ration Mudalali as providing a much needed service for the displaced northern Muslim population (Haniffa, 2008, p. 9-10).

The Conditions of Displacement in the early 1990s

In 1991, a team of researchers under S.H. Hasbullah's leadership conducted a comprehensive survey of the conditions of displacement under which the northern Muslims lived. Titled The Refugee Survey, this investigation looked at a variety of factors, including the assets left behind by the Muslims. In a 1993 report written on the basis of the survey information, Hasbullah outlines the dire conditions under which displaced persons continued to live two years after the displacement.\(^{26}\) Additionally, the report traces the manner in which Muslims who had moved to areas other than Puttalam gradually moved to Puttalam, two years after the event, because Puttalam was perceived as a secure area that was also friendly and responsive towards northern Muslims.

The report also presents useful information on the nature of the state response in the early years of the displacement—information considered noteworthy by the Commission. According to Hasbullah, the displaced persons were refused entry to Colombo (Hasbullah, 1993a, p. 6). Dry rations were not supplied for one and a half months in Kurunegalle in 1993. The reason for this, according to what the report alleges, is officials thinking that the displaced persons would go back to their places of origin if dry rations were withheld; instead of returning, however, the displaced persons started relocating to Puttalam (Hasbullah, 1993a, p. 7). Dry rations of approximately Rs. 600/- for two weeks were insufficient for families of

\(^{25}\) From a 2006 People's Secretariat Petition on Dry Rations and the establishment of the SNDM.

\(^{26}\) The Conditions, problems and immediate needs of the Northern Province Muslim Refugees. A report presented at a conference entitled Displacement and Democracy at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute in August 1993.
five or more people (Hasbullah, 1993a, p. 7). The huts constructed in refugee camps were too small. They were only 10x12 in extent, and families were compelled to cook and sleep in the same small area. Additionally, the huts generally were built too close together.27

Overcrowded and located away from main roads, the camps lacked basic amenities such as sanitation facilities, water, and electricity, and did not include access to medical services (Hasbullah, 1993a, p. 7-8). There was a severe shortage of drinking water, and human waste caused disease. Stagnant water, especially after rainfall, also contributed to the general unsanitary conditions that resulted in health problems. Hasbullah claims that the state had done little to improve the conditions under which displaced persons were compelled to live (Hasbullah, 1993a, p. 9)

Displaced people faced a further problem, which was lack of access to cash. They had urgent health and other needs that required cash, and Hasbullah recommends that the government increase the ration amount and add a small cash component to the assistance(Hasbullah, 1993a, 11). The report also calls for better water provision, electricity, and increased access to health care, as well as for the provision of items like mats, blankets, and cooking utensils, and school uniforms and stationery for school children.

The report also refers to the sudden increase in the population, especially in the Kalpitiya area, and the resultant strain on healthcare and other services. For instance, according to the report, the local population of the area was 15,000 persons and the number that arrived was 17,225 persons. The population increased to more than double within a 20 square kilometer area. Healthcare facilities for the entire population were provided by one clinic at Mampuriya and by the Kalpitiya district hospital (see chapter 7 for more details about the lack of health services). It should be noted that no significant changes were made to address the near doubling of the population in the area--not until 2007, when three clinics were established in the IDP settlements of Alankuda, Karambe, and Sixty Acres.

The 1993 report has been cited to indicate the condition of the displaced persons three years after the expulsion. It also indicates that the state had done little to address the problem, and that even then the population was largely “forgotten” (Hasbullah, 1993a, p. 4).

There is little significant information on the assistance provided by the state to the displaced persons after 1993 until the Unified Assistance Scheme of 1995. In fact, the assistance granted to the northern Muslims after that point must be understood in connection with the emergence of Muslim politics and the manner in which Muslim politicians interpreted the nature of assistance required by their constituents. It might be argued that the fate of the northern Muslims was decided by the vagaries of Muslim ethnic politics.

27 A fire took place about five years after the expulsion in Saltern camp II. 136 huts were burnt down.
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The Unified Assistance Scheme (UAS)

As has been established above, it was necessary to address the conditions under which the displaced persons were compelled to live. Kamalini Wijeyatillake's investigation into the northern Muslims in Puttalam in 1994 revealed that after 4 years of life in welfare centres under trying conditions, northern Muslims yearned for a more permanent form of settlement that would grant them greater dignity.

The main concern among the resettled community is resettlement (return). They do not want temporary measures and are anxious to get back to their original lands. The displaced persons are willing to settle on State land, even outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces, on the event of having been given such separate permanent locations. They vehemently articulate the need to live with human dignity. (Wijayatilake, 1994/1995, p. 11)

According to Brun and Shanmugaratnam, the government assistance scheme for the displaced --the Unified Assistance Scheme (UAS)-- was amended in 1995 and facilitated the northern Muslim settlements in Puttalam (Brun, 2008, p. 142). Although the UAS did not give land grants, not even after its amendment, it enabled northern Muslims to buy land in Puttalam, build houses, and lead a life of greater dignity than in the welfare centers. Therefore, the government's amendments to the Unified Assistance Scheme enabled the northern Muslims to access housing assistance and thereby brought relief to many. Brun states that the change of government in 1994 signified a change in the resettlement assistance provided by the Ministry of Resettlement (Brun, 2008, p. 142). Initially, the UAS was set up for the assistance of people who were returning to their places of origin. However, in 1995, the new government developed and expanded the Resettlement and Relocation program in order to involve relocation, to improve living conditions, and to encourage more independence from aid for the displaced persons. According to Brun

Under the expanded Resettlement and Reconciliation Programme, displaced people located in areas under government control can relocate or resettle (return) and receive a form of multi-stage assistance under the UAS. The resettlement and relocation programmes are divided into two phases. During the first phase, assistance to build a temporary hut is given, together with continuing food rations. In the second phase, assistance is given to build a permanent house. The final stage of the package is a small 'Productive Enterprise Grant' (PEG), which is supposed to enable a family to start self-employment in order to be independent of aid: after having received the PEG, rations would be discontinued. In Puttalam, over the years, almost half of the northern Muslims have relocated from the Welfare Centers to New Settlements. However, very few families had accepted or received the PEG, for fear of losing the rations and their IDP status (Brun, 2008, p. 142).

Muslim politics is an important factor in understanding the government's very progressive policy of changing the UAS to facilitate northern Muslims' access to it. At the general
elections of 1994, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress led by M.H.M. Ashraff won a resounding victory in the eastern province and obtained 7 seats in Parliament. This enabled them to contribute significantly towards the People’s Alliance's formation of a government and it also won their leader a powerful cabinet post in the form of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. The amendment to the UAS was made, then, under Ashraff’s ministry.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the SLMC was interested in maintaining the northern Muslims' presence outside the north in order to maximize the conflict-affected Muslims' bargaining power in the event of a discussion on a political settlement. As already stated, the SLMC took the position that the northern Muslims could not return to the north with dignity until there was agreement on a permanent settlement to the conflict for the Muslims-- a Muslim-administered Southeastern Unit. According to an SLMC insider, Ashraff had anticipated that such a settlement would not be achieved quickly and that the northern Muslims needed a more permanent living arrangement in Puttalam which preserved their communities and provided a somewhat more dignified existence than the welfare centers.

Shanmugaratnam states that the IDPs received an advance of Rs. 10,000.00 from the Ministry in order to purchase land for relocation (Shanmugaratnam, 2001, p. 30). However, Brun states that the UAS scheme was given only to those who already had land. She observes, “[t]he government generally did not give any economic support for displaced people to buy land, but when people bought a plot of land themselves they would receive the relocation package from the government” (Brun, 2008, p.162). Shanmugaratnam states that “[m]ore than 600 families (in Alankuda) received a grant of SLR 10,000/- each from the ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction to buy housing land. This was an advance paid out of the grant of SLR 35,000/- earmarked by the ministry for permanent house construction (Shanmugaratnam, 2001, p. 30).

This confusion arises from the fact that the advance of Rs. 10,000 provided for the purchase of land was not part of government policy. It was a mechanism utilized by the Ministry officials in order to facilitate displaced persons’ land purchase for large settlements. Interviews with those assisting Ashraff indicated that Ashraff had wanted people to be relocated as much as possible in keeping with their communities in the north. Therefore most of the relocation villages are now organized in terms of village communities in the north, and some even bear the names of northern villages. Errukalapiddy village in Nagavillu, Vidalalteevu village in Twenty Five Acres in Puttalam, and Periyamadu village in Husainiyapuram are some examples of these villages.

Most displaced persons readily identified the assistance scheme as Ashraff’s scheme. Those who had worked under Ashraff during the time of the enhanced UAS said that the Ministry altered the scheme very specifically to render assistance to the northern Muslims. The advance of Rs 10,000/- for land purchase was discontinued in 2000 (Shanmugaratnam 2001),

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and the scheme itself was restructured that same year to apply only to those relocating to their district of origin (Brun 2008).

**Extracts from the Unified Assistance Scheme (UAS)**

**Relocation of displaced persons**

The problem of displaced persons is not tied up to the ongoing war. No displaced person will be compelled to resettle in their original places of residence, if the security conditions are not conducive for resettlement. Every effort will be made to relocate displaced persons who cannot get back to their original places of residence due to security conditions. Lands donated by well wishers and state land or unutilized land vested with Land Reform Commission (LRC) will be utilized for this purpose in consultation with local authorities.

Relocation will also be undertaken in lands purchased by displaced families.

**Unified Scheme of Assistance (USA)**

I. The Resettlement and Rehabilitation Assistance to displaced persons was offered as a package called Unified Assistance Scheme (UAS) implemented by the M/PR&R (Minister of Port Development, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction) and the Rehabilitation of Persons, Properties and Industries Authority (REPPIA). This Scheme of Assistance was formulated in 1983 under the Emergency Rehabilitation and Reconciliation Programme (ERRP) and was modified to enhance the assistance in 1994.

II. Grant of Rs. 7,000/- to Construct Huts: Under the Resettlement/ Relocation programme in Phase I, a Resettling/ Relocating family was provided with a temporary hut with cement floor costing a maximum of Rs. 7,000/. Family was free to construct a standard temporary hut according to the specifications provided by the Ministry……

III. Grant of Rs. 1,000/- for Purchase of Implements: A Resettling family was issued Rs. 1,000/- worth of implements for their household activities….

IV. Payment of Rs. 2,000/- as Settling- in Allowance (SIA): SIA was paid to a displaced family on or after resettlement to purchase household belongings…..

V. Payment of Productive Enterprises Grant (PEG) of Rs. 4,000/- per family whose monthly income is less than Rs. 2,500/-, for recommencement of economic activities: PEG was paid to a displaced family after resettlement to recommence economic activities….

VI. Housing Grant of Rs. 25,000/-: A family whose house has been damaged/ destroyed was entitled to receive a maximum grant of Rs. 25,000/- to repair/ reconstruct the house….
VII. Payment of Rs. 25,000/- as Marriage Prosperity Allowance: Under the above scheme, couples who were married while being in welfare centre were assisted to start small-scale generating activities. If both spouses were inmates of Government- maintained Welfare Centers, Rs. 25,000/- was paid. Rs. 12,500/- was paid if one spouse was an inmate of a Welfare Center. This assistance was introduced in July 1995.


The lands to which the northern Muslims relocated were not government lands granted to the northern Muslims. In each instance, officials of Ashraff’s Ministry assisted the northern Muslims to find land and to partition large tracts into ten perch plots. The state never proposed an actual land grants scheme as a resettlement policy for the northern Muslims in Puttalam. However, it should be noted that, after 1995, and the introduction of the UAS in Puttalam, more than half of the northern Muslim population looked for the option of owning land and building a permanent house in Puttalam. There were instances in which certain MPs obtained plots of government land for the displaced, but this was on an ad hoc basis and benefited only a very small number of persons. We came across two examples of such land grants. The first example of granting land was in Thillayadi to create the Thayif Nagar settlement for northern Muslims who were displaced by the fire in the Saltern II camp five years after the expulsion. Testimonies note that Douglas Devananda facilitated the provision of ten perch plots for the 138 families affected by the fire, and that the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction assisted in building houses. The Thayif Nagar settlement village was created in this way; to date, the residents speak gratefully of the assistance rendered to them by Devananda. The second example was the land grant enabled by the intervention of M.P. Abubakr in the Karamba and Thambapani areas. The 150 acres of land belonging to the Janatha Estates Development Board were handed over by former Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake to Aboobakr for distribution to IDP families living there. It is important to note that—despite these exceptions—the government rehabilitation scheme for northern Muslims, in terms of the relocation villages, very clearly did not involve a system of land grants. In fact, Shanmugaratnam notes that many IDPs were resentful of the fact that the government did not grant them ownership of the plot of land they had occupied for ten years (Shanmugaratnam 2001, p.57). The government maintained its allegiance to the 13th Amendment which prohibits altering the ethnic composition of an area through state

28 Commission researcher interview with Eelam People’s Democratic Party (EPDP) representative in Puttalam.

29 Commission researcher interview with MP Abubakr.
intervention; more importantly, the government did not openly advocate permanent settlement of the displaced in Puttalam at that time.\textsuperscript{30}

Much of the land on which northern Muslims built settlements was either agricultural land or barren scrub land. The land bought from the host community was often owned by individuals through government grants under either the Swarnabhoomi_ or Jayabhoomi schemes. The sale of such land required endorsement by the District Secretary, and in many cases this procedure was not followed. Brun recounts an interview with a Puttalam DS who stated that if permission had been sought it may not have been given, since permanent relocation may in fact have meant a more permanent settlement of IDPs--something which was not seen as being in the interests of the government (Brun, 2008, p. 168). As mentioned above, alteration of the ethnic ratio of an area is viewed with suspicion in most quarters of the country, and the large numbers of IDPs could alter the ethnic balance of the area (if they were to register as local residents/voters). The procedure followed with regard to land sales may give rise to problems of establishing ownership in the future. The state authorities may need to intervene to regularize such transactions.

It must also be noted that the UAS housing grants that enabled northern Muslims to settle into land and houses in Puttalam with some degree of permanence were not uniformly seen as a good thing. Many northern Muslim leaders (not the politicians) felt that the somewhat permanent settlements in Puttalam may discourage northern Muslims from returning--in fact, that the settlements jeopardized their right to return and the possibility of speedily finding a way of returning. They were also concerned that the northern Muslims might be giving up their right to state assistance upon their return.\textsuperscript{31} One older northern Muslim activist who had worked closely with the political leadership, stated bitterly that “we gave up our rights for 35,000.00 rupees” (the value of the UAS grant). He stated that the SLMC instead should have assisted northern Muslims who were willing to return, chiefly that it could have helped with their return to their homes and with minimizing their losses. His view was that the SLMC had a different agenda that was not necessarily sympathetic to what the northern Muslims wanted. Speaking of the many losses and difficulties experienced in their attempt to return, he said, “none of this would have happened if the SLMC had helped us to come back at that time.” The conversation nearly reduced this elderly man to tears.

Ashruff and the SLMC used their power and capacity to transform the dire living conditions of the northern Muslims. Many people were highly appreciative of this assistance, and even asked the Commission to note it in the report (Al Mannar sitting, October 2009). However, what is not clear is the extent to which their efforts took cognizance of the northern Muslims’

\textsuperscript{30} It is also important to note here that the case of the Northern Muslim IDPs and land grants indicates that most on-the-ground interventions by the state do not always reflect stated policy.

\textsuperscript{31} This realization was prophetic. Under the World Bank Housing scheme some families were compelled to sign a document upon acceptance of the grant that they would not be returning to the north.
own aspirations about their return. Perhaps the conditions were unsuitable for such return, and the conflict was destined to continue for a further fifteen years. The SLMC’s perspective must have been informed by the horrors of the LTTE massacre of Muslim villagers in Kattankudi and Eravur earlier in 1990. However, there is no clear evidence that the SLMC took the time or made the effort to either consider the northern Muslims’ opposition to the settlement scheme or to look into the possibility of a speedy return. A new political era was ushered in by the 1994 elections, and, in its early days, the Kumaratunga government was committed to a solution to the ethnic problem. Therefore, the SLMC’s disregarding of the immediate return option indicates allegiance to the political agenda discussed earlier, at the expense of some northern Muslims’ wishes. In his statements in Parliament as much as in his writing, Ashraft stresses the northern Muslims’ right to security. He does not give equal emphasis to their right to return immediately.

The history of state assistance to Muslims after Ashraft’s period as Minister of Resettlement, is of improving roads and the provision of services like pipe borne water and electricity to IDP settlements. When asked by researchers about their services to the displaced, Provincial Councillor Dr. Illyas, Deputy Minister Mr. Abubakr, and Minister Douglas Devananda, all claim to have assisted in the maintenance of the settlement villages. Given that the IDPs (numbering over 75,000 people) were not considered members of the Puttalam community, their settlements, too, were considered to be outside the purview of the local municipalities. Therefore, basic services (such as the building and maintenance of roads) had to be undertaken by different authorities. Arguably, the local municipalities were ill equipped to service the large numbers of IDPs; according to information received by the Commission, the local population was not provided with an acceptable standard of service. According to the EPDP, schools, main and small roads, and water facilities were provided for the following settlements through Minister Douglas Devananda’s intervention: “Sadamiya Puram”, “Nindaniyu Mugam”, “Umarabath”, Thayif Nagar”, “Arafath Nagar”, “YMMA Nagar”, “Rathmalyaya”, “Hijrath Puram”, “Malliha Puram”, “Sirima Puram” (tenth mile post), and “Madurankuli”. While in power as Provincial Councillor, Dr Illyas authorized building roads to IDP settlements. When Noordeen Mashoor was in charge of the Ministry assisting Vanni Rehabilitation in 2003, scores of projects were undertaken to develop roads, schools, water supply, electricity, and community centres for the different northern Muslim settlement villages.

It is important to note here that the services provided by the various government authorities far surpassed the services offered by the local municipalities in Puttalam. Therefore, it is not surprising that the host community considered the IDPs to be much better off than themselves, in terms of government services. However, it must also be noted that services like garbage collection became a problem since there was no authority that the IDPs could call on to provide this service. The local authorities were not responsive to them, and therefore the piling up of garbage became a significant health hazard. According to Dr.
Santhirasegaram, one of the few doctors practising in Kalpitiya, typhoid is at epidemic proportions in those areas today. The larger point is also that the manner in which services were provided to the IDPs--via the ministries and not through the respective area authorities--further exacerbated the difference between the IDPs and the locals, just as it fed the local host community’s feeling that the IDPs were better off than they were. Strengthening local authorities to service all segments of the population could be a step that may have contributed to the greater local integration of the IDPS and not attracted as much hostility from the host community.

The Secretariat for Northern Displaced Muslims (SNDM)

Following the change of government in 2004, Risharth Bathiudeen, a northern Muslim member of the SLMC, split from the party and joined the government. This move won him a cabinet post and the Ministry of Rehabilitation and District Development. This Ministry has seen to the progress of many large and small scale community and infrastructure development projects in Puttalam among the northern Muslims. Arguably, there was more work done in Puttalam during the brief time that Risharth Bathiudeen was in power than at any previous time. For instance, a housing scheme of one thousand houses was constructed with funding from a Qatari patron (Quassimiya City). Three new state dispensaries were established in IDP settlements; they served both the host and IDP communities. Schools were built, and various infrastructure development facilities were undertaken. Five hundred teaching appointments were made to displaced persons who are to be absorbed gradually into the national teaching cadre. Bathiudeen was also among those who pushed for the opening of the Mannar-Puttalam road through the Wilpattu wild life sanctuary. A state institution to provide for the northern Muslims' needs in Puttalam was established under the purview of the Ministry headed by Bathiudeen. The Secretariat for Northern Displaced Muslims (SNDM) was established under the Ministry of Rehabilitation in 2006. The idea for the Secretariat was first broached by Noordeen Mashoor who was in charge of the Ministry Assisting Vanni Rehabilitation under the Kumaratunge government. According to its webpage, the SNDM was established for the following purposes.

The office of the S.N.D.M. which was established at Puttalam is responsible for providing all basic/fundamental welfare activities and legal entitlements to the victimized Northern Displaced People, those who were expelled on forced action in October 1990 and who have taken shelters for the survival outside Northern Province.

- Provision of shelter, food, water, sanitation and other household needs.
- Ensure proper health facilities and preventive health facilities.
- Ensure the safety, security of the IDPs.
- Coordination and supportive action to obtain legal entitlements of IDPs.
- Ensure and facilitate to provide proper formal and informal education to IDPs.
- Provision of Livelihood assistance and guidance for self

Discussions with activists who assisted the Ministry of Rehabilitation and District Development (as it was then named) indicated that the necessity for the SNDM was to
establish the specificity of the northern Muslims' displacement, and, further, to mediate between the various relevant ministries and local authorities—such as the GA—on behalf of the common problems faced by the displaced persons. The SNDM also took over the tasks of camp and settlement maintenance that had been carried out previously by the Ministry of Rehabilitation and the Ministry Assisting Vanni Rehabilitation.

From its inception, however, the SNDM met with opposition from segments of the northern Muslim community. One accusation was that the institution was a ploy for Rishard Bathiudeen to take the entire administration of the northern Muslim community under his control. The Jaffna Muslims in particular—the second largest group of Muslims displaced in terms of district—stated that the support under the Ministry and the Secretariat was provided only to the Minister's constituents—those displaced from Mannar. In 2006, the Jaffna community organization – the People's Secretariat-- formulated a petition opposing the transfer of ration provision services from the local Puttalam administration to the SNDM (the People's Secretariat is chaired by B. Sufiyan who is currently a Municipal Councillor in Jaffna). The petition was written from a perspective that viewed the transfer of ration distribution to the SNDM as the needless politicization of a system that worked adequately. It also questioned the necessity for a new institution that undermined the sixteen years of good relations between the IDPs and the local administration. The petition also raised the issue of the continuity of the institution in the event of the change of politicians at its helm. It also questioned the extra expense incurred, and called for the better use of that money in ways that would benefit the IDP community (People's Secretariat Petition, 2006).

In the initial stages, the SNDM claimed to have rationalized the ration distribution by discontinuing rations to those not entitled to receive them and by adding new deserving families to the ration list. However, later, activists felt that it had failed to live up to its promise. Activists who participated in our interviews stated that the Secretariat had ultimately deteriorated into a political instrument with little substantial benefit for the northern Muslims. Most of the mediating functions that it was supposed to handle were not done. Even the jobs of those employed by the institution were not secured, and those employees could not be absorbed into the permanent government employee cadre. Today, despite the best efforts of the Minister, the SNDM no longer exists. Its task of distributing rations has been suspended, and it no longer provides services to the resettlement villages and welfare centres. According to the last set of statistics compiled by the institution, a majority of the IDPs under its purview have already returned (see table in Chapter 10). The establishment of the SNDM

32 The People's Secretariat is one of the partner organizations working with the Law & Society Trust on the Commission Project.

33 During the time of the Commission's investigations we heard of attempts to move the SNDM – at least temporarily to Mannar. But this never transpired and it ceased to function in May 2011.
ended IDPs' relationships with the local administration in Puttalam. The tasks that were hitherto undertaken by the GN were taken over and politicised. Our information suggests that the consequences anticipated by the People’s Secretariat petition did materialise, and that all administrative activities were controlled and policed by the Ministry. As such, an institution that could have done much for the community was ultimately under utilised.

**The World Bank Housing Scheme**

The World Bank Housing Scheme in Puttalam is another assistance initiative associated with the state, that has caused some controversy. The World Bank Housing Scheme was being implemented at the time of the Commission's investigations. The Housing project in Puttalam, inaugurated in 2007, and funded by the World Bank, was implemented under the Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services. Of the total cost US$ 32 million was provided by the World Bank, and US$ 2 million from government funds. The stated objective of the fund was to “fulfill the housing needs, provide safe drinking water, sanitation, improved drainage facilities and regularize land titles for the Internally Displaced People”\(^{34}\) (Infrastructure and Housing Project in Puttalam, Ministry of Resettlement, 2010).

Under the project each eligible household receives a grant of Rs. 250,000/- (US $ 2,300) to construct a permanent house, or Rs. 100,000/- (US $900) to complete a partly-built house. This project undertook the reconstruction of 7,835 houses, 9,885 new latrines, and the provision of safe drinking water to 136 refugee camps housing over 3,000 IDPs.\(^ {35}\)

Nearly 18 selected locations were completed at the end of 2008, and it was acknowledged that Rs. 250,000/- was not sufficient to build a house; those who had completed building their own houses said that it had cost around Rs. 345,000. Furthermore, the project had faced a range of political and administrative difficulties.

“In September 2007 there was a mass demonstration of local Muslims in Puttalam town, demanding a share of the project and since then several relatively minor violent incidents have occurred due to political differences within the IDP community. There is also widespread concern about low level corruption within the project and the potential environmental impacts of turning temporary into permanent settlements”. (Collyer and Ali Khan, 2007)

Following the protest, the project included a number of host community people in its assistance scheme.

\(^{34}\) http://ihdp.lk/sectors_housing.html accessed on 15th Aug 2011

\(^{35}\) http://ihdp.lk/reports/housing/other/TECHNICAL%20MANUAL%20FOR%20HOUSING%20CONSTRUCTION.pdf accessed on 20th Aug 2011
According to Collyer and Ali Khan, “[v]illages were selected for the scheme on the basis of a number of criteria, including a high percentage of the land ownership and a widespread commitment to stay in Puttalam” (Collyer and Ali Khan, 2007). The project is currently nearing completion. The Government of Sri Lanka has formally requested the IDA for an extension of 6 months until 30 December 2011.

During the Commission’s visit to Puttalam, many people expressed various concerns about the project. Many felt that the criteria on which the selections were made were not transparent and favoured those close to the Minister. We were informed that although Nahavillu and Uluhapallam had been placed on the original plan for assistance, this was stopped by the Minister. Others complained that their houses were bypassed for assistance because they were considered “completed.” They resented the lack of acknowledgement of the hardship—and sometimes debt—that was an inevitable part of completing even that much of the construction work. Others complained that the way the system was implemented--payment provided only after the completion of work--was sending people further into debt when they were already in difficulty; they also noted that the amount allocated was not adequate to complete a house (see also Collyer and Ali Khan on this point).

The Current Political Leadership
In January 2010, just prior to the Presidential Elections in the same year, President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his brother Basil- then an MP - visited Puttalam and participated in a massive political rally organized by Rishard Bathiudeen’s supporters. It was announced at that time that all displaced Muslims will be resettled by May that year (Sunday Observer, 2009 December 27). On another occasion in November 2010, the President participated in a commemorative meeting organized by the All Ceylon Muslim Congress—Rishard Bathiudeen’s political party—to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the expulsion of Muslims by the LTTE. The President arrived at the meeting and made a brief speech during which it was clear to all that the President knew very little about the northern Muslim displacement. Bathiudeen’s presence on the Cabinet ensured that the northern Muslim issue maintained a level of prominence on the national agenda. However, little additional attention was paid to the issue, and some specific aspects of it were never addressed adequately. For instance, state policy has not incorporated (at least adequately) the fact that people were returning after 20 years; that special circumstances may prevail due to their long absence; and that such needs will have to be addressed in a specific manner. Additionally, the government’s position of settling “old IDPs” only after the completion of “new IDP” resettlement was never challenged. Bathiudeen does not seem to have been able to use his influence to effect policy changes in any significant way.

While Minister Risharth Bathiudeen’s presence and power among the community has brought about many developments in the northern Muslims’ standard of living, there have also been
Chapter Six

many negative consequences. For instance, we observed that northern Muslims’ access to all government services and benefits were generally mediated by the SNDM and ultimately by the Ministry of Rehabilitation (prior to the Minister’s move to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce). Jobs like teaching appointments for displaced persons were made available only to those who supported the Minister’s party, we were told. He is also accused of using the World Bank housing scheme for the benefit of his supporters alone. Furthermore, the Quassimiya city housing scheme, too, was given to people from Bathiudeen’s own village only, and, to this date, the beneficiaries claim that they have not been given proper ownership of the houses. The Commission felt that the northern Muslims remained vulnerable and captive to patronage politics during the Minister’s tenure in office.

The Commission also found that some actions attributed to the Minister and those closest to him were exacerbating tensions between northern Muslims and their neighbours in both Puttalam and the north. Today, in Mannar, persons connected to the Minister are accused of buying up land through exploitative practices and of inciting ethnic clashes by such actions. His mobilizing of the military to address problems between Tamils and Muslims in some areas of the north is causing tensions and might damage the possibility of ethnic co-existence between Muslims and Tamils in the future. Furthermore, his conduct during the time of the abduction and murder of CTF trustee, Pattani Razeek, contributed to the tension between displaced and host community members in Puttalam. The main suspect was a close associate of his, and Bathiudeen is accused of helping him to avoid arrest (see chapter 7).

Conclusion

This chapter has described how the state took over some of the responsibilities of providing for the massive numbers of displaced persons, following the immediate shock of the expulsion. Ration provision began to fall into place in 1991. Additionally, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction was established, with Ashraff as Minister, after the success of the SLMC in the national elections of 1994. He was able to “do something” for the northern Muslims through the housing assistance scheme – the rules of which were changed to accommodate the northern Muslims’ specific circumstances. A series of Muslim political actors, from Illyas to Abubakr, made various interventions in keeping with the resources available to bring some relief to the northern Muslims. However, it was only in the case of Ashraff that there was a position in government with enough power to effect significant change at the policy level. Other than for Douglas Devananda, the issue of northern Muslims became a purely Muslim political issue. Periodically, whenever the Muslim party in power obtained a Ministry of some significance, the northern Muslim issue gained prominence. For instance, under Noordeen Mashoor in the Ministry Assisting Vanni Rehabilitation, the plans for resettlement-- at least what was discussed about them-- seemed well informed. However, the respective Ministers’ abilities to impact state policies were not
uniform. The Puttalam area saw many developments under Minister Rishard Bathiudeen. However, in terms of IDP policy, he was not able to influence state policy to prioritize "old" IDPs over "new" IDP issues. It could be argued that the issue of the northern Muslims has become captive to Muslim ethnic politics, with the state abdicating responsibility to the political representatives of the community. These political representatives, as a result of the choices they made about how to use their power, contributed greatly to increasing the northern Muslims’ vulnerability and to damaging their relationships with their immediate neighbours. This is true in the case of the host community in Puttalam as well as the Tamil community in the north. The northern Muslims are illustrative of both the positive effects and the adverse impact of ethnicised politics in this country.
Chapter Seven

Specificity of the Northern Muslim Displacement Experience

The displacement experience of the northern Muslims in Puttalam has to be understood as including particular features that make it somewhat different from the experiences of displacement in other contexts in Sri Lanka. The important features of this experience have been noted in the literature. For instance, Brun (2008) has explored the nature of citizenship as experienced by the northern Muslims (see below), and Shanmugaratnam (2001) has discussed the fact that the Puttalam experience—outside the conflict zone—is qualitatively different in terms of freedom of movement for the displaced and the possibility of engaging in economic activities. However, these factors have not been thought of in terms of their impact at the level of policy making for the northern Muslims, either in relation to their lives in displacement or the needs of resettlement and return.

This chapter will survey the specific issues faced by the northern Muslims during their displacement experience in Puttalam. Many of the Commissioners noted that the northern Muslims seem to be a community whose energy has not been productively harnessed towards their betterment. The Commission struggled to identify the possible cause of this oversight. It is the opinion of the Commissioners that this community’s situation can be understood at least partly through a proper appreciation of the manner in which the context of Puttalam—its social and political background and geography—impacted the northern Muslims’ experience.

One of the most fundamental issues to affect the northern Muslims was the fact that they were a Tamil speaking community that was uprooted and set within the boundaries of a mostly Sinhala administered district. Unlike most Muslims outside the north and east, the Muslim community of the north virtually lacked Sinhala skills. There has not been an adequate grasp of the many problems faced by the community as a consequence of this language issue. As the evidence from the testimonies will show, problems varied from people’s inability to read signs on buses, to difficulties communicating with healthcare professionals, to problems with administrative officials and law enforcement agencies.

Second, unlike other instances of large scale displacement in Sri Lanka, the northern Muslims were displaced outside of their district of origin. They were compelled to live among their co-ethnics, but there was little real sympathy with the northern Muslim way of life, no familiarity with the landscape from which they had arrived, and no understanding of the political context that they had left behind. Additionally the state’s virtual neglect of this area, even after the influx of IDPs had nearly doubled the population, resulted in the marginalization of both the displaced people and the relatively poor and under-resourced local population (Hasbullah, 1993). This does not detract from the overwhelming response of the host community to the northern Muslims’ arrival in Puttalam, as evidenced by the many stories of the assistance provided by host community individuals to individual northern Muslim families. Other aspects that should be appreciated are the perceived bond between
co-religionists that Muslim culture generally values, and the manner in which this shared religion has also assisted in resolving disputes between the northern Muslims and the hosts.

Additionally, the administrative apparatus, as it functions in Sri Lanka, ties citizenship very firmly to the district and province of residence. Therefore, when a person is displaced from her or his district and province, there are very few citizenship rights that she or he can enjoy (Brun, 2003, p.378). As Brun has pointed out, for someone to be registered in a province other than the one of her or his residence means that the state institutions in the province where she or he lives are not bound to serve her or him. In the case of the displaced people, the situation of being from the north and living in Puttalam has taken on several levels of meaning. The manner in which the resettlement villages in the Puttalam area were set up further exacerbated their sense of being people who did not really belong to the area. The state provided assistance for buildings alone; there were no land grants for the displaced, and they renamed the places that they settled in --for instance Erukalampitty, in Nahavilu, and Al Mannar in Kalpitiya. Additionally, the fact that most of the infrastructure provision for the areas was made by either the Ministry assisting Vanni development, or the Ministry of Rehabilitation, and not by the local municipality, meant that the villages and the people were not integrated into the Puttalam administrative structure. Furthermore, what also alienated the people from the local community and administration was the establishment of the secretariat for northern Muslims, whereby the ration distribution and day-to-day administration of the people was taken over by a branch of the Resettlement Ministry, thus eclipsing the Gramaniladharis of Puttalam who were attending to these functions.

Given that a large community of migrants had arrived and settled in a backward, underdeveloped and under-resourced area, the northern Muslims severely impacted the economy and transformed the area in positive and negative ways. Consequently, however, both the local community and the displaced community poor became proletarianized (Shanmugaratnam, 2001 p.14). The lack of conditions for agriculture, insufficient fishing grounds, and the absence of other forms of employment for the northern Muslims meant that they became a community dependent on the meager resources of the area and on food rations for twenty years. While many enterprising northern Muslims have found ways of moving beyond their difficult circumstances, many have not and languish in conditions similar to which they arrived in, in 1990.

The following sections outline some of the most pressing problems encountered by the large community during the experience of displacement from 1990 to 2010.

**The early days**

A. Kuriza from Muslim College Road, Jaffna, provides a narrative that amply illustrates the pathos of the early days of displacement when the shock of their new status was greatest. Almost all the northern Muslims who gave testimonies stated that they had expected to go back within a week or a few months at most. None had anticipated their displacement to be protracted for twenty years.
We reached Zahira School. Puttalam people were very helpful. We were expecting to return. We were searching for a house to rent. We got a house for six months. But we said we do not need it for that long, we want to rent it only for a month. My son found a house which did not have doors, windows or grills. My children started to cry, when they saw the house. Therefore we did not take that house. My son took us to another house, even this was not pleasant to any of us. Everyone started to cry. Then my son was angry that we did not like any of the houses he was showing us. He told us that if we did not like any of the places that he found, what was he to do? What could he do? Later we went to a relative’s place in Kalpitiya. They used to come and stay at our place, when we were in Jaffna. We stayed with them for three months. (144)

Many had been unclear about where they were going, and the place in which they had ended up was rarely decided by them, as the following testimony shows.

Then we reached Ekrikkollawa from Vavuniya. We stayed there for one day. The bus was organized by the government. They said it was leaving to Puttlam, so we got into it. The Zahira School was filled with a lot of people. It was raining heavily. Even Paalavi was the same. Then we went to Madhuramkuli, but it was crowded as well. There was a special event happening at the mosque. They took us back to Kanamulai school and left us there. People gave us rice to eat. (232)

There was a person called Zancer Moulavi, he helped us a lot. He was teaching at the school. They prepared all the food and supplied us. We stayed there for 4 or 5 days. Later there was a gentleman who gave us his land to build huts, and live there. It was a coconut plantation. The Red Cross provided us with the required material. We lived in those huts for 5 years. They provided us with the cooperative cards to get goods. We had to go to Sameeragama to get the goods from a cooperative shop. (232)

The first few months of camp life were also a time of great hardship. As the following story indicates, the initial flow of goodwill from organizations and the local community began to dwindle and the state had not yet stepped in with food assistance

Life in the camps was very difficult. Finding food was difficult. Lakspray was so expensive. What they sold here for Rs. 50/- was sold there for Rs. 300/- and even then there was not enough. There was no kerosene oil, no electricity. We lit coconut oil lamps. We ate beetroot and potatoes for 15 days as those were the only things that were sold for Rs. 5/- and Rs. 10/- But can a whole village eat that? That is why everyone has diabetes, everyone fell ill. (020)

The people of Noraichcholai also assisted us in every way, and we obtained mats, plates and some other things from the Noraichcholai Masjid. They also built us temporary sheds like camps and we could stay there for one year amidst many difficulties. Our children had been affected by many diseases like diarrhea and vomiting. (046)
The above testimony also refers to an issue raised by many others—disease spread due to overcrowding. One person recounted in her testimony how, in her case, her son had not recovered from the illness that he had contracted while in the overcrowded camp conditions in the immediate aftermath of the expulsion. Kamila from Allampil, mentioned above, lost her son during those first traumatic days.

My last son died when we came here. He passed away because of this war. We came and were brought to Lanka Rani Estate and here he got diarrhea and he died here. If he was alive he would be 25 years old. (062)

The following narrative by M. Sareefa of Azath Road, Jaffna, who lived in Akbar mosque in Colombo, is a story of relative safety and security in displacement for one year. It seems to be a story of even having the luxury of making a decision to leave the place in order to pursue a life of greater dignity with a future for the children. It also indicates the fact that, apart from the initial arrival of people in Puttalam in 1990, a steady stream seems to have trickled in a few years later due to the prominence of the area as a place of refuge for the northern Muslims.

We were in the mosque grounds for a long time. There were lots of vehicles in the garages. They took these out, cleaned the place and spread mats and gave us pillows and asked us to stay there. Then they gave us milk, tea and also gave us rice parcels. By the grace of Almighty Allah we lived there for a year and in the meantime we got our children admitted to a school in Colombo. For one year we lived in that garage and they provided us with meals and they were very helpful to us. Then we thought, what sort of life is this without a place of our own, no employment? We just eat, drink, sleep and get up. My husband got disgusted and he said that we should do something, depending on this way of life was not good, and there was no future for the children. So about two or three families got together with us and we thought of a place to go to. Someone said that we can go to Puttalam, saying that they had heard that most people are going to Puttalam. Some stayed at the mosque but we left the place. (315)

Issues of Concern to Women

This section consists of insights gained from the women-only sittings organized by the Commission in December 2009 and 12 June 2010. The existing literature on the subject has been used for background information on the issues.

At the initial moment of displacement when most were in highly congested camp settings, privacy and lack of hygiene were pressing considerations for many women.

R. Fayisa of Moor Street, Jaffna, described the difficulties of the first days of displacement. Her testimony informed us of the manner in which women’s experience of the displacement was different from that of the men.
In terms of the problems we experienced, we built a toilet and 15 families had to share it. One organisation just put a fence around something they built which looked like cups. The women and men both had to use it, so we would ask who was in and then go in. It was the same with the common well. The women had to pull water out, fill it and bathe because it was not enclosed. So we would wake up really early and bathe before the men came. Many would come and wait to bathe at that time, sometimes even men. We lived for 3 - 4 years like this in great difficulty, and after we had bought our land they built two common wells. Those living near the entrance would pump the water and bathe. After going to their own places everyone had piped water. (009)

The meeting at Alankuda camp also highlighted the issue of the lack of privacy during the early days of displacement. Participants mentioned the fact that everything happened in full view of everyone—girls reaching puberty or women giving birth or women breast feeding—without the dignity of privacy.

At the meeting in Karambe in December 2009, the issue of early marriage—especially of girls—was highlighted. Dowry is an issue, and the cramped conditions in which many live mean that interaction with the opposite sex is possible and there is an early sexualisation of children (the terms used were, “they play in unsuitable ways.”) Adolescents sometimes run away together, and at that point parents, regardless of the girl’s age, get them married. Many at the meeting stated that parents feel their burden will ease through a child’s marriage. However, this was rarely the case. The children had many reproductive health problems. There were many miscarriages. There were instances when the children died in childbirth or had babies who were malformed. There was also a high incidence of divorce. The children were simply too young to bear the responsibilities of a marital relationship (see also Haniffa 2008).

During the meeting at Karambe, women told us that they were unable to educate their daughters due to the lack of a school in the vicinity. After reaching grade 5, children have to be transferred to a different school located 1 km away. The one kilometer walk was considered dangerous due to youths sexually harassing the girls. They also reported that there were a lot of idle unemployed youth around and that drug use was spreading. Children as young as ten were also seen to use drugs. This situation prevails even today.

**The loss of privacy, dignity and respect**

As stated in Chapter 2, Zackariya and Shanmugaratnam have ably illustrated the manner in which northern Muslim women experienced discriminatory treatment at the hands of men—family and community members, as well as members of the administrative service (Zackariya and Shanmugaratnam 2001). This section illustrates further the manner in which women were compelled to adapt to changed circumstances as a consequence of the expulsion.

One of the most fundamental changes experienced by women was the compulsion to labour on other people’s land. Northern Muslim women had traditionally engaged in small scale agricultural work in their own home gardens in the north. Many of them were part of
agricultural families that owned large tracts of land. In Puttalam they were compelled to lead a semi-urban landless existence, and the women had to work as labourers outside their homes to earn a minimal wage. Men had less work and were often at home. The women invariably considered the need to work outside the home as a loss of dignity and status, and they still covered their faces while waiting for the transport that took them to the onion fields (Haniffa 2008). While the mere fact of being compelled to work outside the house is sometimes understood as empowering, and some women have experienced it as such, exploitative menial labour cannot be understood in this manner, and the vast majority experienced it as a loss of respect and dignity.

Northern people experienced a mixed culture in the North. They found it difficult to adjust themselves to the new culture in Puttalum, but in Puttalam 100% percent Muslim culture is being practiced. People found it difficult to adapt to the new culture. We as girls did not wear Hijab in the North. It is compulsory to wear Hijab in Puttalum when we go out of the house, to schools and for classes. Once when my friend and I went for classes we had a chit on our table saying “Do not come to the class without the Hijab. On two occasions, we found such chits on our table. Afterwards we stopped going for that particular class. Puttalum culture was quite restrictive/conservative compared to that of the North. Later it was changed. Now all wear the “Abhaya” and “Hijab”. Now it’s quite normal to go abroad be it the Displaced or the Host Community (376)

The above quote reflects the manner in which women were compelled to adjust to an environment in which the mobility of women was restricted and women’s roles were thought of in more limited terms. The Piety Movement among the Muslims of Sri Lanka transformed the way in which Muslims all over the country looked, dressed and acted. With regard to women, the movement saw the introduction of the new dress—the hijab and abhaya—in the 1980s and early 1990s that was not previously practiced in the country (Haniffa 2008). While the person above considers the practice a part of the Puttalam Muslim community’s practice of “100% Muslim culture”, the insistence upon it in Puttalum was probably because of its newness. Many of the testimonies that we collected described in positive terms the conservative Muslimness and religiosity of the Puttalam Muslims that northern Muslims were compelled to embrace (see below). However, others articulated it in terms of the increasing conservatism regarding women’s roles. There was much opposition to the education of girls and the employment of women.

Although the above testimony describes the manner in which adjustments were made by both communities—with the displaced people adopting the required dress and the host community becoming more relaxed with the issue of mobility—restrictions against women’s active involvement outside the home in non-traditional occupations continue to be a problem. ‘Twice Removed: Northern Muslim Displaced Women in Puttalum’ is a report prepared by Farzana Haniffa during the initial background work for the Commission. It highlights the manner in which women seeking employment in Puttalum, especially NGO workers, were perceived.
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It was a general trend in the community that women with skills were not permitted to work by families; women who were eager to work were not recruited due to a lack of skills. Women NGO workers reported that they often found it very difficult to work due to a lack of respect for them in the field, harassment in public transportation, and the need to be vigilant in the use of three wheelers. One NGO worker stated that women working late and talking to men in the field are looked at very critically by the communities in which they live as well as the communities in which they work..... Some women even said that it was harder for women working in NGOs to find husbands. It was also stated that even amongst the local NGOs these presuppositions regarding women’s roles continued to prevail. One woman NGO worker noted that women were often paid less than men for the same work even in NGOs. While “gender” was a funder friendly term and therefore various programs that targeted women were undertaken, it is not clear that the wider NGO sector was too interested in bringing about substantive changes in women’s status among the community. (Haniffa, 2008, 16)

Women also felt that the problems faced by them were neither adequately understood nor addressed, while some of their burdens became heavier and remained unacknowledged. One of the activists interviewed provided the following account.

However women are placed second in any community and that will not change. It is a long term process to have a big change in the society with regard to women. Women are faced with many problems, socially and economically. There are many women’s organizations that have come forward to help, but still the number of problems faced by women is increasing drastically. Displaced women faced a lot of abuse, domestic violence, security problems, and prestige problems. They felt very insecure after the displacement. Most of the problems affected women as a whole. A few women committed suicide during the journey from the north but they were not reported. Many ended up with mental illness as they could not bear the difficulties they had to face since the expulsion. (376)

As stated in other chapters, the northern Muslims were a resilient community that managed to build their lives despite difficult circumstance. An example of such resilience that has to be acknowledged is the emergence of women activists from this community who attempted to work to improve the conditions of women as well as to address the problems faced by the displacement. In the course of the Commission’s work, the process was supported by many women activists as well as by members of the advisory group. They are Shreen Abdul Saroor who worked at the international level, and the locally more prominent Jensila Majeed and Juwairiya Mohideen. Additionally, we acknowledge the work of Sharmila Mohamed Haneefa who works with returning northern Muslim men and women in Jaffna, and Janufa Mohamed Saly who works with Muslim and Tamil women in Mulaitiwu. Their work involves attempting to provide necessary services to men and women from the community. Sharmila assists with paperwork for returning Muslims to Jaffna. Juwairiya works with the Quazi courts with issues of domestic violence, while also providing women with general
information about their rights and mobilizing them to address injustices committed against them. Janufa was the only woman who presented the northern Muslim perspective to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) sitting in Kilinochchi. The women activists spoke at length about the difficulties that they faced in their work. The attitude of northern Muslim men towards women activists was mostly negative. While there were men who worked collectively with the women, the majority was not supportive of their actions. In matters of domestic violence, for instance, women have been threatened. While in general the northern Muslim community leadership is looking for some rights-based solutions to their common problems of displacement, what remains unclear is the extent to which the community will be supportive of such a perspective to address problems faced by community women. The women also spoke about the larger issue of funding for work with women and for urgent provision of services like building toilets. While there were many problems that continued to plague women, we were also heartened to note the existence of some hope. Although women experienced many problems in adjusting to life in displacement due to the difficult conditions of camp life and the different expectations of the Puttalam community regarding women’s roles, they have also found ways to grow and thrive in such an environment. The manner in which women activists have found ways to work under difficult conditions is a case in point. Juwairiya, a prominent women’s activist from the community and a member of the Commission advisory group, had the following to say about her experience.

Though it’s sad I must say the displacement brought us benefits too. Take me for instance. Now I can go to an International meeting and meet lot of people and serve our community. If I was in my village, I would have got married at a very young age and lived my life. Also I wouldn’t have got an opportunity to serve people and see to the people's needs and share their problems and find ways to uplift their living standards. I am happy now that I am able to give something in return for the people and also the ability to address a gathering. This I think is an achievement. (239)

Displacement and Health

We have to buy water, even to drink. Water is essential for life. We have not even heard the names of the diseases which prevail in this area. The problem is because we shifted from our birthplace. There we did not get sick like this. The reason being the people there are very hardworking and well nourished. The work of a forty-year-old cannot be done by a twenty-year-old here. The children are weak here. They are given only rice and curry but in our village they were given milk, fruits and honey, and so they were very healthy. Here they are under nourished and always sick so we really need resettlement. Here there are mosquitoes, while back in our village we did not have mosquitoes and we did not know of the diseases caused by such mosquitoes. Here they say that dengue and malaria are spread by mosquitoes. (373)

When discussing life in Puttalam, many northern Muslims referred to a common trope—the new sicknesses that they had suffered as a consequence of displacement. While it is possible
to attribute this to an articulation of the physical and mental discomfort and stress that people are compelled to suffer in a situation of displacement, others also related it to environmental issues in Puttalam itself. For instance, Juwairiya who was an advisor to the Commission process and an active member of northern Muslim civil society in Puttalam, made the following statement.

Here lots of sicknesses were spreading. Not like when we were living in our village. Malaria, diarrhoea, skin diseases and phlegm-related diseases were spreading fast. Also many suffered from wheezing. We didn’t know whether it was due to the change of climate or because of the cement factories which were nearby. The displaced people suffered a lot with such sicknesses. (239)

Partners based in Puttalam also informed the Commission of different variables that have impacted the health status of the northern Muslims in Puttalam. The cement factory was one such factor; an additional factor was the use of chemicals for onion cultivation. Many displaced women worked as labourers in the onion fields, and many sicknesses were experienced as a consequence. There are individual wells and latrines in the settlements where the displaced people built houses, as is the practice in the much larger compounds in which they had lived in the Northern Province. However, highly unsanitary conditions prevailed as a consequence of the presence of both a well and a latrine in each 8-10 perch compound, as well as the manner in which rains often inundate these compounds. Faecal matter in the drinking water makes the water unsafe to drink, and ill health is rife. We were told that typhoid has reached epidemic proportions in the area.36

The other fundamental finding with regard to health care was the inadequacy of services available in the Puttalam district. When the IDPs arrived in 1990, the health services were understandably ill-equipped to cope with the influx. Unfortunately the changes that have taken place during the past twenty years have not improved the situation too much, according to our information. The four DS divisions that currently support the IDPs were serviced by the Puttalam base hospital, the Kalpitiya district hospital and the Central Dispensary in Thalawila and the Central Dispensary and Maternity Home in Mampuriya. The health services did not have any improvements made to them until very recently.37 In 2007, three new central dispensaries were established in areas with a large concentration of displaced persons in Alankudah, Karambe, on sixty acres.

According to the information that emerged from the Commission sittings and the testimonies, health care problems were caused by language issues, and reflected and exacerbated host

36 Dr. Sandirasekaran- personal communication to Commission secretariat.

37 Ibid
community IDP tensions. Those who spoke to us about the problems complained that neither the government nor the activist community did much to address them.

When we go to the hospital we don’t have a way to communicate as we don’t know Sinhala. Also when they give the wrong medicines we can’t say anything to them and they look down upon us as Muslims. It’s continuing to date. They don’t understand our language and we don’t understand their language. It’s a big problem we are facing. (239)

We also learned that for the Puttalam DS division, while there were 3000-4000 pregnant women, there was only one VOG (Visiting Obstetrician and Gynaecologist) and one paediatrician who visited once or twice a week. This caused many problems and delays. Juwiariya’s testimony provides a good illustration of this situation.

A girl from Nagavillu came for confinement and was in labour. She was in the hospital for 3 days as there were no doctors present. Later her condition became serious. Then we met the DMO and she was transferred in an ambulance to another hospital. There the doctors asked whether we can’t speak to any politicians and do something about it as such serious cases are being neglected. As soon as she was admitted they operated and took the baby. Initially the baby was seriously ill, but now she is ok. (239)

**Problems at the Puttalam Hospital**

We also heard complaints about the treatment of new mothers and children at the Puttalam Hospital.

They asked 2 pregnant women to share one bed. Think about it, how could they have shared it? One slept on the floor. When I was hospitalized, I was taken out after the caesarean operation and the bed was very high. I had to use the nurse’s chair to climb onto the bed. And the nurse was shouting as to why I had taken her chair. Just think about it – I am tall, but what would be the situation of a short person? Also the bed was too narrow. How could I have lain down with the baby? Think about a mother who has given birth and who is in so much pain and she is unable to cuddle the baby and feed it. Also they had placed the beds on the narrow hospital corridors. When it rained, the mother and the baby got wet. And it was very cold too. Some mothers got a chill after childbirth. Then the nurses came and gave some medicines. There is no proper system in the hospital to date. (239)

We learned about the children’s ward from the following account.

There aren’t any proper beds for the 12 year olds. The beds should have protective handles. Once I was in the baby ward. At that time a child fell off the bed and was seriously injured. You have to have some protective measures for the children. But they are not concerned. Also they have 2 - 3 children in one bed with various illnesses, such as fever, diarrhea, malaria, urine infection etc. When we complain
they asked us to place the child on the floor. They asked us to bring a mat and keep
the child on the floor. Also the toilets were very dirty. There was no proper facility
even to give a bath to infants and children. The toilet pits were huge. Even adults
could fall into them. So how could the children have used them. (239)

Also when small children pass stools, the bigger children tend to vomit. It takes a
good 3- 4 minutes to get outside. So the hospital should provide some sort of
facilities—bowls or something should be placed within the ward. Also in the case of
children with diarrhoea, their mothers have to carry them quite a distance to the
toilet. Sometimes the stools splash on to the other children who are sleeping on the
floor. (239)

The other main complaint was about language use in the health care system. As stated earlier,
the Puttalam districtis mainly a district that is administered in the Sinhala language, unlike
the north and east. Although it is identified as an area with a Tamil speaking population,
government services are yet to be equipped with facilities to address the Tamil speaking
population in its own language. This problem extended to the health care services as well and
the following problems were repeatedly put before the Commission.

There is only one labourer at the MOH who speaks Tamil. All the leaflets, hand bills,
health issue campaigns such as on malaria, diarrhoea etc., are all in the Sinhala
language. We have requested many times to get it in Tamil. We have also spoken at a
DS meeting and made requests. They always promise us to get it next time. But the
next time never comes. There are many displaced and local people in Puttalam who
are familiar with the Tamil language. So why can’t they do something about it? Only
a very few comes in Tamil language. Nobody knows what happens to the funds
received by the MOH. I think only a few local people benefit from MOH. This is also
a very sad situation.(239)

There were complaints about the fact that doctors and nurses did not have Tamil language
skills, as well as about the absence of Tamil speaking staff who could translate. Therefore
Tamil speakers faced many problems in communicating with doctors and nurses on even the
simplest issues.

The Tamil speaking people go through severe hardship with regard to the language.
For that reason alone many don’t want to go to the hospital and prefer to stay at
home. They are unable to explain even a small thing to the doctors. Therefore they
don’t communicate with the doctors and that could lead to many dangerous
situations. (239)

Sometimes when we go to hospitals we stand in the queue. People who know
Sinhala, they go forward. If they can bring in somebody who is fluent in Tamil and
Sinhala, that will be much better for us.(239)
Even the person who is at the OPD doesn’t know Tamil, not even to explain the medical instructions relating to the use of medicine like ‘after meals, ‘before meals.’ If they are given medicines for worm treatment they are not told anything. So when they go back to the doctor, medication is prescribed for them again. This alone will lead to other sicknesses. (239)

In 1994/1995 in certain villages, midwives visited the camps. Since they spoke in Sinhala, we did not understand what they were saying. They come and say something in a language which we don’t understand. Sometimes they communicate with the males. (239)

Janeera of Kakayankulam had a similar set of stories about the general state of health of the displaced people, as well as about health care services and the language problem.

Back in our village the women work with the men in the fields. Here the women have become lazy. The work they do is cook, eat and sleep. They do not have much work here so they are getting sick. The other problem the women are facing is the clinic problem. They leave the house at five o’clock in the morning to get to the Madurankuli clinic. They do not know Sinhala, and, as a consequence, the Sinhalese people who come at eight o’clock talk their way in and go and stand at the head of the queue. The women folk do not get ‘three posha’ (a nutritional supplement for children provided free by the government). They will give it to the Sinhalese women and say that the stock is over as the women can’t speak Sinhalese. This is a serious issue with serious consequences. The ‘three posha’ should be distributed among all the people who come for it. Even if they go to the hospital for medicine they are left behind, and it is with the greatest difficulty that they get the medicine. In our own village we do not face these difficulties because there is no language problem. (373)

It is clear that the lack of services and the language issue have severely impacted the provision of healthcare to the IDP population of Puttalam. (It should be noted that the spread of new diseases and the long queues were complaints made by host community members as well.) Additionally, we noted that many saw displacement itself—the conditions in Puttalam, as well as the lifestyle that many are compelled to lead—as having resulted in health problems.

**Displacement and Education**

The education of a generation of northern Muslim youth was affected as a consequence of the expulsion, and this was conveyed to us as one of the greatest losses experienced by the community. For the first few years of their displacement, northern Muslim children were accommodated under extremely difficult circumstances in schools located close to the refugee camps. A 1993 report on the educational status of the displaced population estimates that there were approximately 15,000 children of school-going age among the displaced northern Muslims. The report stated that 50% of this number was not attending school due to “reasons related to their refugee condition” (Hasbullah, 1993b, p. 1). The report also stated
that a significant percentage of this number was not attending school regularly due to child labour or because parents were not financially able to support their education. It was estimated that 80 schools in the three districts of Puttalam, Anuradhapura and Kurunegala accommodated the displaced students. This number included 10 schools in which the displaced children outnumbered the local children, and the facilities in these schools had not been upgraded since the arrival of the northern Muslims.38

Some poignant tales about the loss of education were related at one of the Commission sittings with a community of northern Muslims expelled from Jaffna (the sittings were held in Periyamulla, Negombo, on 6 June 2010). M.M.Saboor, one of the communities, stated that he was saddened by the fact that he could not give his children the kind of education that he had received at Osmaniya College in Jaffna. He said that he was moved to tears when he returned to Jaffna after the ceasefire and saw Osmaniya College without its roof. Additionally we have testimonies from those who were teenagers at the time of the expulsion. Their stories of the losses they suffered in terms of their education, due to the expulsion, are worthy of note.

Salfeer of Kamal Lane, Jaffna, related the following especially poignant story of the loss of his education. We are sure that this is only one of many such stories.

Our whole education was ruined by this forcible expulsion. We decided to go to Colombo after one month of being in Puttalam, as we could not continue here. We went to Dehiwala, and there my father spoke to a principal of a school in that area. He had explained our position, and had requested for the child to be enrolled as he wanted to continue his studies; furthermore, we did not have certificates with us to submit to the school. Anyhow the principal had agreed to take the child as it entailed the education and the future of a child. As we were short of money for our daily use, I was unable to go to the school. At that time it would take Rs. 1.50 to travel from Dehiwala, Nedimalai, to town (now it costs around Rs. 8/-). Therefore I was deprived of an education because I could not afford a small sum of Rs. 1.50. This has to be told to the whole world to show how we youngsters lost our education simply because of this small sum of money which we did not have in those days.

Higher education for girls was common among middle class northern Muslims, and many women spoke of how they lost their futures due to the expulsion. Two women activists told us about how they had been preparing for their Advanced Level examinations when the expulsion took place; they had not been able to study beyond that due to the expulsion. They told us about the manner in which they—who had wanted to study and become teachers—had to abandon their ambitions due to the expulsion.

38 S.H. Hasbullah. The Educational Problems of the Refugee Muslims from the Northern Province. A report by an action committee to identify the problems of the refugee students and teachers from the north appointed by the All Ceylon Muslim Educational Conference. (Presented at the conference Displacement and Democracy 18th and 19th August 1993 at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute.)
When I came from Jaffna I felt that my future was ruined as I missed my A/L exams. My siblings and I lost our education after the expulsion. Suddenly, I got a chance to join the Puttlum Zahira School when I met one of my old friends in Puttalum town. She was also a girl who had been expelled from Jaffna. During that period, the government had a special examination in 1991 in Puttalum for those who were registered in 1990. We were registered as students for that examination. The host community students gave us notes. It was hard to follow as the syllabuses were different, but we managed. The host community teachers helped us a lot. They had free extra classes for us. It was a very bad experience in my life, in terms of my education. My siblings, too, continued their education at Nuraicholai. Education was the only hope we had, but finally we could not complete it. We did not experience any discrimination from the host community students/teachers at the school, but we did not continue our education as my parents were not financially sound enough to educate all of us at that time. (376)

Those that were able to study were provided with facilities in selected schools in the areas where the camps were located. In these instances, displaced children were accommodated for the afternoon session while locals were taught in the mornings. While credit must be given for the speed with which makeshift facilities were set in place for the displaced children to continue their education, many of the initial conditions were ad hoc and sometimes disturbing to the children. Many noted the pain they had felt over being compelled to attend only afternoon school; of having the label ‘Ahadhi’ reflected in their index numbers; and of not being permitted to sometimes sit in the front row or be eligible for class ranking. The following testimonies from persons who were students at the time of the expulsion capture some of the issues discussed above.

Janeera of Kakayankulam was 8 years old at the time of the expulsion. She provided the following account.

When we went to Kalawewewe there was no place to stay and we were taken to a school. We did not have a place to sleep. All the men and women were together. It was very inconvenient. There was some land adjoining the school. They asked us to make huts and stay there. From there we went to school for the evening classes. We came here as refugees, we were heartbroken, and in a situation like this we were separated. The evening classes did not function properly, and after that they admitted
us to the morning classes. We did not have peace of mind, they called us refugees. We were unable to concentrate on our studies and we were not allowed to sit in the front row, but despite this we continued to study in a situation like this. We could not live in that place for long. They asked us to vacate it. There were thousands of acres of land in a Sinhala area. It was public property and we went and stayed there. To go to school we had to walk two kilometres as there was no bus service. We left home at 7 a.m. and reached school at 7.30 a.m., and there were many times we had to stand out because we were late. We did not have breakfast in the morning because we might get late for school. Some children fell sick because of this. The school administration was poor and so the education of the children was affected. As the children had to walk a long distance to school, some stopped attending school. There were twenty-five children in my class, but only four attended school. We studied because my father and mother forced us to study. (373)

The following account is an analysis of the situation with regard to education from the perspective of a northern Muslim who was also a teenager at the time of the expulsion but is now a well educated school teacher.

The forced expulsion really affected the education of all the students of the north. Many came without any certificates to enrol in another school, as they were chased away/expelled without any notice. In the case of the few who had managed to bring their documents, they lost their certificates as they had to shift to several places. A few students got a chance to continue their education without any certificates or money, which seemed to be sheer luck. A few lost those opportunities as their parents did not have enough money for books, uniforms, and stationery expenses, and for travelling if the school was situated a little further from where they lived. Also some students who studied in Grade 7 got the chance to move into upper classes, while others were placed in the lower classes. The IDP children were only able to study in the evening schools at the beginning as there was not enough space to enrol both host and IDPs. During that initial period, the host students and teachers were very kind and genuine toward the IDPs. Then, later, when they became aware of the educational developments of our northern children, they began to show discrimination and jealousy towards our students. Then they started to say, “Antha ahadhi waran” (here comes the refugee).

The terminology of ‘Ahadhi’ or ‘Refugee’ is something that emerged at many of the sittings. Young people who were children at that time told us about the effect on them of the labelling ‘Ahadhi’. In the allocation of index numbers they often had a different letter, the letter ‘R’, for instance, next to their names. Additionally, in one instance we learned that they had not been considered in the calculations for the best performing students. They were not allowed to be the first in class. While there may be reasons for all of this, the Commission felt that it was essential that we recognize the stigma that children felt was attached to the label ‘Ahadhi’. In other instances we were told that teachers sometimes used it as a derogatory term when they were cross with students.
Today the situation relating to education is much improved. There are many new schools in the areas where the displaced have settled, and northern Muslim students who wish to pursue science subjects which require greater resources and laboratory facilities are able to do so by transferring to the schools in Puttalam that offer those subjects. Schools in Kalpitya and other areas offer quality education that has seen quite a number qualifying for university entrance. The issue of the university entrance quota from the district has created problems between the displaced people and the host community, and will be addressed in the next chapter. The following are the new schools that have been established in Puttalam after the arrival of the northern Muslims. Vepamadu MMV, Hidayath Nagar MV, Nahavillu Navodhaya, Husainiya Puram Navodhaya, and Al Qassimi City Navodhaya. All are C schools according to the local classification, which means that classes cover the Advanced Level Arts and/or Commerce streams. In addition, seven other schools with the “3” classification (which means that they have classes only up to either Grade 5 or Grade 8) have also been established. Six of these belong to educational zones in the Puttalam district, while 8 currently belong to the Mannar educational zone.39 (Please see Table 1 on page 124.)

An entire generation of northern Muslims has been affected by the inability to complete their education as a result of the displacement. This experience, in turn, influences decisions about going back to the north. Nadeera of Rasul Puthuveli provided the following account about going back and her children’s education.

We’d like to go back to our village but there is a problem. Because of the displacement we lost our education. Likewise we did not want to ruin our children’s lives. Therefore, we decided to finish all our children’s education and then later return to the village. My parents are currently in Mannar. We are hoping to go back once our children complete their education. (380)

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### Table 1: IDP Schools in Puttalam District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Schools</th>
<th>Year of commenced</th>
<th>Village or the Address of the school</th>
<th>Educational Zone</th>
<th>No. of Students attending from both local and IDP</th>
<th>Type of the school</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>No. of Buildings, chairs and tables</th>
<th>facilities like labs</th>
<th>facilities like ground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. Hussainiya puram Navothaya</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Ulukkappallam</td>
<td>Kalpitiya</td>
<td>2300</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03. Hithayathnagar M.V</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Karigaddai</td>
<td>Madurankuliya</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04. Veppamadu M.V</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Veppamadu</td>
<td>Puttalam</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05. Kooyavadi M.V</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Norachcholai</td>
<td>Kalpitiya</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06. Sirimapuram M.V</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Srimapura</td>
<td>Madurankuliya</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07. Karambe M.V</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Karambe - B</td>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08. Thilayadi M.V</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Umarapath</td>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09. 90 acres M.V</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Kandakuda</td>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Almana kalpitiya M.V</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Kalpitiya</td>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Thampapnny M.V</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Thampanny</td>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Al cassimi city M.M.V</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Al cassimicity</td>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Displacement and Voting Rights**

Another issue that is peculiar to the displacement experience of northern Muslims is the manner in which it impacted the community’s franchise rights. During the entire time that they were displaced, northern Muslims have had questionable access to exercising their vote, and, in some instances their right to vote has been manipulated for ends not always beneficial...
to them. In terms of the law and franchise rights of the displaced, an amendment was introduced with the addition of a new section 127B to the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act No. 15 of 1988.

127B (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of any other Law, any registered elector who reasonably fears that due to conditions prevailing in the area within which his polling station is situated, that he is unable to cast his vote at such polling station, may make an application to the Commissioner of Elections within one week of the notice of nomination, requesting that he may be allowed to cast his vote at another polling station determined by the Commissioner, in his absolute discretion.

(2) The Commissioner shall within a week of receipt of an application inform such elector whether such application is accepted or rejected. The decision of the Commissioner shall be final and shall not be questioned in any Court of law.

(3) Where such vote is cast, such vote shall be counted along with the votes of the electoral district where such elector is registered.

The application of this provision in the case of the northern Muslims happened through the administration of cluster polling booths in Puttalam for people of the northern electoral districts to cast their votes. Such cluster polling has been practiced from as early as the general elections of 1994. Cluster polling did not always take place for local government elections but were generally held for national elections—both the parliamentary elections and the presidential elections. However, as many have pointed out, the provision of the law applied only to already registered voters and did not apply to those who were not registered and those who reached voting age after the displacement. According to Edrisinha and de Alwis, in order to enumerate newly qualified persons, the Department of Elections follows certain fixed procedures of enumeration from which they do not deviate. In order to register the newly qualified voters, the Department requires correct information of the permanent addresses of their previous household, proper identification, etc. The impracticality of this requirement stems from the fact that most of these displaced persons have lost their personal identification documents. In the case of protracted displacement, as it is with the northern Muslims, most do not have permanent addresses in the north, and they find it difficult to access their voter lists to find out if their names have been included. Therefore, these laws have proved to be of little real use.40

The Department of Elections tried to address this problem through administrative measures that simply allow individuals who could not prove their previous registration to be entered in the register in their current location. As a result, these voters may cast ballots for candidates from their current district and may not apply for an absentee ballot from their home district. However, the implementation of these procedures is not uniformly followed at the district

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level, and some IDPs complained that they continue to face difficulties in establishing claim to vote in their municipalities of origin. Northern Muslims have long considered return to be important, have wanted to maintain their status as voters of the north, and have wanted their children who attain voting age to have the same status. In such cases this particular solution is not helpful.

**Northern Muslim Perspectives on the Displacement Experience**

Many have noted that the expulsion erased class differences by rendering everyone poor (Brun 2008, Thiranagama 2011.) As we have noted earlier, the northern Muslims’ loss of assets, as a community, was significant. However, large sections of the community have been able to make a life for themselves in Puttalam and elsewhere, and in the words of northern Muslim poet Uwise Ghani, have begun to “blossom like wild jasmin.” The testimonies that we collected provide an interesting perspective on the northern Muslims’ own understanding of the expulsion, the displacement experience, and the anticipations of return today. This section will survey some of the testimonies that anlaysed the displacement experience from a variety of different perspectives.

The following account was related by a person from Jaffna.

> Those who had difficulties there are better off here now. Those who were doing well there are finding it difficult here. There is an area called Yaarl Periya Theru. Those who were resident there are higher in status. They used to cover the windows in their cars when they were going in them because no one should see them. They are seen here waiting in line at the fair. That is their change. They came to know the outside world as a result of the expulsion. Now they are loitering.

R. Fayisa of Moor Street provided the following account of the displacement experience.

> In Jaffna many suffered a lot, but here they are all doing well. Out of 100% about 80% are doing well here. Those who lived well there are facing difficulties here. They have lost much of their wealth and are living here. They had big businesses and knew only that. They didn’t know how to undertake small income generating activities. Those who did such income generating activities there are able to do the same here and find ways to survive. Those who don’t know this are those who had big shops and lived with a lot of facilities. They have left everything and have come here. They don’t have any skills either. People like this are facing difficulties here but they have a lot of property left in Jaffna. (009)

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42 (Gani, 2002)
Fayisa also had a very interesting perspective on the manner in which the expulsion and the resulting changes had broadened people’s horizons as a result of their encountering others who spoke other languages and lived differently.

The local children and children from our native place have got married to one another. So there is no one who is foreign. Only after coming here were we able to meet people who speak different languages and have different characteristics. There is joy in it. It is the one thing that gives us much joy in terms of the whole displacement. After coming here generations from Mannar, Mullaithivu, Jaffna, Puttalam etc., are all mixed up. If we were in Jaffna we would not have been able to find a bridegroom from Mannar. This happened only after being chased out as a result of the problem. The fate of the people is such that they are born to die here. It’s God’s will. (009)

People routinely mentioned that improvements in their religious practice were one aspect of their lives that they appreciated. Fayisa’s is one example of such a narrative.

After coming here there is a lot of advancement in terms of Islam. There ‘Ulama’s’ are less. Then there was a lot of foolishness amongst people. Only older people would attend ‘Bayans’. Young girls do not go. Here even young girls attend ‘Bayans’. It is only after coming here that the people have been given a chance to learn about Islam. It is the same with going for ‘Janasas’, only the older people go. Their superstitions were such. Now the mothers stay back at home while the children go out. (009)

M.M.S. Musthafa of Kamal Lane, Moor Street, provided an account that reflected some of the above sentiments as well as positive developments since the expulsion.

The advantages that we got are that after being displaced the Muslims have got opportunities to work overseas and we have learnt more than ten skills. Previously we did not have any clue about the outer world, but now we are more stable and have got to know more things and have got more contacts with the outside world. (116)

Rahila of Khathi Abubakr Road also had a positive perspective on experiences after the displacement.

The children have attained high standards after reaching this place; in particular, the children of Jaffna have been selected for campus and scholarships. That is one improvement to talk about. There have been many improvements in education and business, and the families that went through difficulties in Jaffna have reached great standards here, where their children are well educated and many are abroad now. All of the displaced communities are ahead now. Since there is help from other organizations, education standards have increased. Presently, the displaced people are able to get to know the outside world, whereas in the village they knew only what was in the village. The people have become kind and people who never travelled in buses are travelling by bus now. (115)
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It is important to note, however, that the perspectives on positive developments were limited; most experiences were of hardship and the inability to provide for children. Many of the narratives were of great loss, pathos and sadness. M.T. Saleem of Jinnah Road did not believe that there had been any substantial improvements.

I don’t see much development. Daily earnings are sufficient for daily expenses only. Work is definitely a factor for the development of a person. It was possible in our area. But here it is not so. Now I get Rs. 6,000/- monthly from the mosque. I could not fully educate my children because of poverty. It would have been possible in our town. Still they are looking for jobs. I have 15 grandchildren. My youngest son is not married as he is not that well. Asthma in Puttlam is increasing because of the cement factories in the area. He is also affected by it. For his medicine we spend Rs. 150/- per day. He is now 22-years-old. I had a Tamil friend in Palai and when they call me they ask me to send him there, but as he was not well I refused to send him. (249)

M.S. Isatheen also had a similar perspective on the difficulties of a life of displacement.

This is a good place to live, but there are no job opportunities, so it is very difficult. The only favour the government granted us was to give us food rations; but we do not receive even that properly. If we were 8 people they would give goods for 5 people. Ever since my displacement my children’s education was badly affected due to our poverty. We find it difficult to find money for our daily food too. My two older children studied up to 10th grade. My third boy stopped school from 6th grade. The others are young. Even after 20 years we are still suffering. We still could not stand on our own feet. None of my children are married yet. (255)

The greatest sadness was expressed by parents who felt that they could not do their best by their children due to the conditions of displacement related to poverty. A.L.M.I. Pakeer Mohitheen of Hijrapuram could not help stating the following regrets in what was otherwise a narrative of positive aspects of the displacement.

We have had a little improvement in education, and I was able to develop my job skills, especially related to cultivation. In addition, I have learned some other types of businesses and gained experience in working as a salesman. All of my children have got married now. My eldest daughter got married in Nachchiadeevu, but she has been separated from her husband with two children. If we could have lived in our own village, we could have earned enough money and we could have got our children married to rich or even middle class people. But now we don’t have many facilities and therefore she had to get married to such a fellow. Our second daughter also got married and the same thing has happened to her too. If we had enough money and property we could have given dowries to get good husbands for them. (046)

One narrative indicated the manner in which the lack of job opportunities compelled men to stay at home and live off the labour of women. This was a cause for great stress within a
traditional Muslim community, and, as Abdeen Mohamed Mustapha of Neeravaipitty stated, it indicated a loss of respect.

Back in our native place women never went to work and only did the housework. There were a lot of job opportunities that were meant for men. Now, since it is only the women who go to work, there is a big problem for men in terms of respect. Here men get to eat only if the women go to work. It is the same with my family too. If they work one whole day they only get Rs. 250/- as wages, so we have to control the expenses of the family. Generally, for a family of 3, you need around Rs. 500/-. Furthermore, there are expenses related to the education of the children and other things. I earned well for 14 years and there is nothing left of it, but I managed to teach my children. One son just passed out of the Peradeniya University and we gave him in marriage recently. My second son, I sent him to recite (religious education), and he attended the Kasimiya Arabic College in Puttalam. Now he is working as a wage labourer at the Norachcholai Coal Power Plant. The third is a girl and she has passed her O/Ls. Because I don’t have a job now, she is not going to school anymore. I feel very sad when I think of her, but I have no way of doing anything. (029)

Alithambi Sareefa Umma of Hijra Puram stated the following about their 19 years of virtual destitution.

There are only a few shops in our camp. We do not have enough money to rear cattle. I have enough strength to run a shop, but I don’t have enough capital to do that. If it’s difficult I’ll do menial work. I have gastritis so I can’t stay long in the sun. If we work as a labourer some pay us Rs. 200/- and some pay us Rs. 240/- or 250/-. We don’t have sufficient money to build a house. Now we are living in a cadjan hut which is very difficult. When it rains, the water comes inside the house so it’s difficult for us to even sleep at night. So sometimes we don’t even sleep the whole night. We have been living like this for 19 years. We don’t have anything. We also asked many people, they said that they’ll help us, but no one has done so up to now. Once, we spoke about our problems to Rauf Hakeem, but he said, “What can I do? I’m helpless”. Everyone who visits us says that they’ll help us, but no one does. Now we have lost hope. If we could have lived in our village we would have been happy. If we eat lunch we worry about dinner, if we eat dinner we worry about breakfast, and that’s how we live here. There are people who live in worse situations than us. There are almost 150 families like that. Organizations don’t help them either. During fasting people go to work early in the morning at 5’o clock, work hard like hell, and come back home late at night. There are women who have lost their husbands, so with whom could they discuss their problems? They are in a dire situation. We don’t even have money to get electricity for our place. (040)

Sareefa Umma is currently a resident of B-Camp in Alankuda, Ettalai.
Relations with the Host Community: Perspectives from the Displaced

One of the most fundamental issues about which the displaced community had problems with the host community, was the use of the label “Ahadhi”. All discussions about the option of staying in Puttalam or going to the north have mentioned this. For instance, see the following testimony from a person from Vepankulam, Mannar, about prospects for return.

If all the people return to their villages, I, too, will go with them. That is our own village, the place in which we were born and where we grew up, so we cannot just leave it. We were forcibly expelled from our village. Today we were addressed as ‘Refugees’, some even called us ‘Refugee Dogs’. If we lived in our own village, we would not have been called these names and insulted. It is because we had to leave our home that we were insulted like this. We were also very thankful to those host community people, and we should be very proud of them as they welcomed us happily when Tamils kicked us out of our village.

The displaced people also complained about the host community and discrimination in terms of access to jobs. A resident of Jaffna provided the following account of his difficulties with earning a living and the limited options available for work in Puttalam.

My wife worked as a cook. She was paid only seventy five rupees per day. It was not enough even for the food. We could not even buy an ice cream for our children. We were grieving about the fact that our children who were well fed were now starving. Life here is very hard. I opened a tea shop, but due to my swollen legs I could not continue the shop. We did not have any improvements here. It is very difficult for jobs here. I could set up a meat shop here, but even if I take the license the people here will not allow it. Some of the people here are good. They invite us for their weddings and we do so as well. But some people are very rude when it comes to job issues. They will never allow us to do any job or business that would give us good profit.

After twenty years of the displacement and having to put up with the northern Muslim incursions into their space, their jobs, and their meagre resources, sections of the host community harbour a great deal of resentment towards the displaced community. The feeling has been exacerbated by the prosperity that has been brought to sections of the displaced community of Puttalam in the past five years by the intervention of the Ministry of Rehabilitation. For the first time, there is a northern Muslim—Rishard Bathiudeen—in a powerful ministry, and the community—especially the people of Mannar—have experienced the benefits of his patronage. The host community initially had problems with the manner in which NGOs favoured the displaced community over the host community, but this feeling has turned to resentment in the face of what is seen as political favours bestowed only on the displaced.

On their part, the displaced people feel that the locals see them as “beggars” and have no appreciation of either their hardships or their losses. The following extract is an indication of
the discrimination that the IDPs have to experience, as well as their sentiments towards such treatment. A person from Erukkalampiti stated the following.

In one instance I needed a loan in 1997. But the bank refused to give loans to displaced people. I was very hurt at that time. But afterwards I got a local person as a guarantor and then I was able to get the loan. Even in schools there was lots of discrimination. Those incidents really make me sad. Sometimes I sit and think of the life we led in our village, but here we are treated differently. I must also say this. Sometimes it is not only because of the local community that things go wrong; our displaced people also have their own weaknesses. Even in schools they treat the displaced children differently. They speak disparagingly of them. These things really hurt us. They think we are beggars who have come begging.

In the Puttalam host community’s presentation to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, the relative wealth of the northern Muslims is discussed in relation to that of the host community.

Most of the IDPs, particularly those from the district of Mannar have established themselves as a formidable and economically stable community. They own about 60% of the Jewellery shops in Puttalam Town. Out of 10 upstairs houses in Puttalam Town at least 5 belong to IDPs.

For the purpose of sharing the allocation of jobs, university admission etc. they want to be considered as citizens of Puttalam. But to get dry rations free of charge they want to maintain the IDP identity even if they have sufficient funds to feed 100 persons daily. They also control greater market share in the glass and aluminium fittings industry.43

In twenty years it is fitting and natural that sections of the expelled community would have found ways of prospering in their new conditions. It is heartening, in fact, to note that not everyone is suffering as a consequence of the expulsion and that many have done well for themselves. The Commission wanted to point out, however, that the visible wealth of a few is not an indication of the prosperity of an entire community of over 70,000 persons. Many persons were registered as receiving rations by the Secretariat for Northern Displaced Muslims. The Commission findings indicated that there were large sections of the community that would be in great difficulty if not for the provision of rations.

It is unfortunate that the host community feels that it faces discrimination and is treated as a second class citizen due to the presence of IDPs. The relative deprivation suffered by the Puttalam district, the lack of services and facilities for the local poor, and the lack of sensitivity to the local population in the provision of aid to the displaced by both the NGO

43 http://puttalamonline.com/2011/02/20/northmuslims-puttalam date of access as 08/27/2011
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community and the state are all issues that have to be addressed. However, these should not be seen as issues worthy of confrontations between IDP and host communities. Both communities are making the best of a situation for which neither party was responsible. The next chapter will explore these issues more substantially.

Conclusion

This chapter has laid out some of the salient features of the northern Muslims’ protracted displacement experience. It has emphasized the difficulties experienced in the early years, in particular the manner in which education, health care, and the voting rights of the population were affected.

Other important issues with regard to the displacement experience—government assistance to the displaced and the settlements created in Puttalam, for instance—have not been addressed here since they have been covered in other chapters.

As Shanmugaratnam noted of the IDPs in the Alankudah area in 2001,

> The majority of the IDPs were farmers and fishermen and most of them were experienced market oriented producers. There were also professional traders, contractors and craftsmen among them. In general, the level of literacy among the IDPs was higher than that of their hosts. The migrant population had not only productive capacities but was also a potential market for consumer and (in the intermediate and longer-term) capital goods. Even though the LTTE did not permit them to take their material belongings along, some of them had financial savings and some managed to hide their gold jewellery and take it with them to Kalpitya. Many IDPs were able to go to the Middle East to earn and remit money to their families. Some of them returned after a few years and invested their savings in farming and other businesses. In the past few years, some of the displaced fishermen from Mannar have been regularly going back seasonally to fish in their former fishing areas and return to their homes in Kalpitya. Groups of displaced fishermen from Mullaitivu moved back to the East coast seasonally and worked for fishing boat owners there. Most of the IDPs, however, had to begin their lives in Kalpitya by working as casual farm labourers and waged employment still remains the major source of cash income for the majority of displaced families. The women were prepared to work as casual labourers. ‘We started working on farms from the day after we settled in the camp’, said one of them. (Shanmugaratnam, 2001, P. 10)

Although the northern Muslims have lost much, they have proven to be a resilient community and many have made successful lives for themselves and their children in Puttalam and elsewhere. As has been noted in the literature, many of them were well-educated, highly skilled people from fairly developed urban areas and wealthy rural areas in the north. As such, they used their skills and abilities to establish themselves after the displacement. However, it must be noted that this is only true of a certain section of the population, and, as
the chapter has shown, many more continue to languish in poverty, in substandard housing, with little improvement to their lives for twenty years. It is the plight of this majority that the Commission process has attempted to highlight.
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MAP 4
LOCATIONS OF MUSLIM REFUGEE CAMPS
IN PUTTALAM DISTRICT

1. Puttalam District
2. No Camp name
3. Kandakuli A
4. Kandakuli B
5. Kurinchatit- North
6. Kurinchatit- South
7. Anaivasaal A
8. Anaivasaal B
9. Kalpine
10. Periyakudinoorpu A
11. Periyakudinoorpu B
12. Aththathalliyarayam
13. Church camp
14. Kalpitty town
15. Paliwassathurai
16. Musalipitty A
17. Musalipitty B
18. Mulhalapiti A
19. Mulhalapiti B
20. Kandakuda A
21. Kandakuda B 90 acre
22. Thavivila
23. Thigal
24. Elhalai
25. Alankuda- Mulativu
26. Alankuda- Erakkalampidy
27. Alankuda- Thaikapalli
28. Nuralchiviali
29. Poochchevali
30. Kanativu
31. 7th Mile Mar
32. 6th Mile Redd
33. 6th Mile lama
34. 4th Mile Pala
35. 4th Mile Vepp
36. 3rd Mile Math
37. 2nd Mile Upp 1
38. 1st Mile Upp2
39. Town Camp
40. Puttalum Town
41. Thialadi
42. Palavi
43. Karambait Janawasama
44. Paniatichiviali
45. Puluthwayai
46. Rodibarai
47. Methawakalam
48. Vruthodi School
49. Nallanthulawa Mosque
50. Nallanthulawa Taika
51. Nallanthulawa Mutly
52. Mutamakhendri
53. Matarukkudi
54. Kaduyomatoli Mosque
55. Kanamootali South
56. Mangalavili
57. Palezhhi
58. Munthali
59. Sameeragama
60. Perukkuwatthan
61. Koottantivu
62. Pulichchakulam
63. Keerankalai
64. Akkaraveli
65. Angunivilla
66. Bathaloya

(Hasbullah, 1993, p. 25)
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Host Community Perspective on the Displacement

When the northern Muslims began arriving in Puttalam in October 1990, the population of 4 District Secretariat Divisions of the Puttalam district (Puttalam, Kalpitiya, Munthal and Vanathavillu) nearly doubled. In the Kalpitiya area alone, the displaced people outnumbered the local population by about 2,225 persons (Hasbullah, 1993, p. 7). State assistance for the people, in terms of food and shelter, was not available at the moment of their arrival. The distribution of government rations began only in 1991. Therefore, during those first harrowing days, the entire northern Muslim population was dependent on the mobilization of the local people for assistance, for everything from food and shelter to health and hygiene. In every single testimony without exception, northern Muslims talked about the manner in which the host community helped them, often naming individuals and families as taking a special interest in them. Dr. Illyas, a prominent member of the Puttalam Muslim community, who later contested as a provincial councillor for the northern Muslims, was one of those instrumental in setting up the initial camps in the areas where the IDPs arrived. Dr. Illyas took the lead in organizing camps and settlements in those large tracts of land. He helped to organize camps in Kalpitiya and Nurrachcholai for those who came across to Kalpitiya by sea. Camps in Thillaayadi and Pulichakkulam were organized for those who came direct to the Puttalam area over land.

The names of Dr. Illyas and M.P. Aboobakr appeared often in the testimonies. The following account was offered by A. Sulthana of Jaffna.

The Puttalam people used to bring the extra food from weddings and similar events to our camp. My husband was unable to keep a job for long. Then a man told him to take a motorcycle and go to Kalpitiya and bring back fish. His name was Umaru. He is no more now, but his wife and children are there. He has a son called Rizwan. They are a very good family. They helped us a lot at that time. Then there was G. Essoom and Muhammed Illiyas from Puttalam. They helped us a lot. He was the one who helped us to register for food rations. This way, even though we suffered a lot, we managed to give our child in marriage without a dowry. They embraced us when we came here...these people of Puttalam. If they had not accepted us, just think about what our plight would have been? Where could we have gone? If they had not done so we would have had to go abroad, to places like Saudi Arabia. We have to thank them a lot for accepting us. They treated us like their brothers and sisters, fed us and helped us. (025)

However, the absence of sufficient state services to assist the expelled Muslims, as well as the manner in which the community was compelled to depend on fellow Muslims and the limited resources of the area, have strained relations between the host and displaced communities in certain areas of the district. When the Commission conducted its
investigations, there were many issues of contention between the two communities. This chapter will focus on a discussion of the host community perspective on the northern Muslims’ arrival, protracted stay, and now the decision to return. Brun argues that, due to migrant fishing and other reasons, Puttalam itself was a town of itinerants who had only recently settled (Brun, 2008, p. 228). To a certain extent, the local community was less affluent, and more marginalized and conservative than the better educated and wealthier (both rural and urban) northern Muslim communities. Culturally, too, there were significant differences between the two communities, as was soon realized by both the displaced people and the hosts.

The Arrival

The people who moved to Puttalam were not one or two but they came in large numbers. They came by road and by sea. Some who had friends here went to their places. More than 90% stayed at the school, on private lands and government lands. It was decided by some that the Zahira National School, Educational section could not be opened but the people of Puttalam broke open the locks and allowed the northern Muslims to stay. The mosque administrators, private companies and the public helped them by giving cooked food, milk powder and clothes. They also collected things from others and gave these to them. The main people who helped in this way are doctor Illiyaas, Jaamiyathul Ulama members, Jamaathi Islam members, brother Niyas, Farook Haajiaar of Thublic Jamaath, the young graduate committee, Saleem Master and Sankey Master. All of them helped and gave their full support. Those who came from this side went to Kaareideevu Aluwankulam. And those who came from Anuradhapura road came to the Puttalam town and those who came by sea went to Kalpittiya. Some went to Negombo and Panadura. Most of them took their own decisions regarding their settlement. Those who moved did not come from one place but they came from so many places like Vanni, Musali, Maanthaai, Jaffna and Killinochchi. (274)

The above quote is from the testimony of Maulavi Abdulla Alim, the head of the Kassimiya Arabic College in Puttalam. He is one of the host community leaders that most northern Muslims perceived to be a very moderate individual who was able to mediate many of the grievances between members of the two communities. He was also, however, sympathetic to the plight of both communities and constantly urged visiting dignitaries to take both perspectives—and not just the IDP perspective—into account in understanding the situation in Puttalam.

The memory of the northern Muslims’ arrival is as strong in the minds of those who were participants of those initial days as was the story of the expulsion for northern Muslims. It marked an important event in the history of the place and was often discussed. A few other narratives of the arrival are worth quoting. K.I. Yaseer who was only 11 at the time provided the following account.
I still well remember the displacement of the Muslims in the year 1990. At the time, we were living in our place. At the time, we were studying in school. They came here while we were studying at school. They needed immediate help when they came here. We were all engaged in helping them. Since they urgently required food, we went out to the farming gardens and brought vegetables. We visited the business people in the village, collected rice, flour, food materials etc., from them for those displaced people.(242)

M.I.S. Rifka remembers the arrival even though she was very young—just 8 years old—when the displaced people arrived.

We gave them all the help they needed when they came here. I can remember that. We cooked and provided them with meals, clothes to wear. Since they stayed next door, they were our neighbours. Further they had already confirmed the proposals of the marriages for their children before they came over here. The weddings of their children were celebrated at our house since they stayed in small sheds. Because of that, they had it in our house.(241)

Many of the Puttalam Muslims had thought—as did the northern Muslims—that their sojourn in Puttalam was temporary. Abdul Latheef, a teacher at Zahira College, Puttalam, stated that he had thought the northern Muslims would go back in a month or so, but this did not happen. As Abdulla Maulawi told us, even if your closest relatives come to visit, things get a little difficult after a few days. The implication was that the northern Muslims—through no fault of their own—have been compelled to overstay their welcome. As Seyyadu Mohammed, a 67-year-old village elder, informed us in his testimony, “we gave them all the help that we could. However, we have always been helping them and we are still willing to do so.” (188) The plea from many of them was that the outside world recognize the burden that the host community has been compelled to bear.

Prior to the influx of the displaced, the Puttalam area itself was a generally under resourced and relatively backward area. It was known for its Muslim community—especially in the town—and had fairly close links with the Muslims of the north. Mannar was located in the district immediately north of Puttalam, and the exchanges were frequent. For instance, Abdulla Maulawi describes the fact that he knew northern Muslims because many patronized the Kassimiya Arabic College that was founded by his father.

I had connections with the Muslims of the north before they shifted here. There were very few Madarasas for religious education. Because of this for the first time a Madarasa called Kassimiya Arabic School was built in Puttalam. So from Mannar and Jaffna they usually come to this Madarasa to have a religious education. At the beginning, my father was the religious head of this Madarasa so I had a lot of contact with these people. The parents who come to see their children usually stayed at my place, and when they came for other purposes as well, they stayed at my place, so I knew them before they moved here. (274)
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As Abdulla Maulawi explained to us, the new people who arrived were almost equal in number to the host community amongst whom they ultimately settled for twenty years. However, there was no corresponding increase in the resources of the area to accommodate the population that almost doubled overnight (Husbullah, 1993, p 5&6). This was especially pertinent in relation to health services, and almost every testimony that we collected from members of the host community made a reference to the long queues in the hospitals and the overcrowded clinics.

A village elder who gave us his testimony described the problem in the following manner.

Previously there were 50,000 families in Puttalam, but now there are 70,000 families living presently. Still the quota of medical requirements/supplies only covers 50,000 families. Therefore, the families suffer badly due to the lack of medicines. However, the displaced community is able to satisfy their requirements because priority is given to them as refugees. They also have direct support from certain ministers. The ministers should take the necessary steps to increase the quota of medical supplies in Puttalam. This should be done by the MP of Mannar; as the Muslims of Mannar are presently in Puttalam, there is no point in having a bigger quota for Mannar as the population there is low. (188)

The above testimony also reflects a sentiment that was held strongly by the host community— that the northern Muslims were politically more powerful than the hosts. They made constant and varied reference to the fact that the Puttalam community was politically fragmented and therefore unable to do much to address their own needs while the northern Muslims were organized and assisted by a powerful minister.

M.I.S. Rifka stated the matter in the following terms.

With regard to our village there is lot of fragmentation. To get rid of this fragmentation there is an idea to bring one MP. But there are party differences. If one generation supports the People’s Alliance the next generation will support the UNP. Since there is no unity and no vision about the future, we are unable to mobilize to elect one minister only for us. Therefore there is a political problem among the local people. But there is no such problem among the displaced people. Therefore there is a difference with regard to the political access of the local people and the displaced people. They have their own ministry. (241)

Land and Land Ownership

The arrival of the northern Muslims had significantly changed land ownership and usage patterns in the Puttalam area. Shanmugaratnam describes the manner in which the Alankuda area was completely transformed by the arrival of the displaced people. The availability of cheap labour transformed the onion cultivation in the area and helped bring about the onion boom (Shanmugaratnam 2001). On the other hand, the sudden demand for land emerged as a consequence of the 1995 Unified Assistance Scheme and the establishment of relocated villages; large tracts of agricultural land were transformed into housing land. Land prices
inflated significantly as a consequence of the Assistance Scheme. This was a phenomenon that occurred not just in the Alankuda area in the Kalpitiya DS division, but in almost all the places where the northern Muslims settled. Host community persons sometimes spoke of the fact that, in comparison with current prices, they sold their land for lower prices to the displaced people. The loss of grazing land is the other issue that is sometimes mentioned, along with the consequent demise of the cattle rearing business. M.I.S.Rifka provided the following account.

In 1990 in our settlement area they had approximately 2,000 head of cattle. Now they have built houses for those displaced people on the grazing lands. Therefore, they gave up the cattle production business. Therefore, a lot of people who were depending on that for their livelihood gave that up and are doing a different job now. (241)

K.I. Yaseer also commented on the same issue in relation to land.

There was a change in the land rights due to their arrival. The price of land went up. Before the year 1990, the price of 1 acre of land was 1 lakh. Now the price of a 7 perch plot is 1 lakh. Their demand for land increased. Our next village is Ullukkappallam.44 The land on which the school is built belonged to a person from our area. Because of the Government’s Land Act, it is owned by the Government. It was given to the people in that area for them to keep cattle. (242)

There are also many myths that circulate about the host community’s loss of land. For instance, there were stories of host community people donating their land to the displaced for various purposes. M.T.M. Nafeel’s narrative is interesting for this reason.

Historically the people of the Kalpitiya area owned 1 acre per person. But after the displacement, they sold these lands to the displaced people, gave them on lease, and sometimes, on humanitarian grounds, gave the land free of charge. In similar ways, in order to remedy the shortage of space on the basis of general service people gave their lands free of charge. Due to the arrival of the displaced persons, the number of students increased in school and there was a need for space for more buildings. For that some people gave their lands free of charge. Similarly, there was a need to build hospitals, mosques etc., due to the increase in the population. For general things like this the people in the area gave their lands free of charge. I heard that the people from areas of Kalpitiya, Munthal came forward and donated their lands free of charge for general services. Like this the people donated their lands, and thus a change occurred in the land shares. (196)

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44 A large northern Muslim settlement.
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This narrative is important, both because there were certain instances when land was donated for such public purposes and also because it captures the sense that many locals have of what they have lost. There is a sense that the displaced people are not sufficiently grateful for the sacrifices made by the locals. They seem to feel that the monetization of the economy, and the profit from the escalating land prices etc that the local community lost out on was the consequence of their earlier generosity. There is a sense that their generosity has somehow backfired on them.

There is also a fear that the Puttalam people are increasingly becoming landless due to the northern Muslim presence. The increase in land prices that occurred after the UAS Housing Assistance Scheme in 1995 soon put the purchase of land beyond the reach of many poor Puttalam Muslims.

The loss of livelihood is connected to the story of land. Loss of livelihood was articulated in terms of the oft-cited example of cheap labour. Displaced women were able to work for lesser pay due to their access to rations. This affected the labouring local communities. Additionally, we also learned that the access to rations impacted a variety of businesses. Small shops run by the displaced people could sell goods at lesser rates due to the fact that they had access to rations (Nafeel, 196). Northern Muslim three-wheeler drivers could charge less for hires for the same reason (Maulawi Abdulla Aalim, 274). The rations were closely connected to the perceived advantage that the northern Muslim community seemed to have in the eyes of the host community. The rations were also seen as an unfair advantage that the displaced people had in a context where the overwhelming majority of the local communities, too, were poor and in need of assistance.

They were provided with rations twice a month. The government did provide everything during 1990, and later, after everyone settled down and became more comfortable, the ration was provided only to those facing hardship. These services were not provided to the host villagers. It’s ok if they didn’t give it to the wealthy but there were host villagers who were very poor and they could have provided these services to them. (223)

The Puttalam economy has expanded considerably after the arrival of the displaced people, as was articulated by many members of the host community. This is seen both as an advantage—people have better and easier access to goods and services—and a problem. For instance, once again due to the rations, the shops run by displaced people are able to sell goods at a slight discount, according to many reports. This secures the displaced people an advantage over the host community establishments. M.T.M. Nafeel outlined this situation in the following terms.

Now the host community people are running a shop. Those who came are also running a shop. There is an opportunity for those displaced people to sell their commodities in their shop at a small discounted price because they are being provided rations by the Government. Therefore there is tension among the shop
owners. When business is affected in this way, there are bound to be changes in the cost of living. (196)

Seyyadu Mohamed was more appreciative of the manner in which they brought new goods and services to the area.

They did not do business in our village, but they did so in their newly bought lands. They put up bigger shops than the ones found within the village, which made the host community visit their shops. (188)

Further, when asked about the advantages to the host community from the arrival of the displaced, Seyyadu Mohamed offered the following account.

One of the main advantages is that their arrival has economically developed the area. Before their presence in the village, we had to go to Puttalam Maduranguli to buy certain goods, but after their arrival we have overcome this problem. (188)

It was clear from the testimonies collected that there was both an appreciation of the fact that the economy was being expanded by the presence of the IDPs’ “bigger shops”, as well as a critique of the fact that most businesses—in this instance petty trading establishments—were being taken over by the displaced people with the local people getting pushed out of them. Such a fear arose over a variety of businesses, including agriculture and fishing, that were popular with the northern Muslims, and the host community feared losing out in this situation. There is also a general feeling that the displaced people have been looked after due to the tragedy of the expulsion. While most people were critical of the expulsion and sympathetic to the initial predicament, many felt that the time of great deprivation and emergency was past; that the displaced had been given help and had recovered; and that the local poor were considerably worse off than the displaced people who continue to receive assistance. Silmiya offered the following narrative.

The place where I work consists completely of displaced people. They are given 10 perches of land, a house is built for them, and the government has built schools for them. There are people who are worse off among the local community, compared to the displaced people. And they even have tap water. If it wasn’t for them, these resources could have been utilized to develop the local villagers. So the displaced people don’t need to go anywhere else to study as they have their own schools which were built by the government, and they do not have to move from place to place as they have schools for all the grades. There is an improvement seen in the teachers who are appointed by the government for the displaced people. But these services are unavailable for the local villagers. (223)

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45 See chapter 7 and the host community submission to the LLRC to be found at http://puttalamonline.com/2011/02/20/northmuslims-puttalam
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Yaseer, too, shared some of Silmiya’s sentiments.

There was nothing much to say about the resource allocation. But due to the resource allocation, there were differences which arose between us and them. In particular, there were good roads, village development etc., in the place where the displaced people were staying due to the support of the Government when compared with the Puluthiwayal village. But there was no Government support for the local people. Therefore there was no development. In the same way, if we take the housing scheme, there are lots of local people without houses. But they made and supplied very good houses and land facilities for those displaced people who came 20 years ago. Therefore, there has been a very good resource allocation for the displaced people. The local community people were given second preference. (242)

As discussed in Chapter 6, the fact that the service provision to the displaced people was undertaken by the Ministry of Reconstruction and later by the Secretariat for Northern Displaced Muslims (SNDM) contributed to maintaining the IDP-host community distinction and to exacerbating the host community’s feeling that the IDPs were better served than the locals. Roads, water, and electricity supply were inadequate to local communities as well, but this was often overlooked when providing these much-needed services to the IDP communities.

The Advent of the Northern Muslims and Education in Puttalam

Education is an issue that was very important for the northern Muslims. Most Puttalam Muslims’ narratives indicate that education was not that developed in Puttalam before the arrival of the IDPs. Despite the sentiment quoted above, many were appreciative of the changes brought about by the presence of the northern Muslims in Puttalam, particularly due to the improvements in schools. Initially, there was an effort made by the Puttalam community to provide facilities for the thousands of students who suddenly arrived. M.T.M Nafeel, a mathematics teacher, described the arrival and the manner in which he contributed towards the northern Muslims’ education.

At the time I was in Puttalam. At the time they stayed in our area in our schools. We helped them in getting food from this area. In addition to that, we provided them with help for their educational activities. In the years 1991 and 1992, there were evening classes conducted for those northern province Muslims who were residing in the Puttalam district. The non-availability of space is the reason for conducting evening classes. In this case, their evening classes were conducted from 2p.m. to 5p.m. I conducted mathematics classes without any fee from the year 1991 to ‘96 for those students’ further education. I taught mathematics for students of Grades 8, 9, 10 and 11. At the beginning, I did that on an individual basis. (196)

As stated before, many from the host community felt that the area of education was positively impacted by the arrival of the northern Muslims. All those we spoke to were unequivocal in
this assertion. Seyyadu Mohamed provided the following account of the improvements in educational standards in the area.

There are changes in educational standards. In the beginning, the host community children were not keen on their studies. The facilities in the village for good education were also of very low standards, as the schools did not have classes up to Advanced Level & Ordinary Level. But after the displaced community’s arrival, there was an increase in all facilities and in the number of schools, and the schools were ranked from A and B. The Puluthyvayal School had classes up to Ordinary Level and the Ulukkapallam School had classes up to Advanced Level. Ultimately, the host students became increasingly keen on studying, so the children who wanted to continue to the Advanced Level joined the Ulukkapallam School. Admission to universities depended on the educational standards of the children, but the host students put in less effort to enter university than the displaced community. (188)

The education of girls, too, was positively affected by the advent of the northern Muslims. Many stated that the educational and employment levels of women had significantly improved after the arrival of the northern Muslims. Silmiya, who was in school when the northern Muslims arrived and had northern Muslims as her friends and classmates, provided the following account.

Women’s education has slightly increased from the local villagers’ point of view. We did not send our girls for higher studies whereas the displaced people sent their children for higher studies, and they were leading in that respect. At the beginning, the local people were not as keen as the displaced people, but now they are. There was competition between the groups of children, and thus they have set an example to the local villagers which has basically increased the standards of the local girls. This can be considered as an improvement. They came while I was in Grade 5, and we could see their knowledge levels were better than ours. So basically the competition increased and the educational developments took place. There were very few girls doing jobs at the beginning, but after their arrival, the number of working women has increased. (223)

Another issue that was raised in relation to education was the manner in which displaced students gained admission to university on the quota of the Puttalam district, regardless of their insistence on their northern identity. Larger numbers of displaced students gained admission to university from the Puttalam quota, and this was resented by the host community. The displaced community felt that they should gain entrance to university, not from the highly competitive Puttalam quota with a relatively high cut-off mark, but from the less competitive northern districts’ quota. Other than the Jaffna district, the northern districts are considered educationally ‘backward’, and students have an advantage and the option of entering with lesser marks. While this was often mentioned as an issue impacting both the displaced and the northern Muslim communities, the recent host community submission to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission outlines the fact that the issue is larger
than the two Muslim communities of Puttalam and should be understood from the perspective of the Puttalam district as a whole. The submission argues that the southern part of the district that accesses 90% of the university entrance quota for the district has better schools and resources; that the resources of the northern part are less advanced; and that, therefore, the area should be considered an educationally ‘backward’ area and students given a lower cut-off mark for university entrance.46

There was another area in which many saw an improvement after the arrival of the displaced people. Many vocations that require technical knowledge, like tailoring, masonry, iron mongering etc., were introduced to the area by the northern Muslims. Some host community members, too, gained exposure to these kinds of livelihoods and learnt from them, and the economy in the area improved, in general, as a consequence of the availability of these skills.

M.I.S. Rifka described these improvements in the following manner.

    In our village there weren’t many businesses that were based on skilled work. After their arrival, they had businesses in partnership with local people in the town. The local people, too, learnt these skills and these businesses. Masonry and Palmyrah fencing are two areas that local people learnt from those who came. (241)

K.I. Yaseer, too, recognized the differences in ways of doing trade and business, as well as the different skills that the northern Muslims brought to the area.

    Next, those displaced people were engaged in new income-generating activities. They introduced new jobs to the area. They did some jobs in ways that were surprising to the local people, in particular stone production for building houses. People here used to give the entire areca nut in full. Now, after watching and following the way displaced people do things, they cut the nut and sell it. They did everything in a technical manner. (242)

Differences in Cultural Practices that have Adversely Impacted the Local Community

As the host community discovered, many cultural practices of the northern Muslim community were different from the hosts. The dowry system, in particular, has been given much attention in our testimonies. Currently, the dowry system has undergone significant inflation, as has been discussed in the literature (Zackariya and Shanmugaratnam 2001 and Haniffa 2008), and is causing difficulties for both local and displaced communities. Silmiya considered the marriage customs of the northerners and the local community to be quite different.

46 http://puttalamonline.com/2011/02/20/northmuslims-puttalam, date of access as 08/27/2011
We do not look for the rates of dowry, but the displaced people’s main aim has been dowry. What we look for is the family standard and whether they are kind hearted. The introduction of the dowry was due to the displaced people. And northern Muslim marriages were similar to the Tamils as they followed their culture. It was the same with clothes and jewellery, but today it has changed a bit. (223)

The displaced people hold night weddings, but the local villagers do it in the afternoon. Presently, though, the displaced people are doing Asr time (afternoon prayer time) weddings. They provide biscuits and tea whereas we provide feasts. (223)

Nafeel’s assessment of the differences is less definitive than Silmiya’s and is also worthy of note.

There are small differences prevailing between the northern province Muslims and the Muslim people of the area. Since the Muslims of Mannar and Jaffna lived together with the Tamil community in those places, those Muslims possess the same cultural behaviour as that of the Tamil community. In that respect, there are differences seen in the cultural behaviour between the Muslims of the Northern Province and the local people. Practices such as the dowry systems were more prominent among Northern Province Muslims. Although the dowry system prevailed among people of Puttalam as well, it was not practiced too strictly. The dowry system prevailed only among those who were well to do. After the arrival of the Northern Province Muslims, it has become popular in Puttalam as well. Due to the advancement in religious matters in recent times, the custom of giving dowries has decreased. (196)

The host community also felt that the displaced community, as a whole, was much better organized and connected and better able to take care of its own than the host community people. The following account is one example of that sentiment.

The displaced people get government sector jobs very easily. The reason that they have a chance to get into such institutions is that most of their community people are involved in such organizations. So they have a greater chance to know where the vacancies are available. Most of the host girls go abroad to work which causes problems within the family because, as they go, they forget their culture and get used to a life of luxury. So the children of such families are neglected and the moral values are lost. (188)

There is also a realization of the need to improve the local community’s approach to women and education, and women and work.

The girls of the host community had very low educational standards—the reason was that these girls, as they reached puberty, were prevented from going to school by their parents. The displaced community girls had very high standards in education.
That’s because parents allowed them to go to school even after they had reached puberty. They also did not care about the times of the classes—they attended a tuition class whenever they had the opportunity to do so. Their parents supported them well in such cases. (188)

The displaced community girls are ahead of the host girls, in terms of education. They also go to work in all types of organizations without any hesitation, but some of the host community thinks that it’s a disgrace to work in certain organizations. So there are a few difficulties for the host community girls to get proper professions according to their wants. (188)

**Perspective on Return**

We have stated in this report that return was a fraught proposition for many northern Muslims. The issue of northern Muslims leaving Puttalam held equal importance for the Puttalam residents who spoke to us. Many were torn between wanting them to leave and wondering what would happen to the place if they did leave. Some were quite insistent that the northern Muslims should leave, but others were not sure. Many said that they should not go back, and that the economy and the educational standards of Puttalam would be affected. The following accounts are a few examples of the different positions that we encountered.

Presently, the opinion of the people of our area is as follows. There is overcrowding, scarcity of resources and exacerbation in terms of scarcity of resources after the arrival of the displaced people. Due to these reasons and also because the displaced people should not give up their own places and lose their resources there; the local people want the displaced people to go back. They will then be in a position to reclaim their motherland. Further, to avoid future problems that may occur due to the increase in population, they feel the displaced should return. If they continue to stay here, there will be a situation where a population of 2, 3 districts will be living concentrated in this district itself. Conflicts may erupt due to congestion. (196)

There aren’t any problems for us if they resettle, but if they are leaving they should give the lands back to us or not sell it to others. Only a few are willing to go there as they had lands in their own villages. Most of the people from the newer generation will not go because they are used to this village’s surroundings and environment. Only 45% of the people might go back, but I don’t think even that percentage will go because most of the children of the displaced community are married to those from the host community. And I don’t think it’s a must for them to resettle because a Muslim chasing away a fellow Muslim is not a good thing. (188)

Next, according to me and from the information I have received, 100% of the people are prepared to go. I think that they should go because there should be evidence that Muslims lived/live in those places before. If they go, there will be an impact on the education sector. Popular schools will be closed. Next, there will no longer be good
teachers. In terms of economic impact, business will be affected. Because of that, in the Puttalam district, each area will be affected. (242)

In my opinion, only one-third of the population says they want to go. I do not think all should go. Even if they go, school educational activities will get affected. They are the teachers who teach in our schools. If they all go, our school children will be affected. Further, if they all go, the education of our area will be affected. But it will not affected in terms of jobs. Jobs will be provided according to the educational status that prevails here. But in the case of educational measures, if those teachers leave, the volunteer teachers who are present at the moment will be appointed as teachers. Those would have taught by one method, and these teachers will teach by another method. Children’s studies will be affected. (241)

I think 80% will leave and resettle, but the wealthier people will not go back to the village as they know it will be difficult to live the same way there, and when these people leave there will be an economic recession taking place in Puttalam. There will be less development of the village, and this can affect the villagers. (223)

I don’t think that they should leave. I think that some people might have 10 perches of land here, but there they might have 10 acres—in that case it’s absurd to stay here. Further, if they all go, there will be less competition and the villages will become backward. Further, if they leave and people of other religions move into their lands/houses, there is a chance that communal problems might emerge. (223)

Tensions between the Host and IDP Communities

Arguably, tensions between the host and IDP communities have been at a low and manageable level, mainly due to measures taken by the leadership of both communities. However, violence has flared up between the two groups in certain instances, and this must be noted. The CPA study on *Informal Dispute Resolution in the North East and Puttalam (2007)* records several instances of violence flaring up between the host and IDP communities. One case study in particular is worth recounting.

According to the CPA report, violence had erupted in the Sirimapura area due to an altercation between three-wheeler drivers of the local Sinhala and Muslim communities. However, on the night of the incident, the brunt of the violence seems to have been directed at the nearby northern Muslim resettlement village of Sirimapura. A mob of 25-40 men had attacked the village. The mob had burned down ten houses and trashed electrical items in seven more. According to village residents, the attackers were not from the neighbouring village but from the more distant urban area of Pallavi. The attack caused great fear in the community because many houses did not have male heads—they had returned to the north for either fishing or cultivation. The IDP community could not find any reason for the attack other than generalized resentment against them.47

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One of the first Commission visits was to the relocation settlement of Al Mannar in Kalpitiya, where we encountered a severe deterioration of relations between the IDPs and the local community. The extent to which relations had deteriorated was such that the local community would not grant permission for the IDP mosque to conduct Jumma prayers. The competition over fishing had escalated to such an extent that relations had completely broken down between the two communities.

The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission visited the Puttalam district on 7 January 2011. One of the most interesting developments related to the visit was the manner in which the host community leadership’s sentiment about the northern Muslims was publicly expressed, perhaps for the first time. The statement illustrated the host community’s dissatisfaction with the situation that they had been forced to endure for twenty years and the minimal attention that they had received from both the NGO community and the state. It was disturbing that the sentiment was articulated against the northern Muslims and what are considered to be corrupt and unethical practices amongst some of them. For instance, it was pointed out that some families seemed to have access to more than one housing assistance plan, and that some families who were visibly wealthy were still receiving rations.

The submission, made jointly by the Trustees of the Puttalam Grand Mosque and the Puttalam branch of All Ceylon Jammiyyathul Ulama (Council of Muslim Theologians) on behalf of the host community of Puttalam and local or host community of Puttalam electorate, outlines the following major issues faced by the Host Community due to the continuing presence of IDPs in their area.

- Host Community (HC) denied access to state lands under the hitherto system of village expansion scheme as most lands are acquired by purched by IDPs.
- Continuous competition in agricultural activities, particularly in the Kalpitiya D.S. Divisions and IDPs acquiring more lands for agriculture and depleting the ground water supply, which is the only source in the Kalpitiya peninsula.
- Undercutting the HC labour force by working for low wages as they receive free dry rations.
- Over fishing using prohibited nets such as ‘laila’ nets in which even the smallest of fish are caught and thereby depleting the marine resource of Puttalam area.
- Fragmentation of coconut lands for large housing schemes for IDPs in many relocated villages and thereby creating a great demand for coconut in the region which in turn resulted in the increase of the selling price of coconut.
- Using political influence to obtain jobs for IDPs in the government sector and denying the rights of equality of more qualified HC candidates for such employment.
- Equipping the IDP scholars fully with all facilities while the HC schools are deprived of such facilities.
• Houses with all amenities for IDPs (even 3 houses for one family) while HC poor suffer in huts similar to cow sheds.

• Shifting of the Vocational Training Centre which functioned under VTA in the Puttalam town to the relocated IDP village in Nagavillu—re-named as Erukkalampitti by the IDPs—and equipping it better, thereby denying the HC youth in Puttalam Town from benefiting.

• HC affected by the very presence of IDPs in many ways.

• The IDPs have established 6 schools within the Puttalam Electorate. These schools come under the purview of the Northern Provincial Council and teachers have been recruited by the NPC and payments and facilities are also provided by the NPC. Northwestern Provincial Council or the Education Office in Puttalam has no jurisdiction over these schools or the administration. This is another example of creating a Northern Province within the Northwestern Province. In other words IDP teachers for IDP children in IDP schools. Also the same times demand and share the allocations and facilities provided by the NWPC to schools in NWP. They want to be citizens and voters in NP as well as in the NWP obtaining maximum benefits at the expense of the Host Community. Host community students are not admitted to IDP schools. eg: Ulukapallam.

• IDP NGO operators dislike HC NGOs or HC individuals being partners of NGOs operated by them eg: Pattani Razick a founder member of a local NGO called Community Trust Fund (CTF) was, according to the CID, kidnapped by S. Naushad who is the Chairman of the Citizen Committee of the same CTF, on or about 11.02.2010 and the said P. Razick is still missing and the kidnapper S. Naushad is absconding. The said S. Naushad is believed to be protected by politicians. Naushad has admitted his political connection in his application for anticipatory bail at Puttalam Magistrate’s Courts.48

The complete submission to the LLRC of the Puttalam Host Community will be accessible on the Puttalam Online website.49

The Abduction and Murder of Pattani Razeek

As stated in the above submission, Pattani Razeek, CTF Managing Trustee, was abducted in February 2010 and was missing for over a year. There were several delays in the investigation into the abduction, and displaced community politicians were allegedly involved in the delays.

48 http://puttalamonline.com/2011/02/20/northmuslims-puttalam date of access as 08/27/2011

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It was found, later, that Razeek had been murdered. The Trustee General of the CTF organization was accused of the killing by the family and the host community leadership of Puttalam. The dispute, according to sources within CTF and the greater NGO community, was about vast areas of property that the CTF had allegedly accumulated in the personal names of its respective trustees by misrepresenting the use of donor funds. The issue was understood by the host community as directly related to the deteriorating relations between the host and IDP communities. Accusations were levelled at the other Trustee General of CTF and the Minister, Rishard Bathiudeen, who has consistently denied involvement, for blocking the investigation and assisting the chief suspect—an employee of CTF—to avoid arrest. The lawyer who appeared for the suspect, Naushad, was a member of the Minister’s political party, and this was construed as damaging evidence by human rights groups.50

In a context in which the displaced community were in the process of deciding about either returning to the north or remaining in Puttalam, the Razeek issue became a rallying point for host community anger at the IDPs. Most host community leaders saw the incident as directly related to the privileges that the IDP community had enjoyed for the years in which Rishard Bathiudeen had wielded power as a cabinet minister.

The local community and the victim’s family mobilized to fight against the long delays and to ensure justice by organizing themselves as the host community against the corrupt practices of the IDP community leadership. Significant progress was made on the case in July 2011. The victim’s body was found in late July, and the funeral held in early August. A massive crowd gathered at the funeral in Sameeragama Puttalam (the LST and the Commission were also represented), and rumour was rife about the possibility of violence erupting between the host and displaced communities.

While it is commendable (if somewhat surprising) that the investigation did move forward, the damage to community relations was substantial. It is unfortunate that the criminality of some and the bad judgment of others in the IDP community and its leadership have had such an adverse impact on relations between the various Muslim communities in Puttalam (see Appendix 5 for the Commission statement on the issue).

Conclusion

The advent of the northern Muslims fundamentally transformed the four DS divisions in Puttalam which received them. The population of the area nearly doubled, and the resources of the area—already only minimally sufficient for the local population—were stretched beyond capacity. The northern Muslims were compelled to stay in Puttalam for twenty years and in that period transformed the local economy, the landscape, and the living standards of both the host and IDP populations, sometimes to the disadvantage of the former. The local population lost land, occupations, and the freedom of their open spaces. Overcrowding, long lines, high prices, congestion etc., were consequences of the IDPs’ arrival. Although the economy was developed, educational standards were enhanced, and the mobility of women was impacted positively, relations between the host and IDP communities remain strained. Although religion and language unite the people, other social, cultural, economic, and political factors generate tension between the two groups in Puttalam, and violence does flare up occasionally.

The sense of IDP-local difference has been exacerbated by the manner in which resources for IDPs were allocated and used without due regard for the impact on the local community, and the manner in which the very minimal services enjoyed by the local community were not significantly expanded to facilitate the doubling of the population. There are feelings of dissatisfaction on the part of the host community, and feelings of entitlement on the part of the IDPs. Additionally, the irresponsible behaviour of certain IDP politicians has led to the belief that the IDPs are highly connected, politically, and that the entire community is party to the corrupt practices of a few Ministry officials.

Today, while many northern Muslims are contemplating returning to the north, a section of the community has slowly begun to register as residents of the Puttalam area. While this may lead to a lessening of some of the tensions, with the population based fund allocations increasing, it is uncertain if all such tensions will vanish. Therefore, it is important that measures are taken to minimize any possible conflicts that may flare up between the two communities.
Nostalgia is the focus of this chapter. The literature on displacement frequently highlights the importance of memories of the home-place (Bahloul 1996, Thiranagama 2011). The aspects that displaced people choose to remember of their homes left behind importantly impacts on the manner in which they conceptualize their lives in displacement and their future. Therefore, a record and representation of their memories of home can offer an indication of their sense of integration with the places in which they currently reside, their plans for their future, as well as their understanding of their place in the world. Therefore, the Commission has thought it important to include this chapter in the report.

The second reason for this chapter’s inclusion is the fundamental importance of record and representation—the twin motivations of this entire project. Apart from the reports that the people of the north have produced in the Tamil language, there is very little accessible documentation that reflects the social and cultural richness of Muslims’ lives in the north. Therefore, we felt that it was important that the Commission, too, records these memories of the people to give the readers of the report a sense of the northern Muslims’ own understanding of their places of origin, the cultural practices that they have left behind, as well as their relations with their former neighbors.

The expulsion resulted in the loss of a people’s way of life. We structured the questions in our testimony collection in order to elicit some information about a community’s cultural practices that were destroyed as a consequence of the expulsion. Arguably, circumstances other than the expulsion may have caused such changes. However, we agreed that it was important to capture people’s feeling of loss in their own words, and also to document the activities of a time and a place that does not exist today. Of course, the element of nostalgia that enters such narratives is inevitable. We are also aware that everything was not wonderful in that place or in that time, and that it only seems that way at the moment that it is lost. For this reason we captured descriptions of cultural events, rituals marking important moments in the life cycle, and commentaries on the changes in their way of life from older members of the community.

Descriptions of the Village in the North

The following section is a compilation from testimonies that gave various interesting vignettes about the places from which the northern Muslims came. The section begins with accounts of the beauty and prosperity of the place that was left behind as a result of the expulsion. Due to restrictions of space we have not recorded these systematically for each village—not even for each district, in fact. We have compiled some of the more interesting stories to provide a window into the manner in which, nearly twenty years after the expulsion, the landscape and life in the north have acquired an almost mythical wonder and richness for the northern Muslims. Later sections also contain stories of people’s lives in the north, accounts that we found interesting and have not been able to include anywhere else.
We feel that these accounts are important in providing a window into the richness and diversity of northern Muslims’ social existence prior to the expulsion.

In comparison with the remoteness and aridness of the Puttalam landscape in which most of these people had settled, Jaffna was a land of great lost prosperity and, of course, happiness. The description of Jaffna that many gave us, as well as the manner in which life in Puttalam compared to it, reflected the sense of loss that many experienced.

Naseera Abthul Azeez of Muslim College Road in Jaffna describes home in the following way.

My birthplace is Jaffna. When you say Jaffna, you say that it flows with honey. There are lots of resources like palmyra, natural resources, and lots more. In Jaffna our relations, kith and kin, were very united and cooperative. During special occasions and functions we always did everything together. Our houses were situated in close proximity, so traveling to our relations’ places was not a problem. We did not rely on vehicles. Most of our visiting was done on foot. We moved with everyone. We were in Jaffna right throughout until we shifted. We stayed very close to the town. (008)

M.S. Jawfer of New Moor Street speaks of Jaffna in terms of its resources.

Here I must mention the resources we have in our village. There were a lot of natural resources in our village. There were plenty of opportunities for fishing in the sea. All the facilities were there for fishing. If we take a look at agriculture, there were coconut plantations, banana plantations, chili plantations and, most of all, rice crops. In general, we did not have to engage businesses on/of our own, because agriculture was highly developed. So even though we were not millionaires, we did not have a situation where we had to beg for a loan from anyone. We had sufficient money to live our lives. Even though we live here, I still cannot forget the life that we lived in our village. (225)

M.S. Jawfer also gave an account of some food practices, common to Jaffna, that are no longer practised among the displaced.

In Jaffna we normally used rice as our staple food. We ate a certain variety of rice called Puluggu rice, which was our favourite. All Muslims basically loved to eat this. After we came here, we started to eat samba rice. Even the Tamils used to eat that rice. It was very nutritious. We used to call it Sivappu Naattu Arisi (red village rice). Even the doctors say that this rice is nutritious. We used to drink the water in which the rice was cooked. We got all the vegetables in the village without any shortage. We had a variety of vegetables at home. We could even buy them from shops. There were different types of green vegetables. We did not have any shortage of fish. Fish was very cheap—it was only Rs. 2.50 a kilo. If there was any left over, we would keep it overnight and eat it the next morning. We used to add pickle, onion, green chillies, and coconut milk. It was a treat to our taste buds. This is the food the Tamils eat when they go to the fields. It is really refreshing. You tend to eat more and
more. I feel like having some at this moment. If we had rice, we would normally eat that at night. If not, we would have pittu or rotti. (225)

A. Sulthana of New Moor Street spoke of home by stating that even the food was better and tastier in her place of origin.

Alhamadulilah, we were very happy to be there because it is where we were born. It is a ‘small Singapore’. Our native place, Jaffna, is a ‘small Singapore’. This is where our parents were born and buried. It was a very prosperous place. Here even the food is not tasty. The vegetables are not tasty. They spray pesticides and chemical fertilisers (medicine) on everything. They engage in all sorts of harmful farming practices/methods. There, it was different. No chemical fertilizers! If they planted the seeds in December, in January they would do the harvesting. All the vegetables were very tasty. The fish was also like that. The sea fish was very tasty...the meat was also very tasty. The meat here gets stuck between the teeth. (025)

M. Masoora of Arali Road spoke of her hometown as a place of opportunities and one that welcomed strangers

My hometown is Sonakar Theru (Moor Street) in Jaffna. What I would say of Jaffna is that there is no other place comparable to it. The reason was that we got everything very easily. We had no problem in finding a mosque or a school, and even job opportunities were never in short supply. We could easily buy fruit, food items and even vegetables. People from other villages come here to work. This is because our village was a place that would welcome anybody. They did business. They had jewellery shops. (226)

Sameena of Puthukudi Irippu, Mannar, seemed to echo all of her neighbours and relatives when she spoke of the life in her native village. This nostalgia for a home that was fertile and plentiful – if not always peaceful—was reflected in almost every testimony that was collected

In our village we did not need to spend money to buy everything. We had our own vegetable garden, fruit trees, coconut estates, and paddy fields, and we had to only buy the meat and fish which was freely available. Here, of course, you need money, and without it there is nothing. We earned and spent, and there is nothing left. If we work here for 8 hours we make about Rs. 250/-, and if we buy fish we spend Rs. 200/-, and the balance is only sufficient for us to buy vegetables. (085)

People’s notion of home as a place of peace and plenty is poignant, especially since they left at a time of war and uncertainty. The following section contains a summary of accounts from Mulaitivu and is indicative of the stark difference between the landscapes of Mulaitivu and Puttalam. P.M. Sithy Kamila of Hijra Puram said, “our native place is green and prosperous. This is a very dry place. There it was very cool with a lot of trees and plants. There is a lake and a river. But here we have to go to another place to even get drinking water. The food also
was readily available. Here everything has to be bought, but the education is good here” (032). Continuing, she said,

“We could be involved in any small scale enterprise in our village. We could work with palmyra or cane according to what suits each person. One could even cultivate. There were no problems in finding work in our village. There is no other place in Sri Lanka comparable to our place in terms of happiness and peace. In terms of nature, we are surrounded by paddy fields, vegetation and other natural things. Furthermore, there are forests around our village too.” (032).

Junaid Saleema of Neeravippiddi said, “we had freedom and rivers, as well as lands to cultivate in our village. We had rice, curd, milk cows and goats in our village” (048). Nostalgia for the place is palpable, and the very stark difference between life in Puttalam and in Mullaittivu is clear in their everyday experience.

The following section contains two accounts of villages in the Kilinochchi district.

M.N. Rajab of Nachchikuda related the history of his family, including his Arab ancestry. He stated that his was one of four Arab families in Nachchikuda. His father was the son of an Arab named Mohideen and was born in 1906. His father, Noordeen Mohammed, had 12 children of whom Rajab was the fifth. He described how his family, including his Arab grandfather, engaged in pearl and shell fishing (sangu kulikirathu). The pearl fisheries and the sea weed business were introduced by the British, he said, and later, the government banned pearl fisheries. Following the change, the family moved on to the shell business.

K.M. Mansoor of Vaddakachchi in the Kilinochchi district described the manner in which Muslim families from Jaffna moved into the Vaddakachchi settlement after obtaining government land grants and houses.

Vattakachchi is in the Kilinochchi district. It is a village which is 7 miles away from Killinochchi. The government built us houses there. The houses they built for us had a big room, a veranda, and a small room. Later, we built the kitchen ourselves. First there were only cajun leaves for the roof, but later the government gave us tiles and we fixed it on the roof. Ours was an interior village. Later, buses started running in the area. To do business we had to go to Killinochchi. Even to reach the market we had to go to Killinochchi. Only those of us who are Muslims stayed in Vattakachi. As time went by our population grew. We built shops and made market places. In this place there was a very famous street called the ‘Sivasundaram Road’. Other roads were named ‘Silva Road’ and ‘Hudson Road’. Sivasundaram was a Tamil, Silva was a Sinhalese, and Hudson was a Christian. In this way, roads were built and given without any racial differences. We lived on Sivasundaram road. Our area was full of farms. We used to get our water from Iranamadukulam. Iranamadukulam is the biggest tank in the northern province and is situated in Killinochchi. This tank was the landing spot for the foreigners who came to meet the LTTE. They would come in something called the ‘Sea Flight’ which would land in the sea. It was such a big tank. We would sow seeds
in two seasons. One is done during the rainy season, and the other is done depending on the water we receive from the tanks. (217)

Interestingly, Hameem of Manippay Road mentioned that Jaffna had a Muslim football team. It was the best team in Jaffna, from his perspective. He also stated that the LTTE kidnapped some of the members of the football team. (090)

Northern Muslims are extremely proud of their educational heritage. Several schools in the north—Osmaniya College in Jaffna, Alighar Maha Vidyalayam in Vidattaltivu, and Mahalir Maha Vidyalayam in Erukalampiddy— are often thought of with great nostalgia as centres of learning. I.Ferozkhan of Vidattaltivu provided the following description of Alighar Maha Vidyalaya in his hometown.

During my childhood, the school Alighar Maha Vidyalaya was a main contributory factor to the educational growth in our village. There were many educated people in Mannar, but most were from our village. I am not being arrogant when I relate such advances in education in our home town/area. There wasn’t a single family that did not have someone who held a government job. These people all studied at Alighar Maha Vidyalaya. In Mannar itself the first graduate, first doctor, first engineer, all came from our village. When we were displaced, there were more than 200 teachers, nearly 7-8 doctors, and 2-3 engineers. Alighar Maha Vidyalaya is the reason for our village improving so much in the educational sector. I, too, became a teacher by studying there. (191)

Relations with Tamil neighbours

A.M. Abdur Rahman of Vaddakandal commenced his testimony by describing the position of Tamils in his day to day life. He said, “our culture was in coexistence with that of the Tamils.” It was well known before the commencement of the Commission’s investigations that northern Muslims revered their relationships with their Tamil friends and neighbours and that they did not equate the LTTE with the Tamils. Every testimony includes some reference that reflects the close everyday connections that existed between the communities. In addition, there were many testimonies that called specific attention to the good relations between the communities and required the Commission to make a note of it. Of course, there were others that disputed this relationship and drew attention to the manner in which Muslims had always found it difficult to access government jobs in teaching and the administrative service because, generally, Tamils were given preference. These, too, will be noted in the report. However, those that spoke of the good relations did so in very fervent terms, and this section will attempt to capture the emotions that they wanted shared.

Muslims and Tamils in Jaffna

Life in Jaffna was such that the Muslims lived in a community that was geographically separated from the larger Tamil community living around them. As such, as the following account notes, Muslims encountered Tamils not so much as immediate neighbours with
whom they shared community life, but as business people and those providing services to the Muslims areas.

There were Tamil people in the area, just close to our place. There were no Sinhalese in Jaffna. Tamils were the majority. We were like a small tube well in the big sea. Mannar was a big area, and many Muslims lived there. Jaffna is different because Muslim people lived within two and a half kilometres of the Jaffna town. They lived mainly in Moor Street. The Tamil people lived close to the Muslims. Tamil people came in to our area. There were many needs to be addressed. They came to do business, and to construct buildings and homes. We were not familiar with such work. When they came to work, we got the chance to associate with them. Even we had to go into their villages. I had a shop in Point Pedro. That was a Tamil area. We worked peacefully with them and they were reliable. We lived in harmony. (225)

There were also other sorts of regularized relations in a time when ethnic and religious differences meant different things. Describing her early years in Jaffna, S.H. Hairun Niza of Kamal Lane told the Commission about the manner in which poor landless Muslims sometimes lived on temple land upon agreement with the temple administration (the testimony did not indicate the name of the temple).

We had Tamil people living in front of our house in Jaffna. They were Hindus and did not even have a cup of tea in other houses. But during the rainy season our house gets flooded and there was no way we could cook, so they gave us food and helped us a lot. I could never forget their help. (018)

Muhseen’s narrative reflects exceptional circumstances during which Tamil neighbours helped them. There was a lot of interaction between the communities, and we encountered many stories about friendships between men. The social arrangements among Muslims in Jaffna were such that women—due to the practice of seclusion—rarely had opportunities to develop friendships with Tamil women. The following narrative is a poignant account of meeting friends after more than a decade of the expulsion and the war.

We had Tamil friends. I knew people like Sree, Rajan, and Thurairatnam. I had many Tamil friends. They have been to my place. I got to know them very well because I had my business in their village. I went to meet them in 2002 and to see the state/condition of my shop. I went to my friend’s place. When I went to meet Thurairatnam, he was getting ready to go to the Hindu temple with his wife. He could not recognize me. It had been a long time since he had seen me, I had grown a beard, and I asked him whether he had forgotten me. Then he asked me to come into their house. He called me Jowfer. We sat together and had a chat. He made fish for lunch, because he knew that I don’t eat meat. They made many curries for me to eat. I had a wash and said goodbye to my friend. I was really happy. I met another boy. I could not meet anybody else. Some are living, and I think some are dead. (025)
The testimonies from Mannar were stronger in terms of their sentiments of closeness and tales of everyday connections among both men and women. The following narrative is an account that combines nostalgia for a place, a period, and lost youth. A.M. Abdur Rahman, quoted above, offered the following account.

Our culture co-existed with that of the Tamils. They would come to our weddings, and we would go to theirs. There were no divisions amongst us; we would eat their food items and they would eat ours. In our school, there would be prayers in all 3 religions. After that they would go to the temple, and we would go to the mosque and fulfil our duties. After that we would get together and go to the temple. We would remove our shirts and tie it around our waists just as they would, and go around the temple. That’s how close we were to our Tamil friends. After returning from school we would look after the cows, goats, chickens, and ducks that my father owned. We would go and play football as well. (163)

As stated before, the stories from Mannar were not limited to male friendships alone. There were other sorts of familial and even somewhat feudal connections that were claimed with Tamil persons of all classes. Juwairiya from Erukalampiddy provided the following account.

We had a lot of connections with the Tamils, as family friends as well as school friends. We also address them as ‘Amma and Appa’, ‘Maami Maama’. We were that close. They also participated in our functions. When a girl attains age, they bring ‘Seer’ (fruits and sweets kept on a tray). What they say is when one of their girls attains age they do the same, which means they considered us almost like family. When we were leaving, they were very sad and cried a lot. There was this Tamil person named Sinnaiah (also known as Michael) who was our driver, and he was like a brother to us. He is the one who came and sent us off in the boat. There was also another person named Arumugam Anna who came to our family to work when he was 10 years old, and he was with my father right throughout. When we left our home, he must have been around 38 years old. He was always seen with my father. He accompanied him everywhere. (239)

Ferozkhan of Vidattaltivu described the manner in which the educational institutions of the area had students from both communities, regardless of whether they were run either by a Muslim or Tamil administration. His account illustrates the manner in which the very well developed Muslim schools in Vidattaltivu attracted students from both communities.

Next to our village there were places like Kovil Kulam, Kalliyady, Agathi Mottai, Periyamadu, and Vilankudy. The children from these areas joined our school and gained admission to higher classes. In this way, students from different religions joined our school. There were lots of people with names like Mahendararajah, Navaratnarajah, Sivalingham, and Varapragasam, who studied with me in my class. From Grade 8, Tamil children, too, joined the school and studied there. Half my school friends are Tamil. Even now we have a lot of connections/contact with them.
Ferozkhan’s testimony also draws attention to the manner in which Tamil and Muslim lives were intertwined and the ways in which the communities maintained closeness while respecting one another’s traditions.

When we were living there it was very different. If there were any special occasions they hired Muslim cooks to cook their food. They also knew very well that we did not eat meat slaughtered by them, and they always provided us with meat bought from the Muslims. They came for all our feasts and we went for theirs. Men and women went together. We also attended their funerals. We all lived in harmony with the Christians. (191)

Cultural Events celebrated in the north.

In all of the different accounts from each of the five districts, we attempted to ascertain information about ritual events in people’s life cycles, as well as events related to common festivals. The following section includes some rich narratives from the north about puberty, pregnancy, death, and marriage, as well as practices related to the Ramazan festival and the birth of the prophet Mohammed. Many of the practices that we encountered were shared with Muslims of other regions but some were also peculiar to the north. Additionally, festivals like the Meelad celebrations—festivities celebrating the prophet’s birth—are somewhat controversial today under the new orthodoxies that prevail among the Muslims of the country. As noted in the testimonies, there is much revisionism practised at the community level, in keeping with the dictates of the different groups engaged in the piety movement (see Chapter 3). Some of the practices recorded below are now lost due to the expulsion as well as to other developments—like the piety movement—that have impacted northern Muslims’ lives.

Meelad Celebrations: Mannar

The Meeladunnabi celebrations were conducted in a grand manner during that period. They also gave the feast of Kandiri to the villagers and raised flags. They even go to the jungle to hunt for deer for the feast. (211)

Kulaamkathar from Putuveli remembered a Kanthuri that was conducted during the Meelad celebrations.

They pray Mawlood in the mosque and give feast of Kandiri, and this will continue during the whole month on a grand scale. There were several types like “Mihraj Kanduri” which was celebrated on behalf of Prophet Muhammed’s trip to Mihraj.\footnote{A Kanthuri is a festival in the mosque where food was cooked and distributed to the community from the mosque.}
Another special occasion would be reciting the Moulood.\textsuperscript{53} It is conducted in this way: they hang lots of white flags in houses for the Meelad celebrations, bring the Moulavies, and recite Moulood. On this occasion, all the Madarasa children will participate. The Moulawi would have already trained the children for that. Whenever there is a Moulood all the Madarasa children will attend. On this occasion they rarely cook beef. It would be mutton or chicken. (191)

They invite speakers from abroad and conduct Meelathullah grandly. They also provide meals. They pay a lot of attention to the people who attend. One month after the Meelathullah is conducted at the mosque on this side, it will be conducted at the mosque on the other side. Since there are 2 mosques, at one time it will be conducted in one mosque and at another time in the other. Likewise it is performed repeatedly. Hathis, and Quran classes will be conducted regularly. There are no problems. It will be conducted in the same way in both mosques. (184)

**Meelad Celebrations: Jaffna (Moor Street)**

B. Sakeela of Azad Road, Jaffna, remembered the Meelad celebrations as very important in Jaffna. Nevertheless, her narrative also represents the influence of the newer orthodoxies that are critical of this practice.

The Meelad Un Nabi was a demonstration and a celebration. They used to have it as a grand celebration. For example, the younger boys used to clear and clean the whole area one week before the grand day. They erect pandols at every junction, similar to the Tamils of Jaffna. The most beautiful pandol would be given an award. Many important guests come to give away the awards. Even Nagoor Haniffa came. That time was such a happy one. When we think of all that now, we realize that all such things were anti-Islamic. (280)

The following narrative provides another very descriptive, if critical, account of the Meelad celebrations in Jaffna.

We celebrate Prophet Muhammad’s birthday in Moor road in Jaffna. It is an unwanted thing. They bring decorations from the Kovil and put up pandols. They also illuminate the junctions. They plant plantain trees and set up a stage. They bring singers from Moor Street and they sing Islamic songs as well as film songs. This is the way it is celebrated. Also girls from Maanpaulul Uloom Madarasa and from other...
Madarasas were made to wear white costumes and carry a green flag. They recite Islamic songs, and are made to walk up to the cemetery and given aerated water, and from there they were made to walk back to Meeraniya school and pray moulood. It takes a long time to finish. Afterwards they were given food in bags. We take this and go home happily. Now only we realise these were unwanted things. They pray moulood for 12 days, and on the last day the rich people get together and have a big feast with coconut rice, mutton curry and a lot of vegetables. They serve these in boxes made out of palmyra leaves. A box contains about a kilo of rice. After the Moulood they distribute these boxes to all the men and children. The women wait at home in the night for the arrival of the Kandiri rice. When I think about it I feel so happy, but I do not know whether these were important. Also for Meelad un Nabi celebrations men dance with sticks in their hands. This is called Silambadi. Usually men watch this and I, too, have watched this. Presently, they do not have such dances. (135)

M.L. Sultan of Neeravaipiddi, Mullaitivu, stated that the Meelad Functions were held on a grand scale where Mouloods were prayed and feasts were held. He also noted the hoisting of flags. There were parades with “many activities” in which he, too, had been a participant. There was a feast or feasts conducted by the mosque. Some even distribute food to the houses in the village. (312)

A narrative from Kilinochchi also confirmed the importance of the event in the ritual calendar.

Moulood was a big event. It was done in a grand manner, and they gave food to all those who came there. On the birthday of Nabi (the prophet), they collected money and had a special event. There was no financial problem at that time. There were 12 mouloods. Every night they recited. They cook good food and serve on the last day of the Moulood. (232)

The Meelad celebrations at the mosque in Mankumpan in Jaffna were famous and attracted people from the entire Jaffna region.

There is a place called Mankumpan in Vellaikadahkarai. All of us go there. There they provide rice in the Pila. Pila is made out of Palmyrah leaves. It was made to put rice and curry. They celebrate the birthday of Nabi (Meeladunnabi ceremony) for 7 days. We don’t cook for 7 or 8 days. We go to mosques, because they provide food at every mosque. Sometimes they send the food to our homes. All of that stopped after a certain period. This happened due to the crisis in the country. The prices of goods went up. The people faced financial difficulties, due to the problems from the LTTE. Because of these reasons the rituals were abandoned. (226)

We learned of festivals conducted in Jaffna—the boat races at Mankumpan and the mosque festivals—and of the manner in which the Mowloods were held to celebrate Meelad. We also learned of flag-hoisting ceremonies (Kodi Et rum), Baiths or Islamic songs being sung (in
Arabic and in Tami), and the conducting of Rathibs—a Sufi devotional practice that was discredited under some of the new orthodox reformist groups (124). In 2010 there was a revival of the Kanduri at Mankumpun mosque with bus loads of Jaffna Muslims visiting from all over the island for the festivities.

Other Celebrations

Practices of conducting Mouloods, singing baiths, reciting thalaifathiha and holding feasts or Kanduri in the mosques are practices that are fast disappearing among Muslims. The orthodoxy, as practiced among the many Muslim reformist groups, is opposed to Sufi practices. Sufi practices have been very strong within the South Asian Littoral in general and in Sri Lanka in particular, and continue to flourish despite opposition in Sri Lanka as well. The following celebrations were mentioned in the testimonies as being unique to areas in the north.

Abthul Raheem of Vidattaltivu fondly remembered the different Kanduri or mosque feasts. He mentioned one.

They take Kanduri every year in the name of ‘Naina Moosa Oliulla’. They will celebrate the festival by planting flags surrounding the 4 sides of the village. All the people in the village will participate in that. Milk rice will be made and given to all of them. (191)

M.M.S. Rasik of Erukulampiddy remembers traditions that venerated Sufi saints.

There is a ceremony on the day they sight the moon. They do this in remembrance of Mohideen Abdul Kathir Jailani. People cook at home and take the food to the mosque to share, all together. Then the prayers are said and the people are asked to come and take their share. They also have another ceremony where they make an announcement beforehand, and items such as rice, coconut, and goat meat are brought to the mosque and cooked there.

M.M.S. Rasik of Erukalampiddy also remembers the flag hoisting in memory of the saint Sheikh Abdul Kathir Jailani. He also mentions the hoisting of flags which is part of typical Sufi practices of worship.

54 The Sri Lankan Muslims’ ritual calendar used to contain a series of dates on which to recite Mouloods. A Moulood was generally a gathering to recite certain prayers for a particular purpose, followed by a sharing of food. There were several different very specific Mouloods, including Subahana Maulud (celebration during the month of the prophet’s birth); Hussein Maulood [celebration during the month of Muharram (Ashura)]; Badreen Maoulood (celebration during the month of Ramazan commemorating the battle of Badr); and Thalaifathiha which was recited in the anticipation of births and at naming ceremonies. This moulood celebrates the memory of the prophet’s daughter, Fathima. Today these practices are criticized by some elements of the piety movement as “innovations” that are not permitted by orthodox Islam.
There was a procession from the mosque, going all around the village, with the blessings of Mohideen Abdul Kathir Jailani. And the drumming of Pakeer Bawa. They sing Islamic songs. On the day of raising the flag we pour coloured water on to others. Later all these traditions were stopped. (234)

Sajina of Erukalampiddy remembers flag-hoisting ceremonies in her village as well. Her testimony reflects a critique rendered in the terms of the new piety within the Muslim community.

We had the Culture of Raising Flags as a tribute to Mohideen Abdul Khathir Jailani. During this occasion, the children used to go around the village carrying flags. There were Kanduris held at that period in specific months. There were two flag-hoisting ceremonies in the village. We also had the culture of Nahrsha (special cooked food) feast which was given to the villagers by the mosque. The Pakeersha people used to lead the children by beating the drum. At that period, they used to sing movie songs. And they did not have good knowledge about the Kalima or other rituals. (126)

Shahul Hameed of Periyamadu remembers celebrations during the month of Muharram. The tenth day in the month of Muharram is important for both Sunni and Shia Muslims for different reasons. Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar. The Shias consider it a day of mourning, as it was the day of the battle of Karbala and the death of the prophet Muhammad’s grandson Imam Hussein. The Sunnis celebrate it by fasting, since it was a Sunna or a regular practice of the prophet. However, in Sri Lanka, the night of Ashura is celebrated by a Maulud that is commonly called the Hussein Maulud, referencing more the Shias’ practice rather than the prophet’s Sunna.

During this period, cultural and religious activities were good in the village. All of them go to the mosque. The month of Muharram was celebrated grandly as it is the New Year for the Muslims. They also hoist flags in the village and all the families participate. At that time there were about 400 families. The males carry the flags and parade around the village. It was grand. Later this parade would return and they would start to pray. (119)

M.K. Junaithu of Erukalampiddi recounts a tradition of singing Islamic songs or Baithu for the maintenance of people’s good health and to bring rain. These are practices that are rarely found among Muslim communities in the country today. M.K. Junaithu explains the manner in which the rituals were shared among the two Jumma mosques in the village, Puthu Palli and Kaatu Palli.

In our place there was a celebration called “singing narulla”. This will be celebrated for 7 days. They gave food to the people of the village on the 7th or 8th day. Since

55 Kalima is one of the five pillars of Islamic practice and belief, and contains the minimal declaration of faith.
there were 2 sections (2 mosques), they celebrate it in the east first and, after 6 months, in the west. Although we belong to the western sector, I am staying in the eastern sector. There are no differences amongst us. We go there, too, and stay here as well. In the 7-day event they sing the Umaru Pulavar’s “Seerapuranam” (Biography of Prophet Muhammed) songs. A person named Nondi Pulavar comes from Periyamadu for this event. He will stay in the village for 7 days. The Meelad event is separate from this event. These are beliefs/traditions prevailing in our area. (184)

They believe that it will rain if they organize a song recital. There is a belief among the people that there will not be any sickness in the community when they hold such events. We divide this event into 2 between the mosques and have it one by one. If there is no rain during the rainy season, we sing Baithu in 2 sections then recite Baithu on all 4 sides, to the east and west surrounding the place. Then it will start to rain the following day. I have seen this during my time. Before coming home after reciting Baithu, it will start raining. Events like that also happened. (184)

Y. Sajina of Erukalampiddi remembers another disappearing custom of praying Thalai fathiha.

We had the culture of praying Thalaifathiha, and this was done in groups, usually inside our own houses. It was the same as the Mouloods. It’s usually recited when a lady is pregnant. They used to conduct these by spreading a white carpet. All my seven children were born in observance of this tradition. At that time, the babies were born in our homes. Two Muslim women visited the house to be present at the birth of the child. (126)

Thahira Umma of Nachchikuda, one of the few who talked about festivities in her area, mentioned many of the same things that were apparent from the testimonies from Mannar and Jaffna

At that period we had the culture of reciting Moulood, and they also hoist flags on the sea shore. Everyone conducts the Baraath Kathhams in the village. There was only one mosque in the village, and my father’s younger brother was the village leader. When I was young I used to recite Salawath really well, but now I don’t remember anything anymore. “Bismillahirrahmanir Raheem, Allhumma Salli Alla Muhummadi Yarabbi Salli Allai Wasallam……..Bismi Alhammdu Salawathai Solwoom……. Anbana Fathimathai Pukalwoum…….”) Nothing of what we used to do in our village is practiced here. Each Friday we hoisted flags and had feasts on the sea shore in our village. Now we do not conduct these events as many Moulavies (Islamic scholars) said these were bad. (311)

**Wedding Rituals**

This section, like the one above, is composed of people’s memories of how weddings were conducted in an earlier time. These narratives are also peppered with nostalgia and some
moralizing. However, they are captured in this form here to illustrate very specific practices that no longer exist. Some of these practices may also have ceased to exist in the north prior to the expulsion. It was not possible to ascertain the period to which people referred. However, we emphasise, again, that the attempt was to record practices that exist in the living memory of the individuals who were expelled. To them, many of these practices ended with the expulsion.

Y. Sajina of Erukalampiddi describes weddings in her village in the following way.

All the marriages were arranged ones. There weren’t any love marriages that took place at that time. The girls didn’t know anything about the groom. We were obedient to our father/s. During the wedding ceremony they beat the drum when the groom arrived at the bride’s place. There was a man named Vannan who spread a white carpet for the groom when he travelled to the bride’s house on the day of the wedding. There were many traditions that were followed during the wedding ceremony. There was a situation when a groom refused to come out because the Vannan didn’t spread the carpet for him. No matter how far the groom goes it’s the duty of the Vannan to spread the carpet throughout the journey. At that time dowry was not much. It was around Rs. 1,000/- . Usually they ask for a house and some jewellery. My mother did not give any jewellery as dowry. My husband came on a horse and that, too, on the white carpet. They also held an umbrella over the groom, no matter whether it was day or night. Before the wedding they exchange sweets and send meals to the groom’s place. (126)

Kulamkathar of Putuveli provided the following narrative.

Poetry was sung at our village. The people famous for that were Habeeb Muhammed Pulawar and Kandu Pulawar. During weddings, people sing songs and dance using sticks. This activity was called “KaliKambu”. (357)

The following interesting piece of information emerged from the testimony of M.C. Idroos Marikkar of Vidattaltivu.

The house is decorated fully only after a small lock of hair from a mother who has recently given birth is put inside a hole in the wall of house. Then the house is decorated. A speaker system is set up and songs are played. (302)

K. Nawasdeen of Erukalampiddi remembers weddings in his home town in the following manner.

The weddings were special. The wedding celebration begins at midnight. The wedding house will be decorated and speakers set for songs. This will go on for a week. Students skip school and come and look at the wedding houses. Meals are served for everybody. When the bridegroom comes they spread the white cloth. As the wedding takes place in the night they are given torches to show/light the way. As the bridegroom comes to the bride’s place his feet are washed—this is a custom. The
groom usually wears a white shirt and white sarong, but some of them wear trouser. Some grooms take 1 or 2 lakhs as dowry, but some rich people give 4–5 lakhs as dowry. Some grooms do not take dowry. There were love marriages too. (297 A)

S. Ramsiya of Erukalampiddi provides the following information on the manner in which food was prepared for weddings as well as a description of how homes were decorated for the ceremonies.

They don’t hire people and cook food. We cook our own food. They go to the forest to find the required wood and sticks to build a tent. They plant a banana tree in the front and decorate it. Two banana trees with the fruits will be planted in front. A white cloth is laid for the groom. Later they remove it. First the banana tree is planted, and later the wood chopped from a Bo tree is planted. (231)

M. Mansoora also described the ritual invitations that are sent and received at the moment when the bridegroom’s party enters the bride’s house.

Before the groom comes they send an invitation. That was a small copper pot. They put eggs, fruit, and money in to it. They also add Maruvandi and sandalwood. Only after these things are given will the groom enter the place. After he enters the bride’s house the women on the bride’s side invite the women from the groom’s side. This happens only after they register. They invite the women (groom’s side) to come forward and to help the groom tie the necklace. Today certain rituals are left out. (226)

One of the more interesting descriptions of weddings emerged from the following account by Abdul Gafoor from Vannankulam, Mulaitiwu. His narrative includes an account of the kind of food that was prepared for weddings.

Weddings were, of course, very special there. At the time dowry was not expected for marriage, and it was not celebrated as people do now here. The meals were served in banana leaves, and we sat on the ground to enjoy a wholesome meal of beef and rice and brinjal and sambol, unlike here where they serve in savan.56 The weddings were always arranged marriages not love marriages. When the groom arrives, he is welcomed. He wears full white, arrives in the shade of an umbrella, and even walks on a white cloth. The weddings were held either during the day or at night. People have it at their own convenience. (082)

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56 A savan is a large plate used for practices of communal food consumption. Traditional Muslim Biriyani (and other dishes) is served in such large plates.
Girls’ Puberty Rituals

As is common with other communities in Sri Lanka, Muslims, too, practiced the temporary ritual seclusion of girls when they attain puberty.

M. Sakeena of Erukalampiddii explained the ritual activities in the following manner.

They keep the child who has attained puberty inside the house, without letting her out. They keep her in a place where people will not see her. None of the visitors are allowed to see her, because it was considered to be unholy. Whatever was used by her was not to be used by others. The girl had a separate set of things. The other rituals were performed only after she was given a bath. The girl was given knives and iron rods to keep with her. This was due to the belief that these things will scare away the evil spirits. Today children feel that these beliefs are not true, so they throw the iron rods away. The girl will be given the best food till she is given a bath. They give her an item fried in gingelly oil and raw eggs. Gingelly oil is a healthy item. They give it so that it will prevent wounds in the stomach. The girl will suffer from wounds and she will be very weak, so they give these healthy foods. Today these things are not given. They are given meat to eat. On the day of the bath there will be decorations hung up, and people are invited to the ceremony. (229)

Some of the narratives were more colourful than others in their description of the life cycle rituals. Sithy Kamila of Hijra Puram described girls’ puberty ceremonies in the following manner with some details about the food that was provided.

In terms of puberty ceremonies in our village, the girl who has attained age will be given eggs and gingelly oil, and milk rice will be cooked. The family will be called the same day to bathe the girl. Later, on the 9th or the 11th day after the girl is ‘clean’, the girl will be bathed. In terms of the food given to a girl who has attained age: in the morning they give eggs with gingelly oil, then porridge made with orid dhal flour and honey, then chicken (very young chicken) and fried aubergines and potatoes fried in oil. Gingelly oil is very good for the body. Later, after the girl has been bathed, the relatives are invited. The girl is dressed beautifully and a feast is held on a grand scale. It is done in a similar manner even today. The elders like to do it this way, to see her as a bride because they think that they might not have a chance of seeing her wedding. (032)

There were mixed feelings about the cultural practices of an earlier time. The new religious orthodoxy being practised was doing away with any shared practices, and many such practices were remembered, not with sadness but sometimes with embarrassment, as signifying a less enlightened time. M. Sareefa of Azad Road provided the following account.

There were lots of unwanted functions, and when I think of it now I get very upset. We have followed the Tamil culture. When girls attain age we do not keep it a secret but celebrate it in a grand way. They also have thrones fixed and speakers put up and they invite people. They sing songs in praise of Fathima (Rali) and give meals to

The Loss of a Way of Life
relatives. They dress the girl like a bride and make her sit on a throne and allow the men and women to see her and give gifts. I thank Allah now because we do not have these types of functions, and if we had stayed there we would have completely got into their way of life. Even for weddings, they had unwanted things. But the happy moments were that the bridegroom did not come by car but came walking. The bridegroom comes walking with the singing of religious songs. As the wedding takes place in the night, petromax lamps will be held on both sides for the bridegroom, and they would hold an umbrella. A lot of men accompany the groom and they have fireworks along the path; some garland the bridegroom. The groom goes to the mosque, prays, and then goes to the bride’s place. They light fireworks. It is a joyous scene to remember. Now it is not like that; we do not know when the groom comes or goes. (315)

While some testimonies indicated regret for past practices conducted in ignorance, S.H. Hairun Niza’s testimony was a little less apologetic.

We also had puberty ceremonies. We didn’t know that we should have a very small ceremony without telling the villagers. We had a grand ceremony. We had a puberty ceremony that was much better than a wedding for my brother’s daughter. We gave rice, fruit, and many other items for the celebration. We prayed Thalaifatih, inviting all the children who were the same age as the girl who reached puberty. We invited them home and gave the children sugar cubes, pomegranate fruit, and dates to eat. (218)

**Circumcision (rituals)**

Boys’ circumcision is a very important ritual among Muslim communities. The following section contains some accounts that capture the rich rituals practised in relation to the act.

Abthul Raheem of Vidattalttivu described the manner in which groups of children were all circumcised during the same period by inviting the “ostha mama” or the circumciser from elsewhere.

Circumcision functions were held on a grand scale. As it was held in groups they call the “Ostha” (Circumciser) from Mannar. After the circumcision, he stays in the village for seven days and on the eighth day they will give a bath to the circumcised children. And finally he returns to his village after he has been paid. (211)

M.M.S. Razik of Erukalampiddy remembered the rituals and the food that was consumed.

Even the sunnath (circumcision) ceremony was a grand event. We make sweets and grind flour. The boy who was to be circumcised was taken in a procession. They had prayers in the mosque. The boy will be dressed in jewellery. They never give him a hat. The rich would dress the boy in a lot of jewellery. Those who cannot afford borrow it from the others and wear it on that day. The sunnath (circumcision) ceremony was very special. (234)
Kulamkathar from Puthuveli provided the following account.

In marriage ceremonies we did not have speakers those days, but people used a drum called “Molam”. It was beaten until the bridegroom arrived at the bride’s place. It was the same with the circumcision ceremony. (357)

Circumcisions are done for the whole village to know. We fill up a bag with biscuit, vadai, sugarcane sweets, cake, etc and give it to everyone who comes saying “Bekku”. (357)

**Rituals associated with fasting during the Month of Ramalan (Ramazan)**

The month of Ramalan when the Ramazan fast is conducted marks an important moment in the Muslim calendar. The testimonies included people’s comments on how fasting was conducted.

M. Masoona of Nachchikudah, Kilinochchi, provided the following account.

When they sight the moon, the whole village is delighted. We would shout out loud, repeat the word ‘fasting’, and walk all over. It will be very special. We make good food. They wake us at 3am by singing songs and drumming. We got so used to it, so even today we get up early and listen to Muslim programs on the radio. We set an alarm before we sleep. If we get up for one or two days we easily get up the next day and we also wake the others.

On the 27th day we would go to the mosque in the night. It will be a grand event. They worship and preach for 2 hours. They provide food. After having the food we fast. The children grind certain leaves called Marathondi (Mehndi) and create designs on their palms. Today we have to buy it in shops, because there are no grinding stones at homes. We had them in our village. We made sweets for the festival. After we came here I can see that they are making different sweets. The festive season was a happy one and we enjoyed it. Each of us buys a dress to wear on the day of the feast. Now people buy different types of clothes, they buy 2 or 3 items of clothing at a time (232).

M. Masoora of Jaffna remembered the time in the following manner.

During the festival days, we don’t get up to the sound of the alarm which is used today. Today they use alarms clocks and phones. They used to wake us up by drumming. There was a person called Pakeer Saafer, and he used to start drumming and wake us up. He used to sing songs. We give him certain things. They made different sweets called kolukkattai and adai. Today they don’t make them. It was very interesting in the festive season. We wore new clothes. My father hired a car, so we went visiting our relatives in that car. We don’t even have a chance to do that now. We have to travel by bus for everything. (226)
Sithy Kamila of Hijra Puram described the kind of food that was consumed during the fasting period.

In terms of the religious festivals, they would celebrate Ramazan and Hajji Festivals specified in Islam, as is done by everyone else. Then for ‘Sahar’ (pre-dawn meal), we would cook meat and rice, and buy curd and bananas. People would buy whatever they liked and then fast. For breakfast we would cook sago or rice porridge. We would steam string hoppers and cook rice. People generally do not like to eat rice after breaking fast. We would eat string hoppers during ‘Isha’ and eat rice during ‘Sahar’. For the 27th day of fasting they would cook in a special manner. They would collect money from the families, for example if there were 70 families around Rs. 7,000/- would be collected. Then they would give it to the mosque. A large meal would be cooked. All the men would have ‘sahar’ there. After ‘Thawba’ (asking forgiveness from God) is over, the women would come. Then it would start for the men. (032)

In terms of the festival sweetmeats, they would make dodol, muscat, payatham paniyaram (mung kevum), cake, aluwa, laddu and murukku. This would be enough to keep on a tray; it would look nice and also give variety. Two sets of new clothes would be bought—one for the house and another set for going out. This is the way it is done even today. On the day of the festival we would wake up, bathe, dress, cook breakfast, and then go to pray. Then our children who are married and grandchildren would come, so we would eat happily together and then visit relatives. (032)

Funeral rites

Funerals are sites at which the new orthodox practices were being enforced quite strictly. They are also an arena of resistance and opposition to the new practices (Haniffa 2008). Some of the testimonies recorded below reflect these developments. Juwairiya of Erukalampidi provided the following account.

With regard to funerals, it was a practice to bury on the same day. They don’t announce in the masjid, but still the villagers get to know about it. I think there were about 5000 families in the village. They all participate. Even if they don’t know the person, they still come. The neighbours, who are mostly relatives, provide meals for seven days. Also they recite ‘Kaththam’ and give alms. (239)

Ramsiya of Erukalampidi had some strong opinions on the differences between today’s practices and those of Mannar before the expulsion.

They recite kattam if someone dies. Today those traditions are not to be seen. We go to the Kaboor, the grave site, but today they are not scared. They go anytime in the night. People didn’t come in the night in those days. People don’t go to the place where the body was washed, and they also crack eggs in that place. Today these traditions are not practiced. (231)
M.K. Junaithu’s testimony reflected the conflicting notions over funeral practices that currently prevail among Muslim communities in the country.

In our place all recite Katham. At the time there was no one to prevent it. There were no rules saying that this is not good and this is not good. It is only now that there are people who come and tell us that these should not be practiced. Earlier they recited 2nd and 3rd Kaththam very grandly. The people who dig the Kabr (grave) and the people who work there will be given preference; they will also be given food. Then they have the Katham, invite their relations, and recite Fathiha. (0184)

Mahmootha of Arali Road, Jaffna, provided the following account.

When there are funerals they do not cook for three days in the funeral house. This usually happens. Almsgiving and recitation take place on the 2nd, 3rd, 7th, 15th, 30th, 40th, and 100th days. The almsgivings on the 3rd and the 40th day are taken in a very special way. It is not only the rich that follow this custom; even the poor do so.(213)

**Conclusion**

The collection of narratives represented above is an attempt by the Commission to present a glimpse of the way of life of the northern Muslims. The chapter has illustrated Muslims’ coexistence with Tamil neighbours; the ritual practices that have been abandoned in displacement; and their own nostalgic descriptions of the places from which they originated. The returning northern Muslims will be going back to something new and even foreign to them. However, we felt that it was important to establish some record of the loss that is not reducible to measurable possessions; we also wanted to show how the lives that they lived in the north are celebrated. This chapter ends with the following long quote from the testimony of A.M. Aseela of Erukalampiddi, who was still a child at the time of the expulsion.

There were 7 mosques in our town. Kattubawa Jummha Mosque, Mohideen Jummah Mosque, Errukalampiddy Jummah Mosque, Thaikka mosque, Sinna Palliwasal, Rahmaniya Mosques with two Madarasa’s—Madarasathul Rahmaniya and Madarasathul Raffaniya. There was also a Ziyaram,a Dharga that was 40 feet long where two prominent religious persons were buried. We believed in the power of the Dargha, so whenever we were desparate we go there to pray. We had the belief that this could solve our problems. We are very proud of the life we spent in our home towns. We were all united and we all gathered for any occasion held in our village. Some performed the puberty ceremony on a grand scale, while a few did it in a normal manner. It was like one big family, though we were from separate families. Dowry was also practised among the people from our village. It was given in order to promote business and to help the men to start business, as it was the basic income earner in our place. Also, in case of a wedding ceremony, if the bride’s side is not in a position to meet the expenses, the whole village would get together and perform the marriage. We also had “Miladun Nabi”, “Kodi Etham” celebrations. During all these
functions the whole village would get together, cook food in the mosque, and distribute it to everyone. People from other villages would also come to take this food as it was distributed freely. We, too, cooked at home and exchanged this food with the mosque’s food. There was another day called “Patthu” once a year. On that day we make a vow to a deity to sacrifice a life for curing wounds and scars on the body. In particular during childbirth people keep this vow as a formal activity in our village. We believed that it would be inauspicious if we did not perform whatever we had vowed to do. We have to perform these rituals unfailingly. On “Kodi Etham” celebrations, too, we make vows and cook meals called “Narsa”. The main singer with a drum “Bawa”, accompanied by 10-12 children carrying white flags, comes to every doorstep and sings religious songs. On that day we get clean white sand from far away, spread it in front of our doorstep, and place a pot full of water there. When these people arrive at our doorstep, they drink that water. We will give them the item that was part of a vow or cooked food in a woven box. They will return a handful of the cooked rice that we gave them. It was real fun. We children had a lot of fun in our village. After they leave/left, we mix turmeric powder with water and pour it on our cousins and other males. (388)
Chapter Ten

Return and Resettlement

We have lost a lot. For us to come to this new place and build our life from scratch was very difficult. We had children and family. We had commitments. We could not let our children starve. At first, we had to do all sorts of odd jobs to buy our daily food. But the local people, of course, helped us a lot. We have survived somehow. No one is bothered/or cares about all that we have lost in the north. Nothing has been done to resolve this issue. Of course we would like to resettle there, but then we have to start all over again, as after the war there is nothing much left there for us to go back to as well. So we feel that we should receive some sort of compensation for our loss, like a house or something or cash so that we can take it with us there and start our lives. (M. Rukaiya, Pudukkudiyiruppu, Mannar)

The Commission’s investigations began when the war had ended, the LTTE had been defeated, and the northern Muslims were suddenly faced with the real possibility of return and the re-establishment of communities in the north. However, while some were ecstatic at the prospect of the LTTE’s defeat and their absence in the return equation, return was a fraught proposition for many others. The northern Muslims were eager to talk about the possibility of return, the possibility of staying in Puttalam, and, in many cases, ways of maintaining connections to both places.

This chapter is based on information gathered from Commission sittings in Puttalam and Negombo, and Commission visits to Mannar, Jaffna, Vavuniya, and Kilinochchi. The Commission also held meetings that were exclusively devoted to eliciting the concerns of women and youth. Findings from these meetings have also been incorporated into this chapter. While the Commission visits to the north were specifically designed to elicit information about resettlement, most Commission sittings concentrated on return as this was the issue of greatest concern to the community, due to the transformed political context.

Going Back – A Fraught Proposition

Northern Muslims have been trying to return to the north since 1990. People have returned to Puthukudiyiruppu on Mannar Island, to Uppukulam in Mannar town, and to Jaffna since the early 1990s. Muslims attempted to resettle in all of the five districts of the north during the failed peace process of 2002 as well, but the presence of the LTTE, their anti-Muslim sentiment/feelings, and their generally recalcitrant politics made return very difficult (see Appendix 10 for problems related to return in 2002). The defeat of the LTTE in 2009 made large-scale return seem a real possibility, and many were hopeful of establishing Muslim

57 The Commission was not able to visit Mulaitiwu due to the fact that it was not possible to obtain Ministry of Defense clearance at the scheduled time. We obtained information regarding Mulaitiwu from partners.
communities in the north again. However, for a large majority that had spent nearly twenty years away from the north, it was not easy to decide immediately to return.

It was clear that most northern Muslims identified with their northern homeland and had been waiting to return. However, when confronted with the real possibility of going back, the decision was harder to make. Many were eager to return—for example, those from Thalaimannar Pier, whom the Commission met at the Al Mannar resettlement village—and were confident of a better life in the North. The place was bustling, currently, and schools were good. They anticipated the resumption of the ferry service, and the only regret was that they had invested in property in Kalpitiya—property which would have to be overseen. In relation to other areas, people were not so sure. Some areas in Mannar (in Musali and Mannar island), Muslim villages have been reduced to secondary forest with little evidence of houses. Some mentioned that it had taken them twenty years to reach a level of satisfaction with life in Puttalam. They said that it might take them a similar stretch of time to be comfortable again in Mannar. Others who used to be farmers worried about the future of their children. None of them farmed in Puttalam and their children did not know how to hold a knife or wield a shovel (Commission sitting at RDF office in Puttalam, October 2009). What were their options, if they were to leave for the north?

Land was a significant issue, and several matters were raised. Amongst the issues discussed were the lack of state land in certain areas to accommodate the increased numbers; the settlement of other ethnic communities in land traditionally considered to be Muslim lands; land sold to Tamil residents at very low prices during the conflict; complicated ownership conflicts; and the plight of those who were landless. Areas in Musali, in the Mannar district, have turned into secondary forest, and identifying property boundaries is difficult. This is true of certain areas in Jaffna as well, and probably true to some extent of all the places from which the Muslims were expelled.

One other issue that came up was whether the plans for Vadakin Vasantham or the Northern Spring development projects currently planned and instituted by the government, included the interests and aspirations of the northern Muslims. Commentators have noted that the plans do not refer to the Muslims and that the statistics do not include the numbers of returning Muslim (Saroor 2010, Raheem 2009).

Many complained that the government’s current resettlement initiatives were geared towards resettling those displaced during the final military offensive between the forces and the LTTE. There was no policy and little assistance for those who were displaced prior to that period. The Commission is in possession of a circular that states that money from UNHCR for cash grants to IDPS is available only to those displaced after 2008.\footnote{While this information was current in 2009, a visit by the secretariat in 2011 indicated that things have improved somewhat. Although the money for the cash grant from UNHCR was utilized only for those displaced after 2008, other monies were found for cash grants to Muslim IDPs. Although not all Muslim IDPs had access to all the resettlement assistance, the Commission was aware that, at the policy level, the state had made some effort to address the needs of Muslim IDPs.}
People also expressed their concern over the lack of information about the military taking over land owned by civilians, in addition to the question of whether any compensation will be provided. One example is the construction of bridges in Mannar through the acquisition of traditional Muslim land with no discussion of compensation issues. The Navy camp at Silawatura was also an issue of grave concern to Muslims. A large acreage of land (50 acres) owned by Muslims was part of the camp premises at the time of the Commission visit. The shortage of land in Koolankulam was due mainly to the presence of the camp (Commission sitting in Koolankulam, Mannar district, March 2010).

Many lack a clear grasp of the nature of their rights, and hold high expectations of the state providing for them. Many are being told by NGOs that if they were granted a house in Puttalam, they may not be entitled to a house in the north. There is speculation over the truth of this claim. According to our testimonies, heads of households who owned a house in Puttalam (but had little access to livelihoods in Puttalam) were resettling in Jaffna under dire conditions. They expected the government to assist them with a piece of land as compensation for what they had lost.

A follow-up visit by the Commission staff in September 2011 revealed that the government had issued a circular to the effect that people who received government housing assistance in Puttalam would not be entitled to assistance in the north. Given that the northern Muslims have been displaced since 1990 and that their families have expanded during this time, it is important for some flexibility to be practiced in relation to this principle. We also learned that such flexibility is being practiced and that all who own land will be eligible for housing assistance. We hope that this is indeed the case. It is important that all government decisions regarding land and housing are conveyed to the people.

People are undecided as to whether they should remain or return. While the Commission encountered many who were very emphatic about not returning at that particular time, it was not clear if they would register as Puttalam residents. There was a serious dearth of information about the need for such decisions and their consequences, and people were wary of making such choices. The lack of a clear policy on the part of the state and the lack of information on any policy matters exacerbated people’s confusion.

The "Old IDPs" versus the "New IDPs"

The Musali DS division was—prior to the expulsion—the only Muslim majority DS division in the entire northern province. When the government commenced its “180 day plan” to resettle 80% of the new IDPS by December 2009, they started the process in Musali. It was also the first area opened up as part of the *Vadakin Vasantham* (Northern Spring) development program. Mirak Raheem, writing in 2009, stated matters very clearly in relation to the Musali resettlement process.

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59 Meeting with DS of Musali, S. Keteesvaran, on 14. 09. 2011
Chapter Ten

Only those displaced from Mussali in September 2007 and still living in displacement within Mannar District were allowed to resettle. This effectively meant that those Muslims who had been displaced from Mussali in September 2007 but had moved back to Puttalam or (were displaced) in 1990 and living in displacement outside Mannar were not included into the resettlement program. Without any official information as to a process or timeline for return, the Mussali Muslims became increasingly apprehensive. As it appeared that there were no Government programs to facilitate the return of families and therefore, communities had to organise their own arrangements. Efforts to spontaneously return were initially foiled as returnees were told they could only stay in Mussali for three days and were unable to secure permission to stay longer. Community representatives repeatedly lobbied political actors and after the issue was raised in Parliament and in the media the authorities began a process of facilitated return. The Government initiated a new resettlement phase in Manthai West and other parts of the Vanni two weeks ago. Once more there is no information provided to the northern Muslim IDPs as to whether they are eligible to be resettled in the on-going process. (Raheem 2009)

As Raheem pointed out in 2009, the government has had no clear policy on the resettlement of the old case load of internally displaced persons. The emphasis, deriving from international pressure in the post-war context, has been to resettle IDPs who were displaced during the most recent fighting between the LTTE and the government forces that culminated in the military defeat of the LTTE in May 2009. The northern Muslim IDPs constitute a large percentage of the old case load. Others include Tamils displaced from the high security zones of the Jaffna peninsula. The state does not have a policy on the return of either group. When the Commission inquired in late 2009 and early 2010, many of the northern Muslims did not have any information about their options in three areas—staying in Puttalam or returning; possible compensation money that could be accessed; and how to resolve different land issues that emerge. Those who had returned to Mannar, Jaffna, and other areas also complained about the transfer of rations. A person’s rations had to be suspended in Puttalam in order for him or her to be eligible for assistance in the north. However, there was a significant time lag between the cessation of rations in Puttalam and their commencement in either Mannar or Jaffna. Furthermore, people were concerned about the delays in mine clearance in Muslim areas, and the fact that information about such clearance was not freely available to the community. It was only in 2011 that some progress was made on the issue of northern Muslim return. The government’s delay in attending to the issues of the Muslims has caused problems and has resulted in Muslims feeling that they are a very distant priority for the state and all other actors connected with the resettlement process.

People were distressed at the manner in which Tamil villages in Mannar seemed to get assistance while Muslim villages were ignored. During the sittings in Musali, on 24 March 2010, people spoke of the two neighbouring Tamil villages of Kokupadayan and Saveriyapuram. The people of these villages were displaced in 2007 to Nannadan, and on their return had received Rs. 500,000/- worth of fishing equipment. Northern Muslims displaced and returning after twenty years had not received such assistance. Many complained...
of the magnitude of the tsunami response and the state’s failure to match that in its assistance to those affected by the conflict. While this was perhaps an issue that would be resolved in time the Commission considered it noteworthy. The people of Musali complained of the development of the village of Saveriyapuram which, according to them, did not exist in 1990. They claim that the village was established in 1995 and now undermines the development of the older adjoining villages. The issue of concern at the time of the Commission visit was that there was a UNHCR funded waterline, taken from Musali to Arrippu and Saveriyapuram (two Tamil villages), that went across the Muslim village. The Muslim village was being bypassed at this stage of the project, and Muslims were compelled to travel over 1 kilometre to access drinking water. This was one of several examples of the sentiment on the ground that the Muslims were a distant priority to all of those carrying out resettlement work.

**Women’s perspectives on return**

Women were at the forefront in categorically stating that they would return only if proper facilities were provided for them. They did not want to go back to life in a hut. They did not want to live like they were displaced again, they stated.

It should be noted, however, that economic imperatives may result in people simply having to move. As was brought up in a meeting with women community leaders in June 2009 (meeting at ULI), most husbands and brothers worked outside Puttalam. Employment opportunities in Puttalam were so few that they had been compelled to seek jobs elsewhere. Further, farmers in Mannar and Mulaitiwu owned agricultural land. Attractive prospects included land available for cultivation and beaches with traditional fishing rights. Thus, many braved the lack of government assistance, lack of infrastructure, and even the threat of wild animals to reclaim their land. 60Women did not have a choice under these circumstances except to face the consequences of the move. Some women moved with their husbands and lived in great hardship. Some mentioned having to leave their children who were grown but still attending school, with relatives. In many cases they reconnected with Tamil women neighbours and laid the foundation for the interactions between the two communities that had been their way of life prior to the expulsion. Others stayed behind in Puttalam and incurred the additional cost of maintaining two households. In some instances husbands had romantic liaisons with other women in the north and women feared abandonment.

We met several women in Puttalam who had been abandoned by their husbands who now have other wives and families. Many of these women are barely able to survive on their ration and any minimal income. While some of these vulnerable women-headed households have income earning opportunities in Puttalam, they did not have plans to go back to the North. They feared that they would not be able to cope in a place like Mannar which was

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60 We met an extended family living on either side of the main road in Periyamadu, who were engaged in onion and vegetable cultivation in what was clearly very fertile land. They mentioned, casually, that they needed to look out for snakes, elephants, and bears on their land (field visit to Mannar, September 2011).
rural and had minimal infrastructure. In many cases, the option of going back was foreclosed if families did not have a male breadwinner who could engage in either agriculture or fishing. As women without partners they could not engage in such income-generating activities. Another woman stated that she had a young daughter, implying that protecting her would be difficult in such an environment (women’s sitting – Nagavillu, November 2009).

Many lived in conditions of extreme poverty, barely surviving in Puttalam. They did not have the economic resources to envisage returning to the north.

One woman talked about how they had gifted their one asset in Puttalam, their house, to their eldest daughter as dowry upon her marriage, and how, as a result they lived with their daughter in one household. A similar story was recounted in another instance, and the woman stated that she now lived with her husband in a shack with only a kitchen.

One woman described how she had been abandoned by her husband and had raised her children on her own with great difficulty. She had given her daughter in marriage, but her daughter’s husband had abandoned her daughter. She now lived with her daughter, her two other children, and her grandchild. They eeked out a living by selling kadayappam or breakfast food.

Another woman spoke of a disabled husband who was unable to work and sons who knew nothing about fishing. They, too, did not have any plans to go back.

Many women asked, “What will we have to face when we go there? What will happen to our land and property here?” It appeared that many people were already attempting to buy at very low prices land owned by northern Muslims in Puttalam.

Many pointed to the availability of livelihood opportunities in the north, unlike in Puttalam. Said one woman, “But we will need all other facilities as well if we are to move. We will need schools, houses, and healthcare facilities. We can’t go back and suffer again. We can’t move backwards.” She seemed to reflect the sentiments of a large majority of women.

The women’s perspective captured above represented another important aspect of return that is unique to the northern Muslims. During twenty years of displacement, the northern Muslims had built up lives for themselves in Puttalam. One half of the population had opted to move out of the welfare centres into more permanent housing. Their children were in schools, and a generation had grown up outside the north. They had strong and abiding ties of kinship and property in Puttalam, as well as a history of overcoming hardship. These ties and this history could not be left behind or forgotten easily. Therefore, northern Muslims who returned to the north did not completely abandon their ties with Puttalam. However, the administration in the north is not sympathetic to this particular aspect of Muslim return. For instance, one of the administrators that we met, the DS of Musali, saw the Muslims’ predicament of “one foot here and one foot there” as a problem. He stated that the entire Musali area was quiet during the month of Ramazan because almost the entire population of his area had moved back to Puttalam. He saw this as a problem, both of commitment on the part of the Muslims, and of planning. When NGOs visit to plan interventions, people who are
registered on paper as returnees to Musali, are not physically there. Therefore they are considered to be “difficult to work with” (see also the section on Registration as Returnees).

This feeling of belonging to both places is a condition of northern Muslim return, and should be recognized and accepted as such. People should not be expected to abandon their lives of twenty years to accommodate administrative processes and live in a manner that falls in line with standard NGO assistance packages. Ideally, administrative processes should find ways to accommodate the specificity of the northern Muslim experience and address their problems related to return. NGOs must engage closely with the community in Puttalam and the north, and design programs that address their specific circumstances.

**Women’s activism regarding return**

In the above section, we have illustrated women’s concerns regarding return, the predicament of some extremely vulnerable sections of the community (women headed households), and their inability to consider return at this point of time. However, return was considered seriously by many women activists from the northern Muslim community. In community activism regarding return, women activists have played an important but often unrecognized role. For instance, the Mannar-Puttalam road that cuts across the Wilpattu Wildlife Sanctuary was a matter of some controversy shortly after it had been opened. Environmental organizations argued that the road should not be opened up specifically for IDP use since it was a threat to the wildlife of Wilpattu, and took the matter to court in order to have the road closed. Since the road was important to northern Muslims as a link between Puttalam and the north (especially Mannar), they made an intervention in the case. Muslim women’s groups initiated an Intervening Petition in the case, pointing out the importance of the road to IDPs and urging the court to maintain restricted access. The road cut the travel time and cost from Puttalam to Mannar by a significant percentage. Northern Muslim IDP women and Tamil women from the north jointly drafted a letter on the issue and forwarded it to the President, the Attorney General, the Chief Justice and the Minister of Justice (see Appendix 6 for letter). Currently the Supreme Court has requested a report from the Police of Puttalam, Anuradhapura, and Mannar on illegal activities conducted in the Wilpattu area. The road remains open, although it is impassable when it rains. The IDP women activists who initiated the action are fairly optimistic that the court will decide in favour of keeping the road open to provide access to IDPs.\(^{61}\)

**Concerns of Youth**

Many young people stated that they were reluctant to return. Many said that they were used to living among Muslims and did not want to live among Tamils again and go through the hardship experienced by their parents. Their relationship with the host community was closer than that of an earlier generation and they felt a sense of belonging. One young person who

\(^{61}\) The Commission also made an intervention regarding the importance of the road. See Appendix 7 for Commission statement on the road. The statement was published in the *Daily Mirror* on 25 June 2010.
had visited Jaffna recently commented that the place was “smaller” than he had imagined, seemed crowded, and did not have enough room to accommodate the current population; therefore, he preferred to stay in Puttalam. A pressing concern was the education of children and brothers and sisters who were now in school; properties owned in Puttalam were also part of what made people reluctant to return. Some preferred to remain because they favoured the Muslim culture in Puttalam—because in the north it was still “mixed”. One young woman stated that Muslims should have been asked to return twenty years ago. She claimed that it was unjust to ask them to return now, twenty years after the expulsion, when they had built up alternative lives in other places. However, Puttalam itself did not offer many opportunities for youth; therefore, their options were limited and many were frustrated.

It should be noted, however, that reluctance to return was not a uniform sentiment among youth. Some said that they would follow the dictates of their elders, and we did encounter some who had returned, especially to areas in Mannar which included large tracts of cultivable land left behind in the expulsion.

Several youth held the perspective that the north was to undergo a process of accelerated development. Job opportunities were available, as well as enough facilities for education. People also felt that they could engage in farming and fishing if they did not find other jobs, as land was available and the area was situated close to the sea. The fishing families of Selavathurai wanted to go to their village as soon as possible. The other important reason behind Muslims wanting to return was the discrimination and mistreatment they suffered at the hands of the host community. They did not like being called refugees. We encountered this comment many times. The perspective of the host community—calling them refugees—coupled with the problems of sharing limited facilities in Puttalam, especially in education and employment opportunities, made return a pleasant prospect. The youth felt that their parents who had held important positions in society in the north were psychologically affected by the expulsion. Being referred to as refugees in many contexts—in hospitals and by government functionaries—was distressing to them. As stated in a testimony, “they think that we are coming as beggars; they don’t know how we lived.” Therefore, they prefer to lead a free and comfortable life in their native lands without this labelling. Another reason for youth returning to the north was the high cut-off mark for university entrance from the Puttalam district. The northern districts (other than Jaffna) are considered backward areas and therefore, according to government quotas, students from these areas are able to gain admission to university with lesser marks. Young people feel that the north would give them a better chance of gaining university admission. They also stated that if the prevailing situation of peace and the accelerated development activities in the north continued, they, too, would like to return and take advantage of the new opportunities in the north. They wanted the government to provide the facilities necessary for their return—for example, education, electricity, hospitals, roads, and transportation—to enable them to live a decent life like their families had done prior to the expulsion in 1990.
Concerns about Land: Information from the Testimonies

As already stated, land was a significant issue for the displaced community anticipating return. Invariably, discussions came around to matters such as complicated ownership conflicts, land changing hands due to the context of the conflict, and loss of permits and deeds. This section reflects some of the issues raised by the testimonies.

Suhara Umma of Thannangilappu Road, Chavakachcheri, provided a narrative about how she mortgaged her property to someone she knew. However, it is now over twenty years since the transaction, and the manner in which it was conducted—based on trust rather than documentation—poses a problem.

In Chavakachcheri we had twenty perches with a large house. It was in my name. We mortgaged it in 1987 because of financial problem. To redeem it we collected money. During that time we were chased away from there in 1990. They took all our money. We could not redeem the property. We could not find the people to whom we had mortgaged it for about 15 to 18 years. At one time, there was peace and the road was opened. At that time I went there and told the person to whom I mortgaged the house that I will give the twenty thousand as well as the interest, and I asked him to give me back my property. He refused. It is the property of my young girls. He said time had passed and that the property was destroyed. I came back and filed a case in Jaffna through the Red Cross. They are the people who helped me. The case is ongoing, and they are seeing to the expense of this case. In 2006 the road was closed. They stopped the case and sent a letter. Thereafter the case took place in Chavakachcheri. The road was opened again and the case was taken up. Tomorrow I will be going there alone. I know some people there. I stay there because of the case. There, the people I know are Tamils. They are very friendly with us. I am staying with my children in their friends’ house. We had to pay tax when they opened the road. They wanted me to pay tax, which I did, and I have the receipt for it. They asked me three questions. First, they wanted my husband’s death certificate. Second, they wanted to know if I have the V.C. to build the house. Third, they wanted to know if I have the right to build the house. They asked for the three documents. By the time I wanted to take the documents the road was closed. The person to whom I had mortgaged the house says that I sold it to him. I did not sell it. He took my signature on a blank paper. I trusted him he must have written that I sold it to him. (075)

Shahul Hameed of Periyamadu provided the following narrative about the loss of his land and a visit to the north while it was still under the LTTE. He did not mention what measures he has taken to access his property in the recent past.

I have my own land and houses. I visited the village twice and I was able to see that different people have occupied our lands and houses. It was mostly non-Muslims who lived in those houses. However, we could not do anything because we were not given any other rights than to see the village. We could not do anything because the LTTE had captured some of our family members, so if we did anything they would
have harmed them. We have our house deeds and we took them with us, thinking that we will be given back our properties. All of the village assets have been destroyed and some of them have been demolished by bomb blasts. The houses are still standing only in certain areas. Other than that all other areas have turned into forest. Some people are cultivating the agricultural lands as well. We have the deeds to those lands. (119)

We have a similar story from Iranamadu as well. M. Jasmin of Iranamadu described returning to the village and discovering many changes, including the fact that others were utilizing their land.

We went in 2002, but the village had been virtually destroyed. It was so sad to see the village. We showed our home town to our children. They told us that the village looked dangerous to live in. We have half an acre of land. They also fear to stay there because the present surrounding is safe and we have a lot of neighbors but our village looks deserted so they are not willing to stay there. There are Tamils on our lands. We tried to evict them, but they did not give the land to us as they had the support of the LTTE. So we came back here again. (133)

Ameerkhan of Nachchikudah, Kilinochchi, told us the story of how his family land was lost as a consequence of the economic losses suffered by the expulsion. It is evidence of the complicated manner in which land changed hands among family members and was ultimately lost in a manner that the owner considers to be unfair. It is not clear whether anything can be done about this, in terms of the law.

My father was not given land so my father wrote a letter to Queen Elizabeth saying, ‘I am an Indian, right now I am in Sri Lanka, and since I am an Indian they are rejecting my claim for land’. Later, Queen Elizabeth had written back immediately saying my father should be given land. So they gave my father 5 acres of land. I helped my father clean that land because it was very wild. We planted coconut trees on two and a half acres. My father passed away afterwards. My brother took 5500 rupees from my uncle on credit, and he asked for the land to be written in his name as guarantee for the money. Later they had sold the land to someone else without our knowledge. During the ceasefire they had sold it for 5 lakhs. (099)

Sitthi Aseema of Kathi Aboobakr Road, Jaffna, stated that she no longer had the deed to her land in Jaffna. She seemed to feel that the land was lost to her due to the war.

The house and the land we had in Jaffna were given to me by my mother. But we do not have the deed for it now, we left it all behind. Now it has been completely destroyed. We have nothing to return to, even if we wanted to. My children also told me they are willing to return if proper arrangements and compensation is provided for all that we have lost. (112)
We also heard stories of people who had successfully engaged in litigation and recovered their lands. One such case was related by A.M. Mansoor of Kilinochchi.

In 2002 I saw my home town and recognized my land. The house was destroyed. I saw that a person was illegally occupying my house, so I went to court and got my house back in 2008. Since then I regularly travelled there and used to visit for nearly six months. After problems occurred I have not visited it. I have three granddaughters and they are very young. Now I would like to go to my village, earn well, and live peacefully. All the neighbours were my relatives. So we lived peacefully. I would go and settle in my village if the government provided me with necessary facilities. (304)

Mansoor of Vattakachchi hoped that the sale of his land, done under duress from the LTTE, will be considered illegal so that his land will be given back to him. He sold land that he had received under a government land grant, and is aware that he cannot sell such land except under certain conditions.

I would like to go back to Vattakachi and live there, but we have sold our land. We intended going back to Vatakachi and getting our land back, but there was nothing we could do. Now we have a plan for that. There is a boy who is connected with the government, and I spoke to him regarding this. Without redeeming this land we can go to other places and be sad about this one. Every time we think of the land we were living in, it makes us sad. What the government gave us we cannot sell. But all who bought them are under the control of the LTTE. They would have thought that it is a Tamil state and it’s their kingdom. None of them would have thought there would be peace like this. The LTTE told the Tamil people to buy these lands, and that’s why they brought them from us. They thought that this would be their land. Now it is no longer the case. It has proved to be an illusion. Now we have the desire to get our land back. (217)

Many had sold their land due to poverty during the twenty long years of displacement, and although legal remedies for their losses were probably untenable we considered their predicament worth recording as one of the sadder consequences of the displacement.

M.T. Saleem of Jinnah Road, Jaffna, had the following rather sad narrative of being a landowner in Jaffna who had been compelled to sell his land due to poverty.

I was the only person to have 40 perches of land inside Moor Street while others only owned about 2-3 perches. Even if you forget your own mother you should never forget your birthplace. So returning there is still a dream for me. The land I had in the town, I sold it for Rs. 5 lakhs. I want to return but my children don’t want to leave as they are married and settled here. With this money I arranged marriages for my children. So now even if we do return we don’t have a place to stay. (249)
Findings from field trips: March 2010- September 2011

Concerns about Land: Returning Muslims encountered a host of problems as a result of the fact that twenty years had passed since their departure. The administrative boundaries of their areas had changed in both Mannar and Jaffna, but more specifically in Mannar, and what used to be one DS division or ward had become 5 different divisions. Villages had emerged where none had existed, and their lands were encroached on by the state, other institutions, and individuals. Generally, what was occurring was a slow process in which Muslim presence was erased by the vagaries of time. Additionally, long years of war and neglected had destroyed valuable irrigation systems that served the Musali area; thus, water was a problem (Commission sittings in Mannar town, Koolankulam, Errukkalampiddy, Rasool Puduweli, Moor Street, Uppukulam, Thalai Mannar Pier).

The Sinhalising imperative of the state was felt in Mulaitiwu. All name boards for places were in Sinhala, and this was true of Kilinochchi as well. Muslims were restricted from fishing and felt that the military was favouring the Sinhala migrant fishing people who were fishing off of the Mulaitiwu coast. Further, traditional Muslim prawn fishing areas off of the Nandhikadal lagoon were given to a multinational company. Muslims also felt the dire need for land. While 1500 families were expelled, there are now over 5000 families expecting to return. Therefore, returning Muslims felt that they need to struggle very hard to reassert their presence. It seemed clear that the return would be neither easy nor successful without the intervention of the Muslim leadership in particular and the state in general. It seemed clear, especially on Mannar Island, that it was essential to have state intervention for some recognition for the legitimacy of Muslim return and to assist in its success.

Land Issues in Mannar

Kulankulam does not have government land that can be given to returning Muslims. As a result, many build houses on their agricultural land. The issue of natural increase needs to be addressed. It was reported that in this village alone the number of residents had stood at two hundred and twenty families at the time of the expulsion. This number has exceeded six hundred and fifty at the present moment. A further problem was the fact that the Silavaturai Navy camp encroached on 50 acres of land owned by Muslims.

The Kondachchi area, too, witnessed a severe shortage of land due to the natural increase in the population. However, residents reported that adjacent government land could be given to the people. Furthermore, they reported that they did not have toilets and experienced problems accessing drinking water.

In Uppukulam, many people seemed to feel that the government (the Minister) had compelled them to resettle and had not provided adequately for their resettlement. For instance, although nearly seven hundred families had returned, housing assistance, provided through the ASB organization, was available only for twenty-three families. Land and houses were provided for returning Muslims in Tharawankottai. This was considered too far from their own community and too close to other ethnic communities. Muslims feared the loss of their community support networks if they were compelled to relocate there.
Representatives from the villages of Sirukulam, Mathanweli, and Walayyadi complained about the too slight development in their areas. They had spent Rs. 100,000/- of their own money to clear the area, but little had been done consequently. Two hundred and fifty families lived in temporary huts and had to share ten toilets. Access to drinking water was 1 kilometre away on foot. Electricity is not available in spite of this being a densely populated area. Appeals to the authorities to provide electricity have not been successful to date. Furthermore, their lives and assets are threatened by elephants—a major hazard. Considering the difficulties and the lack of facilities for decent living, a majority wants to return to Puttalam after the harvest (Commission sittings in Mannar district, March 2010).

Most of the evicted Muslims of Nannadan sold their paddy land in the years following 2002. The war which showed no sign of ending, the loss of livelihood, dire need for finances, and painful living conditions in camps compelled them to liquidate their assets. Looking back at the conditions under which they had sold their land to Tamils, they felt that they had sold their valuable property ‘under duress’. They sought justice in terms of a reversal of those transactions by which they had sold their land, so that they could own what was originally their property (Commission Sittings in Mannar district, March 2010).

Paadu is an area where boats are parked on the beach. It is considered to be an important place in the fishing industry, as it serves as a parking space for the boats and also provides space for the fishermen to sort out their catch. Much to the disappointment of the fishermen who had hopes of engaging in their traditional livelihood, many were instructed by the military to keep away from the Paadu as it has been demarcated a ‘high security zone’. The knowledge that the paadu, which was supposedly the HSZ, has been given to the Sinhalese has made the community very angry (Commission sitting in Koolankulam, Musali Division, March 2010).

The displaced people urgently need government land for their use. Fortunately, certain areas in Mannar have ample government land that can be used as such. Residents of certain villages may have to relocate. It is hoped that this will be done in consultation with the displaced people. Muslim communities emphasized the need for collective relocation to maintain community networks.

Land and housing are urgent needs. Most returnees are unaware of government plans. It was reported that Minister Athauda Seneviratne had visited the area and spoken of assistance from the Saudi Government to build three hundred houses. However, the plan does not appear to have materialized.

The displaced people need assistance to access water. People from Mannar often spoke of the lush green landscape and waterways of the villages that they had left behind in the expulsion. However, because the irrigation systems have fallen into disrepair, and well and waterways have dried up, water remains a serious problem. The environmental degradation that has
occurred as a consequence of the conflict should also be taken into account when calculating assistance for people.\textsuperscript{62}

As stated above, life has continued for twenty years after the Muslims’ departure, and thus land disputes were severe and felt very strongly, especially on Mannar Island. The following quote from a mosque leader captures both the complexity of the context and the feeling of alienation amongst returning Muslims.

The first problem is that the individual lands have been taken as governmental lands. We have filed a case in the courts, but even though there is a case filed, we were not given a proper decision or judgment till now. We also can see that a few individuals have settled on our lands, forcibly, with the support of the other communities. Due to this problem we went to investigate our deed documents in the Land office but there weren’t any documents as they had been spoilt/damaged. We reported this to the Bishop, and he is requesting the deeds. However the copies of these deeds are with the Survey Department and when we requested it from them, they requested a letter from the Divisional Secretary. The Divisional Secretary is not cooperating with us. Some school buildings have been built on some lands. We found that the children of the DS are studying in those schools, so they are not willing to go against those schools, even though they know that the schools are built on such lands. There are twenty-five properties in Mannar, and there are more than a thousand acres on such land. We have information on that land, but we do not have deeds. That land is more than 8 hundred years old.

Recently I obtained a few deeds for such land from someone. I visited that land, and I am in the process of getting it back. There is more of such land, and I have not yet got the deeds to prove ownership to the remaining land. Perhaps I might get them. This is the same with the other Muslims of Mannar: such land has been forcibly taken away from the people as they don’t have deeds. (Report of Mannar visit of the Commission: March 2010)

The land issues on Mannar Island were a recurring problem that gave rise to some communal tension. There was some disputed land adjoining a prominent Catholic school, that, according to the Muslims’ claim, was given to them by LDO permit. The Church claims that it was granted to the Bishop of Mannar by the Bishop of Jaffna in the 1950s. Although the church has agreed to make some small land allocations to the families that lost out on that land, the Muslims feel aggrieved. A protest action undertaken by the Muslims was dealt with by the law – the Muslims had to appear in court and felt further humiliated. Ill feeling was rife on both sides due to what the Commission felt was a fundamental misunderstanding of the facts—a misunderstanding resulting from poor communication between the authorities and the Mosque trustees.

\textsuperscript{62}On our visit in 2011, we learned that the Ahathimurippu irrigation system was being repaired with assistance from JAICA.
Muslim Return and the Catholic Church

The Commission met the local representatives of the Tamil communities as well as the Buddhist priest at the Jaffna Temple, and all were uniformly welcoming of the return of Muslims to Jaffna. Mannar presented a different situation. Although the local leaders stated that the Muslims had a right to return, comments also reflected the element of competition. The Bishop of Mannar, Rayappu Joseph, stated that the Tamils who had stayed behind had been displaced over twenty-six times, in addition to losing children to the LTTE, losing family members to death and disappearances, and losing limbs etc. The Muslim community, on the contrary, missed much of the war due to the displacement. He even stated that the expulsion was probably a blessing in disguise. There were ongoing land disputes between the returning Muslims and the Catholic Church. It was evident to the Commission that the Church was yet to accept the legal ramifications of Muslim return. For instance, in Kokupadayan, the church had claimed fifteen acres of land from the neighbouring Muslim village of Tammatamusali. The church’s claim and the issuing of the land to the church by the authorities, dated from over ten years ago. The fact that there had not been any opposition for ten years seems to indicate to the church that there should not be grounds for dispute. However, the Muslims were driven out twenty years ago. All transactions on land belonging to Muslims or within Muslim villages that were conducted over that twenty-year period will necessarily have to be reviewed. The issue of land seemed to give rise to a lot of ill feeling. Very little of the good relationship that many northern Muslims had spoken of seems to have survived. Muslims complained of the statue that had suddenly come up in Oosimukkuthurai, a ward of the Muslim village of Errukkulampidy. Serious clashes had erupted over the issue in 2003, with Muslims destroying a structure that was built to accommodate a statue. The issue was resolved later with the intervention of Muslim politicians, and a decision was made to halt all construction there. However, a new statue had appeared recently. Muslims generally fear that the large tracts of land that the Muslims owned on Mannar Island will be gradually taken away from them.

In a more recent interview with the Vicar General, Father Victor Soosay, we heard that the Catholic Church was taking measures to meet the Muslim mosque leadership and build better community relations. The Tamil communities of Mannar feel a measure of insecurity and fear for the future of their children, especially in the areas to which large numbers of Muslims return. They fear that they will not be able to own land because of the large numbers of Muslims who have appeared after twenty years. These circumstances require attention from the leadership of both communities. The Commission appreciated the efforts made by the church in this regard and felt more intense engagement would be necessary.

The Bishop also seemed to reflect the Tamil Catholics’ beleaguered sensibility in the face of an increasingly Sinhalising state. The Bishop stated that Tamils did not have a representative in Parliament, whereas the Muslims had a Minister, implying thereby that Muslims had greater access to resources.

On a follow up visit in September 2011, the Commission met members of many Muslim communities on Mannar Island who spoke well of their Tamil neighbours. For instance, the
community in Uppukulam that had returned in 1991 stated that it did not have any problems with Tamil neighbors and interacted very closely with them. Although land disputes did arise and the leadership of both communities was suspicious of each another, the common people seemed to have maintained the good relations that were the norm in Mannar prior to the expulsion. We also spoke to a family in Talaimannar Station who said they have very good relations with their Tamil neighbours. The village received only two houses as government assistance.; one was given to a Tamil family and the other to a Muslim family. Such examples of good relations are heartening and augur well for the future of an ethnically diverse north. However, the actions of the leadership of both communities are sure to do much, either to fulfil this promise or to bring about its failure.

Concerns regarding return and education

When the Commission visited in early 2010, poor infrastructure facilities were a recurring complaint in Mannar. Furthermore, people in all of the areas to which the Muslims were returning complained of the lack of properly functioning schools to which they can send their children. Families in Nannadan complained that they had to travel five kilometres to school and did not have transportation. They needed bicycles. Commission staff encountered many of the same issues during the follow-up visit in late 2011. The Principle of the Vepamkulam school stated that the dropout rate was high due to some of the above problems. The schools do not have functioning toilets or water; there was a severe shortage of teachers for Mathematics, Science and English; and the children had to travel a long way to attend school. The area lacked a regular transport system, and children had to walk for miles. The staff conducting the interviews observed children arriving home after school at 4 p.m. The Principal, S.H.M. Mufti, stated that while people did return in significant numbers and children did attend school, he was concerned that many of them would drop out if steps were not taken to address the above conditions.

Nachchikudah, Kilinochchi

In Nachchikuda, Kilinochchi, the absence of sympathy from Tamils towards returning Muslims was felt quite strongly. This ancient village that claims to be one of the first Muslim settlements dating back to the 8th century is currently hemmed in by new Tamil settlements less than twenty years old. Land that the Muslims considered to be their entitlement in the event of the village expanding through natural increase had been given to Tamils. This was a consequence of the Muslims’ twenty-year absence from the area (Commission sitting in Nachchikuda, June 2010).

People returned spontaneously, even without state assistance, because many feared losing their land. People reported to the Commission that government officials in the north are not all equally sensitive to the Muslims’ problems. In Nachchikudah, they mentioned that the officials were “very young” and suggested that they were from a generation that did not know of the Muslims’ problems and were not sympathetic to them. There was anxiety over Tamil communities’ presence on land that Muslims considered as traditionally belonging to Muslim villages. In Nachchikudah, Tamil people from Jaffna had settled on Muslim land after Muslims had been expelled in 1990. The government official of the area says that he cannot
move people who have occupied the land for twenty years. During the twenty years since the
expulsion, Tamil families have been settled in the surrounding areas, according to official
state practices, and given land grants (they have deeds of ownership). Most expelled Muslims
who lived there before the expulsion in 1990 only have LDO permits (temporary ownership
under the Land Development Ordinance in order to develop the land).

Nachchikudah was an example of another development that has taken place in the north
during the twenty years of Muslim absence. The people who are settled in Nachchikudah are
from Jaffna. The Tamil neighbours that some Muslims encounter are sometimes not just
young and unaware of Muslims in their neighbourhoods—they are also from different areas
and strangers to the same neighbourhoods. They have little history in a given place—the
conflict is the only shared past for many.

People in Nachchikudah also complained about limited infrastructure facilities like water and
electricity and the lack of a bus service. They did not have financial assistance from the state
for resettlement or to start livelihoods. Many families have fallen into debt in order to go
back to the north.

Issues specific to Jaffna

The situation in Jaffnawas especially serious in terms of land availability. There were no
Government lands that were available for returning northern Muslims to claim. There was
also little land that could be earmarked for purchase and development by the Muslims. One
exception was a large plot of land in the Mankumban area. This plot was identified and
sectioned off to accommodate fifty landless returning families. However, the project is
currently at a standstill due to funding difficulties. Housing is such a serious issue in Jaffnà
that Community leaders urged the Commission, during its visit, to inform people in Puttalam
and elsewhere that they should not come back if they did not have their own lands and
houses, since there was no hope of obtaining government land and housing grants in Jaffna.
However, people were rightfully indignant that they had to postpone returning to their home
town due to lack of land ownership. Many of those who had come for business purposes—we
met butchers and scrap iron collectors—were very keen on expanding their business interests,
regardless of their landless status. They resided in rented houses and engaged in their
business with some difficulty. Community leaders also stated that they were engaged in
discussions about purchasing property that becomes available, in order to provide housing for
the landless. (Commission sitting in Jaffna, March 2010). The funding for such projects
remains a problem. The government, too, seems affected by a lack of funds.

In Jaffnà, the Commission listened to problems between supporters of different northern
Muslim factions. Some local authority representatives claimed that it was this issue more than
others that stifled progress on matters relating to displaced Muslims. The Commissioners felt
that while this may be a problem, it did not explain the state agencies’ negligence in
delivering the necessary services to the returning northern Muslims. We noted during our
visit that a large number of people did not receive rations because their registration had not
been finalized by the GA. While the administration informed us that the Muslims were not
organized enough to present their concerns, the Muslims that we spoke to were indignant and insisted that this was not the problem. They reiterated the fact that the administration was not sympathetic to Muslim concerns. One person at the Jaffna hearing provided the following narrative.

We have been living in Jaffna from 2002. There is a GS region in Section J86, but there have been three different GS for these years. I have a good relationship with him, but still he pretends not to know me when I go to meet him. Even Sufiyan Moulavi is unhelpful. We are asking for the GS to recognize our needs and do things without a letter from the mosque.

People arrived with the idea of resettling in Jaffna, but went back due to the lack of housing.

Land Issues in General

The Commission encountered a variety of different issues linked to land, including the inability to access rental properties where people had shops and other businesses. The Commission recommendations call for some specific measures to address these problems. On the Commission’s follow up visit to Mannar in 2011, we were informed of the Bimsaviya program that is to be implemented from September 2011. While some northern Muslims have lost all documentation, some landowners have passed away and their children have no means of accessing the land to which they are entitled by inheritance. These issues should be addressed through circumstantial and other evidence. It is for these reasons that the Bimsaviya program, if implemented properly, can be a source of great strength. However, people must be informed and given adequate time to do the necessary paperwork. Further, returning Muslims complained about the administration’s lack of cooperation in such matters. This, too, is an issue that must be speedily addressed to make the program a success.

Registration as Returnees

The Secretariat for the Northern Displaced Muslims (SNDM) released statistics in April 2011, just before the institution was shut down. A majority of the northern Muslims registered to receive rations in the Puttalam district have discontinued their rations and registered as returnees in the north. According to the SNDM figures obtained by the Commission, 77,965 persons have returned to the north. Of this number, 62,052 people have returned to Mannar District, 7658 to Jaffna District, 6296 to Mullaitiwu District, and 1577 to Kilinochchi District. However, the Commission also found that a large majority of persons continued to live and work in Puttalam despite registering as returnees in the north. This was due to the lack of housing and infrastructure facilities in the north, the lack of access to jobs, and the education of children already in schools in Puttalam (many do not want to interrupt their children’s attendance at the well-established Puttalam schools in favour of the institutions in the north that are just restarting). Furthermore, many felt that they were compelled to register in the north for fear of losing their future entitlement to return and obtain assistance—this perception arose as a result of confusing, and sometimes erroneous, information. This situation has caused a problem—confusion in government records on resettlement. Some live in Puttalam although registered as returnees in the north; they travel
to the north to collect their six months’ worth of rations. These people do not have any standing in Puttalam and have to travel to the north for even the most minor administrative function. The Commission has now heard that, due to these difficulties, some opt to register as residents and voters in the Puttalam district.

Several other issues arose over registration as well. Some who owned houses or land in the north returned on their own without any assistance, and were therefore not registered as returnees. Others who had never been registered due to the fact that they lived with family after the displacement, found it difficult to claim returnee status. Many complained about how, following their arrival in Jaffna, they had been required to return to Colombo to obtain a letter from the authorities to attest to the fact of their displacement. The logistical demands of this move are too much for many people. Because of safety concerns and the lack of proper housing, the entire family has to travel in order to obtain the letter. Many cannot afford this move.

**Table 2: Summary of Resettled Families and Persons Up to 25.04.2011**

**Secretariat for the Northern Displaced Muslims**

**Ministry of Resettlement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>D/S Division</th>
<th>No. of Families Resettled</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No. of Person Resettled</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Resettled W/O SNDM Approval</th>
<th>Total Families Resettled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>Musali</td>
<td>4,937</td>
<td>21,479</td>
<td>350</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manthai West</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nananatan</td>
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<td>2,266</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>6,599</td>
<td>27,494</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Madu</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>2,642</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14,839</td>
<td>62,052</td>
<td>15,189</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulaitiwu</td>
<td>Mulaitiwu</td>
<td>1,778</td>
<td>6249</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ottusuttan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
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</table>
Chapter Ten

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>1,790</th>
<th>6,296</th>
<th>1,790</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vavuniya Vavuniya</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>125</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheddikulam</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>152</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffna Jaffna</td>
<td>1,853</td>
<td>7,650</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velanai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandiruppai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,856</td>
<td>7,658</td>
<td>1,856</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilinochchi</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>1,537</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>365</td>
<td>1,537</td>
<td>365</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trincomalee Kuchchawely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kantalai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thampalagamam</td>
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<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Batticaloa Eraur</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valaichchenai</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>18,945</td>
<td>18,945</td>
<td>77,965</td>
<td>77,965</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Displaced Families living in Puttalam District (SNDM: 26.04.2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order No.</th>
<th>D.S Division</th>
<th>No. of Families</th>
<th>No. of Persons</th>
<th>No. of Families getting Dry Ration</th>
<th>No. of Families not getting Dry Rations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Puttalam</td>
<td>1,209</td>
<td>4,172</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wanathawillu</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mundal</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kalpitty</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>2,231</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,247</td>
<td>8,466</td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: The Original Places of Residence of Displaced Families currently living in Puttalam District (SNDM: 26.04.2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Families</th>
<th>No. of persons</th>
<th>No. of Families getting Dry Ration</th>
<th>No. of Families not getting Dry Rations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jaffna</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>3,237</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kilinochchi</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>1,035</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mullaitiwu</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>1,339</td>
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<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vavuniya</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>2,088</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,247</td>
<td>8,466</td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Ten

Conclusion

In general, northern Muslim return takes place on an ad hoc basis. Many issues are resolved as they emerge. Many northern Muslims struggle to ensure that the authorities give northern Muslims the same assistance as recently displaced people. While this is necessary in certain instances (at the very least the old IDPs should be able to access the minimum allowed them by the government policy), what is unfortunate is the lack of a policy that addresses their specific needs. The population amounts to more than 200,000 persons. It is important to recognize the specific circumstances of the expulsion and the displacement, as well as the particular needs at the moment of return, and to make special provisions to the general policy on IDP assistance. For instance, most returning northern Muslims have not been home for twenty years. Thus, the status of their houses and properties will be different from that of houses and properties that have been left by their owners for a shorter period of time.

The Commission found that Muslims wanted to maintain their links with the north. At the same time, many stated that they did not want to go back until they had adequate facilities. The Commission also felt that many who had returned were those who were very poor and had limited livelihood options in the places to which they had been displaced. These findings are also consistent with information from the SNDM indicating that 95% have registered in the north, and the fact that a majority of them are still residing in Puttalam despite their registration elsewhere. However, many people held strongly to the sentiment of wanting to return, even in a context in which people did not have land or houses in the north. Therefore the Commission wishes to emphasize the need to facilitate northern Muslim return in as efficient and cost effective a manner as possible. We end this chapter with the following quote from M. S. Isatheen who does not own land in Jaffna any longer, having been compelled to sell the land due to poverty.

Back in Jaffna I owned everything necessary for a hotel, and an Oxford car, a Rukmany Hi- Ace lorry--its value today will be 50 lakhs--and a big house. We did not bring anything when we arrived. I would love to go back, but, due to hardship, I sold my land for 3 lakhs and 35,000. Now I do not have any land back there. My children do not know the value of that soil, but we do. I want to go and live in a rented house, if it is possible. I know the government cannot return the lands that we lost. If I go back I should be given land and a shelter—then I can hope for a better life. Many people have interviewed us like this, but nothing was done. I hope at least this interview will result in some positive action to address our plight. (255)
Chapter Eleven

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The Commission on the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province has come to the following conclusions regarding the expulsion, the displacement and return:

1. The Expulsion remained marginal within the discourse of the conflict and the many peace processes due to a combination of factors. These factors were the lack of community mobilization; the insufficient attention paid by Muslim politicians to publicizing the issue; and the fact that northern Muslims’ interests became secondary to the interests of the Muslim political parties.

2. The northern Muslims seem to have been caught up in the struggle to access state and NGO resources for the community, and have not emphasized sufficiently the importance of making the issue better known within the larger world. In short, they have not been very successful in making it an issue of global prominence.

3. During their displacement, northern Muslims faced some issues that were common to most Sri Lankan citizens affected by the conflict. For instance, the fact that the ration amount was not increased in two decades affected not just the Muslim IDPs but other IDPs as well. Furthermore, the language difficulties faced by northern Muslims while accessing health care facilities or when visiting government offices are also faced by Tamil speaking people all over the country. To date, Muslims have not paid enough attention to articulating their issues as concerns common to the country as a whole.

4. The larger Sri Lankan Muslim community has mobilized to provide humanitarian assistance to the community, but has not done much to lobby for the issue to receive prominence on the national or international stage. This activism is emerging only now.

5. There should be better use of social media to make the issue more prominent, nationally and internationally.

6. The Expulsion seemed to have been a response to the SLMC’s actions against LTTE ideology. The LTTE may have tried to undermine the SLMC’s political strength through this act, but it seems to have bolstered it instead.

7. The northern Muslims had not expected to be displaced for so long. Many seem to have expected to return within a short period—a matter of weeks or at most a couple of years. None had anticipated a twenty-year period of exile.
Chapter Eleven

8. The northern Muslim community has grown considerably since 1990. Policy making lacks sufficient appreciation of the natural increase of the population and the necessity to accommodate large numbers in planning for northern Muslim return and resettlement.

9. The response of the Tamil leadership was inadequate at the time of the expulsion. This is true of the political leadership as well as the Catholic Church. While there are stories of individual Tamils and individual Catholic priests talking to the LTTE in an effort to get more time for the Muslims, there is a lack of evidence of the leadership mounting any substantial critique of the LTTE’s actions.

10. The University Teachers for Human Rights’ reporting of the incident is the one exception to the above situation.

11. The responses of the Sinhala leadership and of the state in general were also inadequate. It is clear that the state has not acted to prioritize Muslim interests. Evidence can be found in the state’s failure to respond to the expulsion in Mannar, despite the presence of a large army camp in the Silawaturai area which was home to a majority of the northern Muslims; in the manner in which assistance was provided during the displacement; and in the ways in which the resettlement process is being undertaken today.

12. Northern Muslim resettlement, considered to be part of the “old IDP” problem, has been a distant priority for the state. This treatment has made returning northern Muslims feel like second class citizens.

13. The lack of attention to the event, both when it took place and in the aftermath, and the current second class treatment meted out to northern Muslims after the defeat of the LTTE, all highlight the systematic neglect of the issue. It is also important to point out the international community’s culpability. Pressurizing the government to deal with the New IDPs, the international community omitted the Old IDPs. International NGOs have contributed to and been complicit in the exclusion of Muslims by falling in line with the manner in which the government looks at the problem as limited to the new IDPs. The justification of this stance, the need to work with the government, rings hollow.

14. The expulsion resulted in a generation of northern Muslims losing their education and the possibility of a future of some economic prosperity and status. Parents lost the capacity to educate their children, and government servants were compelled to give up their jobs, and substantial pensions due to the expulsion.

15. The northern Muslims suffered economic losses on a staggering scale. There have been two attempts at calculating these losses—the first was the Refugee Survey of 1991, conducted by the Research and Action Forum for Social Development (RAAF), and the more recent effort was the survey conducted by M.I.M. Mohideen in 2004. According to Mohideen, losses including residential properties, commercial and industrial establishments,
agricultural lands, religious institutions, gold and jewellery, livestock, and so on, amount to around US $112 million.

16. The twenty years since the expulsion have almost erased evidence of Muslim presence in the north. Resettling northern Muslims face great difficulties as a result of this issue and the needs and wants of the respective local populations. The state’s neglect and the absence of the Muslim leadership only serve to reinforce Muslims’ marginal position in the north. Therefore, it is essential for the government to be seen to endorse Muslim return.

17. The Commission identified the following issues as those that have to be addressed in connection with returning northern Muslims and land:

   a. Northern Muslims face difficulties in identifying their land, often because some boundaries are not traceable.
   b. Others unlawfully occupy land owned by Muslims. Ownership is disputed in some cases.
   c. Many northern Muslims have lost ownership documents for their land and face difficulties in obtaining copies or attestations as to their ownership from local land registries and the Grama Niladharis and District Secretaries.
   d. Some northern Muslims were compelled by the LTTE to sell their land.
   e. In some areas, land belonging to Muslim villages has been claimed by people from neighboring Tamil villages. Such claims have been endorsed by the local administration. This leads to tension and mistrust between the Muslim and Tamil populations.
   f. Some were compelled to sell their land due to hardship faced in conditions of displacement. They expect compensation for property sold at low prices (some want to buy back their land).
   g. Tenants have lost their rented premises.
   h. Land disputes have arisen, in particular between the Catholic Church in Mannar and the displaced Muslims of Mannar Island. Muslims fear that their claims may not get an adequate hearing, even in court, due to the Church’s power in Mannar. The Commission spoke with representatives of the Church and hopes for an amicable resolution to such issues, in particular in a manner that is fair by all concerned.

18. Muslims who bought land in Puttalam to access government housing assistance have many different sorts of ownership documents, many of which may not be legal documents. Therefore some measures need to be taken to regularize northern Muslims’ ownership of property in Puttalam as well.

19. There is little or no acknowledgement of the mental stress and trauma caused by an event of this nature. The shock of having to leave at short notice, the stress brought on by the complete abandonment of homes, lives, and livelihoods, and the manner in which these
stressors have affected family and marital lives have not been adequately explored or acknowledged. As a community, the northern Muslims have minimal access to psycho-social support services in Puttalam and elsewhere.

20. Northern Muslims have been resilient and have built up their lives despite the expulsion. Some have become prominent and even wealthy in Puttalam and elsewhere. However, this is not true of all northern Muslims. Some continue to languish in welfare centers in conditions similar to their initial situation twenty years ago. Some still do not have access to water or electricity, and sanitation continues to be poor.

21. The perception of all Muslims as traders was shown to be false. A large number of people from the north comprised farmers and fisher folk. Some of them owned large tracts of land and had a special relationship to their land. Most held their ancestral connection to the land and to the place very close to their hearts.

22. The perception that all Muslims were able to take care of themselves somehow was also proven to be false. Relations between the communities have become strained as a result of the manner in which the host and displaced communities were virtually left to fend for themselves, with the government doing little to address the inadequate state services in the area and the lack of employment opportunities. Good relations based on the common religion and culture break down sometimes as a result of multiple stress factors.

23. The short-sighted manner of providing services to the northern Muslim community has exacerbated host and IDP differences and led to tensions between the communities. Greater thought was required to service an IDP population that was suddenly thrust upon a somewhat impoverished and peripheral regional community.

24. The northern Muslims have integrated well into the Puttalam economy and built up substantial communities in the area. However, the distinction between them and the host community continues to be strongly felt and articulated, and the northern Muslims are not integrated into Puttalam community in any significant way. The maintenance of their IDP registration, as well as some structural features such as the construction of settlements with names from the north and the provision of assistance to those settlements from authorities other than the local municipality, have helped maintain the northern Muslims’ sense of separateness from the host community. The host community, in turn, has watched with resentment as sections of the northern Muslim community have received roads, pipe-borne water, and electricity, while many of their villages continue without such services.

25. While many northern Muslims return in large numbers, a significant percentage has also decided to stay behind in Puttalam and is beginning to register there. This means that some significant work needs to be done to build confidence between the two communities and to convince the northern Muslims of their allegiance to Puttalam.
26. An enduring problem for both host and displaced communities is the lack of employment opportunities for youth from low income families in Puttalam.

27. The northern Muslims were a community used to interacting with ethnic others. While the north became a mono-ethnic place after the expulsion of the Muslims, the northern Muslims, too, were, for the most part, compelled to live in a mono-ethnic context among the Muslims of Puttalam. Therefore, the Commission encountered many who spoke of a fear of “losing their culture” if they were to return to the north, due presumably to the influence of the Tamil community. The Commission sees this as an unfortunate consequence of the war and the polarization of communities—that as a nation, we are unable collectively to appreciate religious and cultural difference.

28. The north suffered tremendous changes in the twenty years following the expulsion of the northern Muslims. Some Tamil leaders have interpreted the expulsion as a “blessing in disguise”, indicating that the majority of northern Muslims missed the destruction wrought on communities in the north during the conflict. While it has to be acknowledged that, during those twenty years, the northern Muslims were spared the experience of destruction as well as the suffering of people who were compelled to live under the LTTE, it should not be forgotten that the northern Muslims were chased away, under the threat of violence, with barely any notice. This is an act of ethnic cleansing and should be acknowledged as such.

29. It can also be acknowledged that the northern Muslims had more access to state and NGO services, more mobility, and fewer restrictions placed on their daily lives, due to the fact that they lived outside the conflict zone and did not have to experience the security concerns and the restrictions of access to goods that was the norm in displaced camps in the conflict areas.

30. The Commission noted that the women of the community had suffered great hardship during the time of the conflict, in the expulsion experience, and in the long-term displacement. The Commission report has tried to illustrate the variety of such experiences encountered.

31. The women of the community have been compelled to take on the burden of income earning. They are also subject to moral policing within the more conservative context of Puttalam. While many stated that they benefited from the greater religiosity that had to be embraced during displacement, we also learned of difficulties encountered in the transition period. Many girl children lost out on their education, and a number of women were unable to pursue careers due to the different roles expected of women in Puttalam during the early years of the displacement. The Commission felt that the women of the community continued to bear a significant burden within the community without sufficient support or acknowledgement.
32. We also met women activists who told us of the problems they faced in serving the community. We felt that women’s work and ideas continue to be devalued in the community. It would serve the community well to grant greater space and attention to women’s work.

33. The northern Muslims have seen the inflow of aid in the aftermath of the Tsunami of December 2004, as well as the steps taken to address the massive housing need that arose at the time. Protracted displacement is a long-term problem with consequences for hundreds of thousands of lives, and it should be recognized as such. It is necessary to recognize and address the need for housing provision on a massive scale. While some measures are being instituted to address the massive housing needs in the north, more needs to be done and at greater speed. Housing assistance should be provided in an equitable manner that endorses the right to return of all communities that were compelled to leave due to the war, including those who were expelled.

34. Returning Muslims face a number of challenges in establishing communities in the north. They require greater state endorsement, as well as more support and engagement from civil society and the NGO community.

35. Northern Muslims returning to all of the areas in the north complained of the reception they had received from state officials in the north. Barring a few exceptions—the GA of Vavuniya and the DS of Musali were mentioned as very helpful—many of the state officials who were Tamil were very unhelpful to Muslims in terms of arranging for attention to administrative tasks. This is especially troubling due to the new land registration system that is being introduced, the Bim Saviya Program. Under this program the Grama Niladhari and the District Secretary have enormous powers to demarcate and decide land ownership. Northern Muslims fear that they may lose their land because of the inaction and discriminatory practices of the administrative officials.

36. While some state officials are Muslims, it is important to establish a greater representation of Muslim cadre in the administrative service in order to address the concerns of returning northern Muslims. While all administrative officials have to be sensitized to be neutral, in terms of ethnicity, in their provision of services, it is also important for Muslims to have adequate representation in the administrative service.

37. Many northern Muslims were eager to return to the north but found it difficult to leave behind their lives in Puttalam due to the lack of facilities in the north. This was perceived, erroneously, by many state functionaries as a problem that the Muslims had to deal with speedily. The Commission felt that this sense of being in two places was a strategy that helped many to deal with the enormous challenges of return after a twenty-year period of displacement. It should be recognized as such by people designing policy and assistance programs. Northern Muslims should not be compelled to choose one option too quickly.
38. Northern Muslims were uniformly pleased and happy to be back in their own lands although facilities were inadequate. They spoke of the sense of freedom offered by the open spaces and familiar landscape, and also appreciated the fact that language was no longer an issue.

39. Political actors and their agendas have improved the lives and conditions of some of the northern Muslims. The assistance rendered by M.H.M. Ashraff, Noordeen Mashoor, Aboobakr, Illyas and Risharth Bathideen must be acknowledged. However, politicians must be held responsible, collectively, for the relatively minor place occupied by the northern Muslims on the national agenda for resettlement and for the development of the north and east.

40. The short-sighted actions of some Muslim politicians exacerbate tensions between the northern Muslims and their neighbours in Puttalam and the north. Politicians need to be more sensitive to the long-term impact of their actions on the communities’ interactions with their neighbours.

41. The leadership of both the Muslims and the Tamils must address the problems of return and resettlement encountered by both communities. Some of the problems are common to the two communities and can be addressed collectively, while others require the goodwill of the other ethnic community. Therefore, the leadership of each community needs to be sensitive to the problems of the other ethnic community. Such sensitivity is needed to ensure successful return and resettlement for both communities.

42. Sinhala-majority party politicians must articulate the northern Muslim issue and bear some responsibility for its marginal status.
Chapter Eleven

Recommendations

On the basis of the conclusions above, the Commission makes the following recommendations to the government, NGOs, INGOs and UN Agencies, and the Muslim political and civil society leadership.

To the Government

1. The government should officially recognize the expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province as an act of ethnic cleansing committed during the course of the war, and, further, should acknowledge the inadequate assistance provided to the Muslims by the state in the aftermath of the expulsion.

2. The government policy on IDPs should include more attention to those who were displaced during the conflict but prior to the most recent hostilities (Old IDPs). The massive problem of protracted displacement should be recognized and addressed. The general IDP policy should be formulated to recognize the different experiences of displacement and the specific nature of needs.

3. Northern Muslims should be informed of the state policy and given access to information on the assistance to which they are entitled.

4. Although there has been a recent implementation of some assistance programs for the northern Muslims, Muslims feel that their resettlement is lagging behind in general. The government must take measures to ensure that the Muslims, too, benefit equally from the peace dividend and the Northern Spring.

5. It is important for representatives of government authorities assisting northern Muslims to be better sensitized to the expulsion experience and to the need to re-establish Muslim communities in the north. They should be instructed to provide assistance of a better quality to returning northern Muslims to address the issues encountered upon return—especially issues over land.

6. There should be more senior Muslim officials appointed to the administrative service in the north to overcome the absence of such cadre in the service and to address returning Muslims’ concerns regarding discrimination.

7. The specific expulsion experience should be recognized through the use of a term other than ‘internally displaced persons’. Terms that should be considered are ‘forcibly evicted persons’ or ‘expelled persons’.

8. The lack of an adequate government response to the expulsion compelled the northern Muslims to depend on the resources of fellow Muslims. While the Muslim community of
Puttalam was able to respond to the emergency in 1990, the need to continue supporting the population for twenty years has seriously drained the resources of the community and affected relations between the host community in Puttalam and the northern Muslims. Therefore, the state must also acknowledge the difficulties faced by the host community and consider the possibility of compensation.

9. The Puttalam area was compelled to support a sudden increase in population, as well as the continued presence of those extra numbers for twenty years. Therefore, the district must also be officially recognized as a war-affected area which requires the institution of development measures. These measures should be designed to benefit both the displaced community and the host community.

10. It is important to address the needs of the many thousands of northern Muslims who remain in Puttalam. To ensure that they are not disenfranchised by their decision to stay back—especially if cluster polling is no longer practiced—they should be informed of the advantages of registering as voters in Puttalam.

11. Assurances should be given that this population will not lose out on future compensation measures—if any—if they decide to register as voters in Puttalam.

12. Muslims feel neglected and forgotten by the government. They feel that this neglect is due to the fact of being a minority community. In the post-war context, the state should consider the manner in which it treats its minorities and should take minority representatives’ perspectives into consideration when designing assistance schemes.

13. The government and the NGOs must engage in confidence- and trust-building measures between the Muslims and the Tamils in the north to minimize ethnic tensions that may arise when Muslims return to the north. The north has been mono-ethnic for twenty years, and many from the younger generation of Tamils neither know nor recognize Muslims and their right to return to the north. Religious and community leaders of both communities should be encouraged to meet in order to facilitate the amicable and peaceful coexistence of both communities.

14. The voting rights of displaced Muslims should be assured. Currently those applying for the vote in the Jaffna or Mannar district, but with an address in Puttalam, are disqualified. Measures need to be taken to ensure that new generations of northern Muslims do not become disenfranchised due to the displacement.

15. Currently cluster polling has been discontinued. This decision should be revisited after a proper assessment of returning numbers has been conducted and the return experience of Muslims—where they maintain links with both Puttalam and the north—has been taken into account. The Commission recommends that cluster polling be continued for a further three years until the resettlement process reaches some momentum and more northern Muslims
make decisions about either return to the north or permanent settlement in Puttalam and elsewhere.

16. The Commission has come across a variety of problems linking the northern Muslims’ protracted displacement and issues of land. The Commission recommends that the government take necessary measures to address the many conflicts that prevail over land. Measures must be taken to amend current land laws as necessary. Measures should also be taken to grant ownership to those holding permits. Furthermore, rights of inheritance must be recognized.

17. Land grants should be made to returning northern Muslim families, taking into account the natural increase that has taken place during protracted displacement. If land is not available in the villages from which northern Muslims originate, then alternative land of a similar nature (i.e. land suitable for agriculture) should be made available to them. When such alternative land is found, Muslims should be resettled in large community groups so that single families do not feel isolated and communities do not lose their social networks through resettlement.

18. In terms of reparation for losses, a policy must be formulated, in keeping with international standards currently in operation with regard to reparation.

NGOs, INGOs and UN Agencies

19. It is important to recognize the dire conditions of the welfare centers in Puttalam, and NGOs should consider Puttalam a priority area. There is some aid fatigue in relation to Puttalam, but it should not be forgotten that many people in the welfare centers in Puttalam still live without toilets and access to drinking water.

20. Psychosocial services need to be improved in Puttalam.

21. The local community leaders—both northern Muslim and host—must be given some training in conflict resolution and mitigation.

22. Clean water and sanitation should be provided to all those in the area who do not have access to such services.

23. Livelihood support should be provided to the poor displaced and to the host communities of Puttalam. Greater employment opportunities in agriculture and fishing should be created for all communities in Puttalam.

24. Training should be provided in human rights and women’s rights.
25. UNHCR funds cash grants only for those rendered IDP after 2008. This practice is troubling and goes against all internationally accepted principles of non-discrimination. The international response to IDPs should not be discriminatory.

26. NGOs should design assistance programs for returning northern Muslims in ways that take their particular experience seriously. Working with northern Muslims should not be dismissed as “difficult” purely because their experience does not conform to the implementation requirements of a “one-size-fits-all” pre-designed aid package.

27. Returning northern Muslim communities need assistance with income generating activities for the period during which they cannot cultivate their paddy fields. (They asked for assistance with tube wells for lift irrigation to conduct onion and chilli cultivation.)

28. School children need assistance to continue attending school in an area where the transport system is only just beginning to function. They need either a regular bus service or a bicycle. The lack of such assistance contributes to the increase in the number of dropouts.

29. Drinking water and sanitation continue to be a problem in many areas to which northern Muslims return. They need wells and toilets.

To the Muslim Political and Civil Society Leadership

1. The Muslim leadership should be better engaged in publicising the northern Muslim expulsion.

2. When issues faced by Muslim communities are shared by other communities, attempts should be made to articulate such issues on a common platform. It is important to encourage strategic partnerships for activism.

3. Tensions between the host and IDP communities reached an alarming intensity during the period when the Commission wrote its report. The Muslim leadership and community organizations should take measures to address and mitigate these tensions.

4. The Muslim political leadership should take measures to avoid exacerbating tensions between the Muslims and their neighbours in Puttalam and the north. The northern Muslims face great difficulties on their return. Greater support and assistance are required from the larger Muslim community in the country.

5. The Muslim leadership should not be seen to be advocating for Muslim return alone. The civil society Muslim leadership, in particular, should find ways of working with the Tamil leadership in the respective areas and fostering a culture of collective work and coexistence.
Appendix 1

List of Abbreviations

ACJU – All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama
ACMC – All Ceylon Makkal Congress
BC – Birth Certificate
CCFD – French Catholic Committee Against Hunger & for Development
CID – Criminal Investigation Department
CPA – Centre for Policy Alternatives
CTB – Central Transport Board
CTF – Community Trust Fund
DMO – District Medical Officer
DS – District Secretariat /District Secretary
ECOSOC - Economic and Social Council
EPDP – Eelam People’s Democratic Party
EPRLF – Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front
E-ROS – Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students
GA – Government Agent
GS – Grama Sevaka
HC – Host Community
HSZ – High Security Zone
ICES – International Centre for Ethnic Studies
ICRC –International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTJ –International Centre for Transitional Justice
IDP – Internally Displaced Persons
JEDB – Janatha Estates Development Board
JVP – Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna
LLRC – Lessons Learnt & Reconciliation Commission
LST – Law & Society Trust
LTTE – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MOH – Medical Officer of Health

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MP – Member of Parliament
MWDF – Mannar Women’s Development Foundation
NGO – Non Governmental Organisation
NPC – Northwestern Provincial Council
NUA – National Unity Alliance
OPD – Outpatient Department
PEG – Productive Enterprise Grant
PLOTE – People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam
PS – People’s Secretariat
RAAF – Research & Action Forum for Social Development
RDF – Rural Development Foundation
SLFI – Sri Lanka Foundation Institute
SLFP – Sri Lanka Freedom Party
SLMC – Sri Lanka Muslim Congress
SLR – Sri Lankan Rupees
SNDM – Secretariat for Northern Displaced Muslims
TELO – Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization
TULF – Tamil United Liberation Front
UAF – Unified Assistance Scheme
UC – Urban Council
ULI – Unity Lanka International
UN – United Nations
UNP – United National Party
VOG – Visiting Obstetrician & Gynaecologist
VTC – Vocational Training Centre
WBHS – World Bank Housing Scheme
WFP – World Food Programme
YMMA – Young Muslim Men’s Association
Appendix 2

Commission Mandate

Citizen’s Commission to Investigate the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province by the LTTE in October 1990


Terms of Reference and Planning Document

1. The History of the Expulsion

a. The different Experiences of the Different Districts. To be collected after brief focus group discussions with people from each of the districts in order to identify the kinds of experiences that have to be recorded.

b. The State and its role during and after the expulsion- did it perform its duty towards its citizens? This information is to be collected from discussions with community leaders from the 5 districts.

c. Media Reporting on all three languages about the expulsion. Was it sufficient? Desk Research.

d. Why did the expulsion happen? Talk to the LTTE? Or look at Tamil nationalist writings on the subject? Web search, archives.

Note: Most people expelled from the north were farmers and fisherfolk. This must be emphasized. Tamil nationalists’ claims that they were itinerants that arrived there as traders is not accurate. (Not to say that that would then justify the expulsion) we think that this will emerge through the conversations with leaders of the five districts. Much of the above will also be covered by life history narratives. We will have an equal number of narratives from men and women, and will also look into ensuring regional representation.

2. The Experience of Displacement. Illustrate the current conditions amongst which they live, with an emphasis on locating what is unique to the experience as well as what is common to displacement experiences throughout the country.

a. Women’s Perspective – talk to partners and advisory group about the nature of the experiences that we should capture and the case studies of these experiences.

- Reproductive health issues. Lack of facilities, lack of information, no access to clinic etc.
- Early Marriage
- Child abuse, if any- examples of early sexualisation
- Women and work
- Violence against women
b. Perspective of Youth
   To be collected through focus group discussions, in relation to the following topics.
   - Education
   - Employment- for boys and girls
   - Hobbies
   - Return – fears about future conflict, living with the Tamil community,
   - Changes in youth culture

c. Refugee–host community relations- refugee community perspective. Members of Tamil and Sinhala displaced communities will also be interviewed when necessary.
d. Refugee–host community relations - Host community perspective. Tamil and Sinhala host communities will also be interviewed for comprehensive coverage of the issue.
e. Disenfranchisement of sections of the community.
f. No access to jobs in the area due to voter list issues.
g. Some have managed to succeed and build prosperous lives for themselves.
h. Language problem –
   - Case studies regarding health and language.
   - Some case studies regarding state communications all being in Sinhala.
i. Health Conditions-
   - mental health issues
   - The increase in heart conditions, diabetes, asthma
   - limited access to health care
   - health conditions as a consequence of the environment in which some camps are located
j. Living in dispersed population groupings—no longer with those of the same village or even district. The displacement has destroyed community.
k. The worst conditions that prevail in the camps right now. Alabkudah B, Saltern 1.
   - Secure a photo record of conditions.
   - Sanitation/water
   - Cramped conditions.

l. The conflict between different groups of displaced persons due to the unequal and politicized access to resources.
m. We have to find a way to articulate loss of cultural values, and practices such as lullabies, forms of poetry etc. We also have to record Family heirlooms, objects of value that have been brought back.
3. **Expectations for Return and Recommendations for Compensation.**
   
a. Experiences of return: State aided resettlement, return without state aid, limitations in terms of return, current state policy on northern Muslim return.

   b. The issue of land.
      
      - Current state land laws and consequences for the northern Muslims at point of return.
      - LTTE’s land laws (no longer relevant but important historical detail)
      - Re-allocation of land under the LTTE, and the current consequences. Case studies
      - Muslims’ place in current plans for the northern province.

   c. How must twenty years of life in Puttalam be thought about when planning for return?

   d. What guarantees should there be (from the state and the LTTE) to facilitate return?

   e. What sort of political option will facilitate return and long-term settlement for Muslims?

   Note: The above areas (d) and (e) were drafted during the presence of the LTTE and may not be relevant, given the recent military defeat of the LTTE. Some have argued, however, that we have to acknowledge and document the fact that Muslim and Tamil communities do not know each other any longer and do not have a memory or shared practice of living as neighbours.

4. **What has been done so far for the community? Is it adequate?**
   
a. M.H.M. Ashraff’s assisted settlements in the mid-1990s

   b. The World Bank Housing Project

   Note: Commission will meet political parties. One of the issues to be covered at the meetings will be what the politicians did for the expelled people. Ask all political parties regarding their position on the northern Muslim expulsion and what they intend to do about it.

   This is a working document and is upgraded after each advisory group/planning, and Commissioner meeting and Commission hearing. In soft copies the file name will indicate relevant date of document.
Appendix 3

Questionnaires

Citizen’s Commission to Investigate the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province by the LTTE in October 1990

Topics for a Life Story: General format for testimony collection

Use this as a guide for yourself only. You don’t have to have answers to the questions in the order that they are asked here. Just make sure that they are all referred to at some point in their story. You can use these questions to restart the conversation if it stops at any time.

1. Early life in the North with parents and brothers and sisters
   a. Family background – grandparents, elderly aunts, uncles, and their influence in your life
   b. Parents, where were they from? Their work, their influence in your life
   c. Brothers and sisters
   d. Childhood friends and neighbours. Did you have friends from different communities?
   e. What were those friendships like? Do you know where they are now?
   f. Games played as children, and childhood journeys. For example, did you visit relatives in distant places outside your village, like Puttalam, Colombo or Batticaloa?
   g. What sort of school did you go to? Up to which grade did you attend school? What was your school like? Who were your teachers? Were they from the same village? Where did you get your religious education—in school or at a Madrasa? What did you want for your future when you were a child?
   h. Everyday life at home during your childhood- who did the cooking and grocery shopping at home? What were your favourite foods? What were mealtimes like?
   i. Special occasions – weddings, festivals, coming of age rituals for girls and boys, and funerals. What were they like in your native area during your childhood?
   j. Your native area - was it a village(big/small), or town? How many mosques? How many schools? Who were the village leaders and religious leaders during that time?
   k. Cultural life – religious life,
   l. Leisure- songs, poetry, drama, and dance.

2. Working Life
   a. What sort of work did you do? (Inside and outside the home, paid and unpaid)
Appendix 3

b. Who taught you how to do this work? Was it your parents, or did you have to go somewhere to learn it?
c. Who were the people with whom you worked? Have any friendships with colleagues lasted?
d. What was working in the north like when the LTTE started to become stronger? How did they affect what you did?

   a. Where is your husband /wife from? Is he/she from your village or some place outside?
b. Who arranged the marriage?
c. How do you and your partner share the household work, like managing the household budget, child care, deciding on children’s education, and decisions that affect the family?

4. The Expulsion
   a. How old were you in 1990?
b. Were you married? For how long were you married? How many children did you have at the time?
c. How did you find out that people had to leave?
d. How did you leave? With whom did you leave?
e. What things did you carry with you?
f. What things did you leave behind?
g. What was the journey like?
h. Did you have any interaction with the LTTE? Did you have any interaction with the military?
i. Who helped you?
j. For how long did you expect to leave?

5. Life outside the north
   a. Tell us about your arrival here. Where did you go at first? Who helped you?
b. At what point did you come to where you are now?
c. What sort of work do you do here/did you do here?
d. What has life been like in this place?
e. Do you know your neighbours? Are they from your village?
f. What happened to children’s education? What happened to your family property in the north after the expulsion? Did you own land there? How much land did you own, and whose name was it in? What happened to that land?
g. What have been the developments in your family since you got here? How many children were born? How many children started/finished their education? How many got married? How many grandchildren have been born?

h. What, if any, have been your interactions with people from the host community?

i. Have you been back?

j. In your opinion, how has the northern Muslim community changed since the expulsion?

k. What are your thoughts and expectations for the future of you and your family?

Semi-structured questionnaire for researchers interviewing host community members.

We are documenting the expulsion of Muslims from the northern province, and, as part of that documentation project, we want to find out the perspective of the people who welcomed them in 1990 and among whom the northern Muslims have been living for the past 20 years. It is for this reason that we have come to speak with you.

1. Please provide some information about yourself.
   a. Name
   b. Age
   c. Sex
   d. Educational level.
   e. Type of association with members of other communities – northern Muslims, Sinhala/Tamil neighbours etc. Please mention both formal associations (groups, committees, businesses, relatives by marriage) and informal connections (friends, neighbours, etc.)

2. Can you tell me about your family history?
   a. What are your mother’s and father’s native areas?
   b. Where in Puttalam do you and most of your family members live?
   c. What sort of income generation work do you do? What is your job?
   d. What were your father’s income generating activities?
   e. How many family members are involved in income generation activities?

3. If you do recall, please tell us about the time of the arrival of the northern Muslims. [This section is to be answered only by respondents over 30 years of age, and then only if they answer “yes” to question (a)]
   a. Were you a resident of Puttalam when the IDPs arrived? (Continue with questions in this section if the answer is yes).
b. If so, do you remember how you heard about it?
c. Where did they first come to?
d. How was it decided about where they would go?
e. Were you involved with any of the early work associated with their living arrangements, food provision, and schools for their children?

4. Economic Life: The sudden arrival of a large number of persons in the area is sure to have brought about many significant changes to the economic life of the area. Can you tell us a little bit about the economic changes that have taken place?
   i. What new income generating activities have become part of the area in the past twenty years, as a result of the northern Muslim presence?
   ii. How has land ownership changed as a result of their arrival?
   iii. How has the cost of living changed as a result of northern Muslim arrival?
   iv. Has state resource allocation to the area changed after the arrival of northern Muslims?
   v. How do limited resources get distributed?
   vi. What sorts of jobs do northern Muslims engage in, in your area?
   vii. What sorts of businesses do northern Muslims run in your area?

5. Cultural Activities

Is there a difference between the culture of northern Muslims and that of the Muslim host community? If yes, what are these differences?
   i. Marriage customs
   ii. Dowry customs
   iii. Child rearing practices
   iv. Women and Education
   v. Women and Work

f. Is there much mixing between northern Muslims and the host community?


h. In terms of the spoken language, what are the most important differences between the northern Muslims and Puttalam Muslims?

6. Educational Activities: How have the educational facilities in Puttalam changed after the arrival of northern Muslims?

   a. Has the number of schools increased?
   b. Do students from the host and displaced communities attend the same schools?
   c. The number of students entering university from the area—has this number increased in the last twenty years?
d. Is there competition for university places between northern Muslims and the host community?

e. Do all students who complete O/Level and A/Level education have access to employment opportunities in the area?

f. What sorts of employment do they find?

g. Do young people leave the area for employment purposes?

h. Who leaves, and where do they go?

7. Political Activities

a. Do the northern Muslims and the Muslims from Puttalam have different political affiliations?

b. What are these affiliations?

c. How have these affiliations impacted relations between the communities?

8. The Future

Currently the situation in the north has changed drastically. The defeat of the LTTE means that the northern Muslims do have the possibility of returning to the north.

a. What is your opinion about northern Muslim return?

b. Do you think they should go back?

c. What percentage do you think will go back?

d. What do you think will be the consequences for the Puttalam area if they were to leave?

9. Conclusion

What are the advantages of having northern Muslims in Puttalam?

What are the disadvantages?
Focus Group Discussion with Youth

Topics to be covered

1. The expulsion experience
2. Resettlement
3. Education
4. Employment
5. Going back to the native village
6. Marriage (Dowry)
7. Leisure & Hobbies

Structured Questionnaire used for Community Activist

1. Please tell us about the circumstances in which you left your village.
2. We heard that the entire district was displaced a few years before the expulsion. Is that correct?
3. What percentage of people went back that first time?
4. What can you tell us about how people left from your village during the expulsion?
5. Can you tell us your experience of being displaced from your village?
   a. Where did you first live?
   b. What were the consequences, in terms of education, for you and your brothers and sisters?
   c. Can you tell us about your parents and their income generation activities and levels?
   d. Do you know of any health related experiences for the older generation?
6. Where does most of your family (including extended family) live at present?
7. Where do most people from the north live at present?

1. The Community

From your experience of working for the welfare of the community and heading a large organization working for the community, what, in your opinion, have been the main consequences of the expulsion? These can be both negative and positive consequences.

1. Education
2. Health
3. Economic development
4. Place in civil society
5. Community representatives engaging in politics
6. Political representation for the community
7. Employment in state sector, private sector, and NGO sector
8. Psycho-social wellbeing of community
9. Place of women in the community
10. Religious awakening in the community
11. Attachment of community to Puttalam.

2. Return and Resettlement

This is an important moment in history because the war has ended and a new era is about to begin.

Before we approach questions about the current resettlement process, can you tell us about the following aspects?

1. What were the other historical moments in which people attempted to go back—to their original districts (the ceasefire is one example)?
2. What were the limitations to resettlement at those times?
3. What percentage was able to go back and live in the north despite problems?

3. Current resettlement

1. Please give us some background to the government position on northern Muslim resettlement since the war ended in 1990.
   a. What was it like when Minister Rishard was in the Resettlement Ministry?
   b. What was it like when Minister Milroy Fernando took over the Ministry?
2. What numbers have returned to date, according to your understanding?
3. Can you tell us about their situation in terms of the following aspects:
   a. Shelter
   b. Livelihoods
   c. Health and Sanitation
   d. Children’s education
   e. Mine clearance
   f. Access to deed lands
   g. Access to permit lands
   h. Government assistance with above
   i. Situation of returned women
   j. Situation of women still living in Puttalam and elsewhere with husbands who have returned to the north
4. With regard to people’s attachment to Puttalam,
   a. How many (in terms of a percentage) do you think will return?
   b. Why will some people want to go and others want to stay?
   c. Do you think the entire population should leave? Will that happen?
   d. If people decide to stay behind, what sorts of facilities, changes in laws, assistance programs, and compensation programs will be necessary for them to stay behind?
   e. Do you think people who stay should register as Puttalam residents? What are the reasons for your answer?

5. With regard to the situation of women, would it be better for women to stay or to return? Provide reasons for your answer. Please comment with regard to the following aspects.
   a. Education
   b. Freedom of movement
   c. Ownership of property
   d. Access to employment
   e. Freedom to marry without the burden of dowry

6. If there is any planning for compensation, what sorts of measures should the government take, and what issues should the government take into consideration in giving compensation?
   a. Loss of education
   b. Livelihood

 Specifications for testimonies from those who were children at the time of the expulsion.
 Age of person: 12-15 years at the time of the expulsion.
 1. What do you remember of your native place? Was it a small village, large village or town?
 2. What was life like there? What were the cultural events, opportunities for play, prayers, and religious education
 3. Do you remember the school you attended? What was it like?
 4. Do you remember the LTTE? What did you think about them at that time?
 5. Do you remember the expulsion? Can you tell us how it happened?
 6. Can you explain what your parents did during that time? What did they do to find transport, food, etc., and to look after you?
 7. Tell us a little bit about the journey.
 8. What was it like when you arrived in the place, Puttalam or elsewhere?
 9. What were the surroundings like?
10. Do you remember the people who helped you? What kind of help did you receive from them?
11. Where did you live?
12. Tell us a little bit about the very first days in the camps.
13. What were the problems that you faced with regard to health and hygiene during those first days of displacement?
14. How was food provided? How did you take care of your hygiene, cleanliness, and use of toilets?
15. What did you do about your studies? What was the school like?
16. What is your educational level today? To what extent do you think the expulsion influenced your education?
17. What has been your relationship with the host community?
18. Do you plan to return to the north? What do your husband/wife plan to do if you go back?
19. If you plan to stay back, can you give details about your decision? What sorts of job/educational/religious/social opportunities does Puttalam have for you?
20. What has been the most disturbing thing that has happened to you because of the expulsion?
21. What has been the most beneficial thing that has happened to you because of the expulsion?
Appendix 4

Commissioners' Profiles

1. **Dr. M.S.M. Anes** is the Head of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology at University of Peradeniya. He is also a native of Puttalam.

2. **Dr. Cathrine Brun** is an associate professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway. Her work in Sri Lanka goes back to 1994 which was the first time she came to Puttalam and met the Muslims displaced from the north. She has published widely on the Sri Lankan situation, and is the author of the book on Northern Muslims “Finding a place. Protracted displacement and local integration in Sri Lanka” (Social Scientists’ Association, Colombo, 2008).

3. **Chulani Kodikara** is an Associate at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) in Colombo. She has a LLB from the University of Colombo and an M.A. (with Distinction) in Governance and Development from the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. She is the author of “Muslim Family Law in Sri Lanka: Theory, Practice and Issues of Concern to Women”, published by Muslim Women’s Research and Action Forum, 1999, and the co author of “Women and Governance in Sri Lanka” (with Kishali Pinto Jayawardena) ICES 2003.

4. **U.L. Abdul Majeed** is a retired judge of the High Court in Sri Lanka.

5. **Dr. Devanesan Nesiah** currently works as a consultant to the Centre for Policy Alternatives. Dr. Nesiah has served as the Government Agent (G.A.) of Jaffna, Mannar, and Batticaloa, and as the Secretary in two government ministries. He has also been Head of the Policy Analysis Unit of the Sri Lanka Institute for Development Administration (SLIDA) and the Chair of the Human Rights Commission Committee of Inquiry into Disappearances.

6. **Dr. E. Santhirasegaram** qualified as a medical doctor from the University of Colombo and presently works on synthesizing theoretical models to explain biological interactions with magnetic fields. He is the author of “AIDS – Scientific Concepts & a Philosophical Inquiry” and “Heart Attack: Prevention & Treatment”. Dr. Santhirasegaram renders yeoman service to the people of Puttalam as the only accessible medical practitioner.

7. **Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe** is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the Department of Sociology at the University of Colombo in Sri Lanka. Dr. Samarasinghe has a B.A and Masters in Clinical Psychology from Universite Rene Descarte, Sorbonne, France, and a PhD in Psychology from Universite De Bretagene Occidenale.
8. **A. Javid Yusuf** is a lawyer by profession. Apart from practicing in the Sri Lankan courts, including the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, for 16 years, he has also served as Sri Lanka’s ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 1995 to 1998, as a special Envoy of the President to the U.A.E in 2000, and as a Senior Advisor on Arab and Islamic Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

9. **Dr. Nimalka Fernando** is an Attorney-at-law and a women’s rights activist, and is the head of International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR).
Appendix 5

Commission Statement on Abduction and Murder of Pattani Razeek's
Managing Trustee of Community Trust Fund

The Commissioners’ and staff would like to express their condolences to the family of Mr. Pattani Razeek Managing Trustee of CTF. It is with great sadness that members of the staff and management of the LST attended the funeral of Mr. Pattani Razeek, who went missing/ was abducted in February 2010. The Commission strongly condemns the killing of this human rights defender and respected member of the community and is disturbed by the fact that the investigation into his disappearance and death was delayed for so long. The Commission also appreciated the manner in which the funeral was concluded in Sameeragama, Puttalam, without incidents despite the many rumours and allegations that were circulating at that time.

There have been allegations of political interference in the investigation, and if this is indeed the case, we strongly condemn such interference. It is necessary that the authorities investigate all avenues of culpability in the case and see that justice is done. Additionally we hope that the case will be expedited and the perpetrators punished in keeping with the law. It is only fitting that the case is concluded speedily and the family is given some relief and closure after the harrowing 500+ days that they had to spend without knowing Mr. Razeek’s fate.

The Commission is aware that this incident of personal criminality and possible institutional corruption is being understood by some as a problem between the host and displaced communities. Elements within both communities may capitalize on this tragic event for motives that have little to do with the well being and safety of either community. The Commission is aware, from the work that it has done among the northern Muslims that the community by and large are grateful to the host community for the welcome extended to them when they first arrived. The Commission from its engagement with the host community recognizes the difficulties that the host community has had to undergo as a result of the sudden influx of northern Muslims twenty years ago and the minimal assistance by the state to support such a large and sudden increase of people in the area. The Commission is also aware that despite the differences that have arisen from time to time the two communities have been able to coexist amicably with only minor incidents. It is to the credit of the leadership of both communities that this amity has been maintained. We urge both communities to continue to regard each other with the respect that they have long maintained. Mr. Razeek was known for his commitment and work with the northern Muslims and many in the community respect his memory and are shocked by and mourn his death. The Commission urges all parties concerned to not let this terrible criminal act by a few individuals damage the good relationship between the communities.
The Commission calls upon the leadership of both communities—particularly the Puttalam Grand Mosque committee on the side of the host community, and civil society and political leaders from among the northern Muslims-- to do their utmost to alleviate the tensions that have emerged. The fact that the two communities have their differences is well known. This is inevitable given the past twenty years where the northern Muslims have been compelled to make a life for themselves in the Puttalam district through no fault of their own, and the host community has been compelled to accommodate the almost doubling of the population of the area and the strain on their space, resources and infrastructure-- also through no fault of their own.

While many northern Muslims have left for the north and many others are planning to leave, it is likely that a large number of northern Muslims will also finally take on residency and voting status in the Puttalam area and settle down. Thereby both communities will benefit for the long term from the economic development, greater interest in education and the spirit of competition that the northern Muslims have brought to Puttalam. The added numbers will bring the much needed increase in resource allocations to the area as well. In this context it is essential that the northern Muslim vs host community difference that is being mobilized at this time is not permitted to take on an unfavorable hue.

The abduction and killing of Mr. Razeek is a terrible, inhuman criminal act and it is essential that the utmost is done to bring all those involved to justice. Care should be taken that the issue is not politicized by elements of either the northern Muslim community or the host community in a manner that unduly damages the relations between the Muslim communities in Puttalam as a whole and does nothing to further the investigations into the case. Efforts should be made instead to ensure that the investigation is carried out and justice is done.

*The Citizen’s Commission on the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province is an initiative of the Law and Society Trust and three northern Muslim partner organizations to document the 1990 expulsion of Muslims from the north by the LTTE, the twenty years of their displacement, and the experiences of return.*
Appendix 6

Petition to the President on Mannar Puttalam Road,
Protect Wilpattu Park and the Mobility Rights of Internally Displaced Women

We, the undersigned call on the Government to take immediate action to prevent the destruction of the Wilpattu National Park, while continuing to provide access through the road from Puttalam to Mannar via the park. We believe that through taking corrective measures the Government can ensure that both issues are addressed in order to protect the rights of the expelled Northern Muslims and the ecology and natural heritage of the area.

We call upon the Government to ensure that steps are taken to maintain an access way through the park as it is vital for civilians in the area, especially displaced women and their families. We are requesting restricted access. When the road was reopened in January 2010 to facilitate the Muslim IDPs are turn to Mannar mainland, particularly to Musali DS division, there were many restrictions to protect the park (for instance, the road was kept open for public use only from 6.30am to 3.30pm and the speed limit was restricted to maximum 20km/h. Further, every 100 yards there were navy and military personnel stationed by the road guarding the park. Despite these safeguards, one wonders how it can be argued that the park is exploited and animals are harmed only by the IDPs.

This road provides easy and low-cost access from Puttalam to Musali in Southern Mannar as the alternate route that goes via Medawachchiya takes double the time (Puttalam-Medawachchiya– Marichchukadi 235km vs Puttalam– Wilpattu– Marichchukadi– 77km) and triple the cost (Rs. 320/- to vs. Rs. 100/-). We’d like to point out that a saving of Rs. 220/- per trip makes a considerable difference to the IDPS who are struggling to have one meal a day- the saving means they can have an extra meal, especially after the destruction from the recent floods which also affected areas in main land Mannar.

On humanitarian grounds, we are appealing to the Government and the Wildlife Authorities to allow reasonable use of this old Mannar Road. We are not requesting that a new high way is built through the park and are contend to use the existing road. We support the handing over of the administration of the park to the relevant wild life authorities, while at the same time provide access to IDPs. Before the closure of this road in May 1985, people utilized this road while the guards appointed by the park authorities and during the internal armed conflict, the military, over saw the use of this road by the population of these areas.

A women’s group has been accessing the road a few times since it was reopened in January 2010. On a couple of visits, elderly women who had lived in the adjoining villages accompanied the members of the women’s group. These visits have helped us understand the importance of the road, especially from the perspective of women, since the population most affected by the closure of the road are women and children. Though the temporary closure of this road due to the rain in September 2010 put an end to such visits, the women’s group has
sufficient information to demand the mobility rights of the IDP women and their families. The narratives and experiences of IDP women are highlighted below:

It was the Muslims from Musali division in Mannar who began to return to their places of origin (Musali) from Puttalam, where they lived with as IDPs for more than two decades. This was made all the more possible because the Wilpattu (or old Mannar) road was reopened after about thirty years. Access to their places of origin via this road made it possible for them to return, with the belief that they have mobility between Puttalam and Musali. It was a historical moment for the women to have mobility via old Mannar road between the set two places that they are comfortable to move around and feel safe.

Basic facilities like water, shelter, sanitation, health and education are not available in the resettlement areas, including the interiors of Musali. Pregnant women and women with small children under go immense suffering and face difficulties to meet their exist entail needs when they returned to their places of origins. Hence, there turn of the entire family is taking longer than expected with some family members, most often the men folk and also some women, moving to the resettlement areas while the children remain in Puttalam while the educational facilities in the return areas are being reconstructed. Thus, the road has become a crucial means through which access basic services. Spending an additional Rs. 220/- on a regular basis is beyond their means, especially when their livelihoods have not yet been restored. More over, traveling via the longer route is impossible for a pregnant woman, especially if she is in her early or later months of pregnancy. Hence, her right to mobility is denied with the closure of the road. Another concern is increasing snake bites since there settlement areas are infested with snakes and closure of the road would restrict the ability of the IDPs to have quick access to medical treatment.

Since the mobility of women has been restricted by the temporary closure of the road, women have become more dependent on the male members of their families resulting in there enforcement of traditional norms and gender roles, in the form of women staying back at home to look after house hold work while men have mobility and access to resources. Women’s safety is once again at risk, given that most male members are away from weeks from Puttalam camps to resettlement areas in Musali in order to rebuild their livelihoods and houses.

Another aspect that affects the women the most is the lack of support structures, such as neighbours and relatives, in the resettled areas. For example, a single woman living with her children in the resettled area, used to have support from her relatives living in Puttalam who visited each other frequently when the road was open. This is no longer possible and single women have been once a gain place in a vulnerable category.

We are greatly perturbed by reports in the media that the Wilpattu Park is being destroyed as a result of illegal felling, mining and the construction of new roads through the park. Wilpattu Park is a unique habitat for both fauna and flora and needs to be protected. As people of the are a were cognize its value. We call on the Government to take steps to ensure the Park is not further destroyed. We feel that a balance has to be and can be found between the demands
of the people of the area and nature by providing reasonable access through one road through the park. Access roads through national parks are not unusual either in Sri Lanka or internationally and we fully recognize that measures will have to be taken to ensure that the wild life and the forest are not negatively impacted by the movement of civilians.

While reiterating the right of access through the road, women’s groups have no objection to place limitations, as required, regulating the access in terms of nature of vehicles and time of opening of the road.

After twenty years of displacement and living and suffering in welfare camps in Puttalam the Northern Muslim community has started moving to their places of origins and access through this road is one critical step to support this process and allow them to exercise and enjoy their rights!

Dated: March 13th 2011

Signatories:
Jensila Majeed (Community Trust Fund- Vavuniya, Puttalam and Mannar)
Juwairiya Mohideen (Unity Lanka International- Puttalam)
Priyadarshini Thangarajah (Women’s Action Network)
Luies Rebekka (Women Rural Development Society Chavatkaddu- Mannmar)
Edward Lourdsmereny (Women Rural Development Society Eluthoor Mannar)
Jeyaram Junisha (Women Rural Development Society Uppukulam North Mannar)
Athisayarajah Sugeevini (Women Rural Development Society Chavatkaddu-Mannar)
Vijayakumar Mery Rubitta (Women Rural Development Society Santhipuram-Mannar)
Michel Pathima Ranjini (Women Rural Development Society Pannankoddikaddu West-Mannar)
Sharmila Mohamad Hancefa (Jaffna Civil Society for Equality)
Janufa Mohamad Saliy (Tamil Muslim Women’s Forum- Mullaitheevu)
Mahaluxmy Kurushanthan (Mannar Women’s Development Federation)
Shreen Abdul Saroor (Mannar Women for Human Rights and Democracy)
Cayathri Sivamalar (Women’s Action Network)
Srithirtha Kathiravel (Suriya Women’s Development Centre-Batticaloa)
Parameswaran Vijayakumari (Women’s Coalition for Disaster Management- Batticaloa)
Sitrelav Iruthayarani (Voluntary Social Development Organisation for Women-Trincomalee)
Alahendran Renu (Voluntary Social Development Organisation for Women-Trincomalee)
Naheswaran Kanthymathy (Voluntary Social Development Organisation for Women-Trincomalee)
Appendix 6

Rajany Chandrasegaram (Gender Based Violence Working Group RDHS Office- Jaffna)
Jegatheeswaran Praba (Wholistic Health Centre- Jaffna)
Gritharan Thayapari (WDO Nallur- Jaffna)
Udeyani Navaretnam (WDO- Jaffna)
Thevaraja Floria Thayani (Safe the Children SriLanka- Jaffna)
Rasalingam Premalatha (Activist Chavakacheri- Jaffna)
Seeni Mohammed Fathima Fahira (Akkaraipattu Women’s Association- Ampara)
Uthuma Labbi Rihana (Akkaraipattu Women’s Association- Ampara)
Alaharadnam Rama (Akkaraipattu Women’s Association- Ampara)
Appendix 7

Commission Statement on Mannar Puttalam Road through Wilpattu National Park

The Citizens’ Commission on the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province by the LTTE recently completed its second field visit to the North. The Commission conducted sittings in Musali, Nannatan, Mannar and Mannar Town. The commission met with the Bishop of Mannar, the Army Commander of Thalladi, the DS of Musali, the DS of Mannar, and the trustees of the Mannar Grand Mosque. The commissioners traveled by the newly opened Mannar-Puttalam road to Musali.

According to its findings the Commission wishes to issue the following statement.

There has been a considerable amount of furor over the opening of the Mannar-Puttalam Road. The one issue that has not been raised in the discussion is the use of the road by the people living in the areas closest to the road. The issue is especially pertinent to the case of the Northern Muslims.

The Northern Muslims living in large numbers in Mannar and smaller population groups in the other five districts of the North were expelled by the LTTE in 1990. Close to a hundred thousand members of this community have been languishing in resettlement centers in Puttalam, with only the most minor improvements to their lives. In the aftermath of the end of the war there is great hope among the Northern Muslim community of possible return, rebuilding of their villages in Mannar and elsewhere and reestablishing the historical presence of Muslims in the North. The Commission has been repeatedly told of the importance of the road for the Muslims of Mannar and other Northern areas.

The largest concentration of expelled Muslims lived in the Musali DS division, immediately North of Wilpattu. The Mannar-Puttalam road—then a road with restricted access for private vehicles only-- was used by Musali and Mannar residents prior to its closure during the conflict. And its opening has greatly eased the burden of travel time between Mannar-Musali and Puttalam.

From virtually the first encounter that the commission had as it entered Musali from the Wilpattu national park, the road was a subject of discussion for the returning Northern Muslims. The Commission found that the spontaneous and largely unassisted return that is now occurring owes much to the presence of the road. Prior to the opening of the road the journey from Puttalam to Musali required 185 kilometers of travel. After the opening of the road, the distance is only 100 kilometers. (The longer route to Mannar is 210km and to Marichchakada-Musali is 235km whereas the shorter route has shrunk the distance to 143km.
The residents of Musali immediately North of the Wilpattu National park especially need the road since they will otherwise have to first travel north to Medawachchiya and then travel back south to their areas.

During the commission hearings, Northern Muslims repeatedly stated that the road was crucial for their return process. The Commission found that the road is especially important at this very early stage of resettlement where Northern Muslims are foraying into their native places while being compelled to maintain a tenuous link with Puttalam. The Commission found that the Northern Muslim attempts at resettlement are happening with the most minimal assistance and support of the state and in areas where housing and basic infrastructure facilities are lacking. The Northern Muslims, therefore are unable to bring their families—wives and young children—with them at present. Most of the villages have been completely decimated. There are no houses left. The areas are elephant and snake infested, there are limited schools with no proper facilities and health services. The Commission found that most live in temporary shelters and in public buildings. It was clear to the Commission that the easing of travel time had a fundamental impact on the quality of these people’s lives and on assisting to build up the Muslim community in the North.

However, the Commission recognizes the importance of environmental conservation and the threat posed by the precedence that such a government take over of reservation land could mean for the future of wildlife and general environmental protection in the country. It recognizes that the Wilpattu national park is a valued resource in this country and should therefore be protected.

The Commission is also troubled by the presence of an additional coast road and the rumours of a state plan to establish a tourist resort along the protected coastline from Kalpitiya to Silawaturai.

While the Commission is sympathetic to concerns of environmental conservation the Commission recommends an alternative to the complete closure of the road. While conservation of the country’s protected areas is important, the poorest and most marginalized of local populations’ concerns should also be taken into account and accommodated when possible. The Commission recommends that the road remain open and access be granted by special permission to residents of the adjacent areas, and that the usage be limited to a certain time of the day only.

Specific groups should be given access on a limited basis based on their residence and be charged a fee for the use of the road. Park authorities should administer access and no heavy vehicles that could damage the environment and threaten the flora and fauna of the area should be permitted to use the road.

In this regard the commission welcomes the recent intervention by the Northern Muslim community in relation to the case brought by a group of organizations calling for the closure of the road. The Commission has found that the Northern Muslims who were evicted have undergone a tremendous amount of pain in being displaced, and living in Puttalam for almost two decades. At this juncture where they are resettling in their native places, it is only
Appendix 7

reasonable that they are assisted by making the journey less circuitous. Further on principle, while environmental conservation is important, steps that are taken should not unduly burden those already marginalized by historical injustices.
# Appendix 8

## List of Persons who gave Testimonies to the Commission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial Number</th>
<th>Name of the person</th>
<th>Male/Female</th>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>Current location</th>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Aasath Lane, Jaffna</td>
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<td>002</td>
<td>Meera Mohideen Kaleel</td>
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<td>New Moor Street, Jaffna</td>
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<td>003</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>005</td>
<td>J. Ansari</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Main Street, Jaffna</td>
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<td>006</td>
<td>M.A.C. Ismath Inoon</td>
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<td>Naseera Abthul Asees</td>
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<td>026</td>
<td>A.M.A. Azeez (Molvavi)</td>
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<td>Yaseen Kachchu</td>
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<td>Meera Nachiyar</td>
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<td>Rathmalyaya, Puttalam</td>
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<td>F. Fathima</td>
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<td>345</td>
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<td>K.M. Sareefa</td>
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<tr>
<td>349</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>H.M. Abthul Jabbar</td>
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<td>Nadira</td>
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<td>G.M.M. Lareef</td>
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<td>H. Irfana Begum</td>
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<td>A.M. Sahfan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Moor Street, Mannar</td>
<td>Nindany, Puttalam</td>
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<td>391</td>
<td>A.C. Mohamed</td>
<td>Male</td>
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</table>

Appendix 8
## Appendix 9

### List of Commission Sittings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of the Sitting</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participating Commissioners</th>
<th>Participating community</th>
<th>Issues Discussed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30.09.2009</td>
<td>SEDEC Colombo</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe, Dr. Devanesan Nesiah, Dr. M.S.M. Anes and Mr. Javid Yusuf</td>
<td>25 northern Muslims from Colombo</td>
<td>First sitting of the Commission. The expulsion experience in Jaffna and Mannar, as well as resettlement possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.10.2009</td>
<td>Al Mannar, Kalpitiya, Puttalam.</td>
<td>U. L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe</td>
<td>Members from Al- Mannar Settlement camp &amp;</td>
<td>IDP issues with host community, and expectation to return en masse</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.10.2009</td>
<td>Alankuda</td>
<td>U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Women in distress, and conditions of the camps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.10.2009</td>
<td>RDF Office, Palavi, Puttalam</td>
<td>U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe and Dr. M.S.M. Anes</td>
<td>Approx. 35 IDPs…</td>
<td>The expulsion experience of the different districts, Land issues, and problems faced during displacement, such as sanitation, health and education</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.11.2009</td>
<td>Nagavilu, Puttalam</td>
<td>Dr. Cathrin Brun and Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe</td>
<td>Women from IDP community</td>
<td>Women’s perspectives on resettlement, and the limited participation of women in all areas of community life Intense vulnerability of certain women, and political bias towards their issues as a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of the Sitting</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Participating Commissioners</td>
<td>Participating community</td>
<td>Issues Discussed</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.11.2009</td>
<td>Karambe, Puttalam</td>
<td>Dr. Cathrin Brun and Dr. Gameela Samarasingha</td>
<td>Women from IDP community</td>
<td>Women’s issues related to resettlement</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.11.2009</td>
<td>Pulechakulam, Puttalam</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nissiah, Mr. Javid Yusuf, Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed</td>
<td>IDPs preparing for resettlement</td>
<td>Basic needs and the challenges of resettlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.11.2009</td>
<td>Akkaravely, Puttalam</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nissiah, Mr. Javid Yusuf, Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed</td>
<td>IDPs preparing for resettlement</td>
<td>Basic needs and the challenges of resettlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.11.2009</td>
<td>ULI Organization, Puttalam</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nissiah, Mr. Javid Yusuf, Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed</td>
<td>IDPs preparing for resettlement</td>
<td>Basic needs and the challenges of resettlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.11.2009</td>
<td>Madeena Nagar</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nissiah, Mr. Javid Yusuf, Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed</td>
<td>Met Northern Muslim Community in the villages</td>
<td>Challenges faced over the resettlement</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.02.2010</td>
<td>Casimiya College, Puttalam</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Devanesan Nissiah, Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe, Mr. Javid Yusuf and Dr. M.S.M. Anes.</td>
<td>Host Community members including Moulavi Abdulla, Women’s group spoke person Ms. Lareefa who helped organize the sitting</td>
<td>Problems of being hosts for 20 years, as education quota, health services and economic problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.02.2010</td>
<td>RDF, Puttalam</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Devanesan Nissiah, Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe, Mr. Javid Yusuf and Dr M.S.M. Anes.</td>
<td>Youth from host and IDP community</td>
<td>Issues of return, relations between host and IDP communities, and employment opportunities for youth in Puttalam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of the Sitting</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Participating Commissioners</td>
<td>Participating community</td>
<td>Issues Discussed</td>
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<td>20.02.2010</td>
<td>Amman Kovil, Puttalam</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Devanesan Nesiah, Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe, Mr. Javid Yusuf and Dr M.S.M. Anes.</td>
<td>Meeting with the Kovil Kurukkal</td>
<td>Muslims IDPs and the relationship with the Tamil community</td>
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<tr>
<td>09.03.2010</td>
<td>Jaffna GA office, Osmaniya College, Bommuveli Housing Scheme</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Devanesan Nesiah</td>
<td>Jaffna GA Mr. K. Ganesh, Mr. M.S.A.M. Mukthar Principal</td>
<td>Resettlement process and monitoring the development of Osmaniya College</td>
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<tr>
<td>09.03.2010</td>
<td>People’s Secretariat, Jaffna</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Devanesan Nesiah</td>
<td>Meeting with Resettled Men</td>
<td>Resettlement processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.03.2010</td>
<td>Nalluru Kandasamy Kovil, Jaffna Naga Vihara, Bishop House and Jaffna University</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Devanesan Nesiah</td>
<td>Kovil Gurukkal, Naga Vihara High Priest and Bishop including Secretary of the People’s Council of Peace and Fisheries Officer, Vice Chancellor of University</td>
<td>Monitoring the resettlement process, issues related to fishing, and university enrolment</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.03.2010</td>
<td>People’s Secretariat, Jaffna</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Devanesan Nesiah</td>
<td>Meeting with Resettled women</td>
<td>Women’s issues and land issues related to resettlement</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.03.2010</td>
<td>Chavekachcheri, Jaffna</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Dr. Devanesan Nesiah</td>
<td>Chavekachcheri Jummah Mosque Priest Nilafdeen</td>
<td>Resettlement</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.03.2010</td>
<td>Musali, Musali DS Office, Nannathan, Madhu Church, Mannar Mosque</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulani Kodikara</td>
<td>Musali DS, Nannathan Muslims</td>
<td>Monitoring the resettlement process, and the response of the state</td>
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<td>24.03.2010</td>
<td>Musali, Mannar</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulani Kodikara</td>
<td>Koolankulam village</td>
<td>Problems of resettlement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of the Sitting</td>
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<td>Participating Commissioners</td>
<td>Participating community</td>
<td>Issues Discussed</td>
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<td>Errukkalampidy, Mannar</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulania Kodikara</td>
<td>Errukkalampidy returnees</td>
<td>Problems related to resettlement</td>
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<td>25.03.2010</td>
<td>Nannathan, Mannar</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulania Kodikara</td>
<td>Rasool Puduveli Returnees</td>
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<td>Mannar GA Office and Mannar Bishop House</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulania Kodikara</td>
<td>Mannar GA, Mannar Bishop</td>
<td>Problems related to resettlement</td>
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<td>25.03.2010</td>
<td>Moor Street, Mannar</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulania Kodikara</td>
<td>Moor Street Resettled Individuals</td>
<td>Problems related to resettlement</td>
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<td>25.03.2010</td>
<td>Uppukulam, Mannar</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulania Kodikara</td>
<td>Uppulukam Returnees</td>
<td>Problems related to resettlement</td>
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<td>26.03.2010</td>
<td>Thallady, Manthai West, Vattakkandal and Vidathaltheevu</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulania Kodikara</td>
<td>Army Commander Cornel Ariyaratne</td>
<td>Security matters of resettlement, and visiting northern Muslim villages on the way</td>
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<td>05.05.2010</td>
<td>Vavuniya</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulania Kodikara</td>
<td>Mullaitivu and Vavuniya GA</td>
<td>About the ongoing resettlements, and visits to a few resettlement villages</td>
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<td>05.05.2010</td>
<td>Kilinochchi</td>
<td>Dr. Devanesan Nesiah and Ms. Chulania Kodikara</td>
<td>Kilinochchi GA</td>
<td>About the ongoing resettlements, and visits to a few resettlement villages</td>
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<tr>
<td>06.06.2010</td>
<td>Periyamulla, Negombo</td>
<td>Mr. U.L. Abdul Majeed, Ms. Chulania Kodikara, Dr. Nimalka Fernando,</td>
<td>Displaced and Host individuals including youth groups from all</td>
<td>Land issues and difficulties in claiming compensation</td>
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<td>Date of the Sitting</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Participating Commissioners</td>
<td>Participating community</td>
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<td>ULI Organization, Puttalam</td>
<td>Dr. Anes and Dr. Gameela Samarasingha</td>
<td>the communities and the Puttalam Kovil Gurkkal.</td>
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<td>Dr. Nimalka Fernando and Ms. Chulani Kodikara</td>
<td>Women’s Group from IDP Community</td>
<td>The need for resettlement, feelings about the native land, issues of resettlement (including inadequate protection, distance to schools and health hazards)</td>
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<td>Dr. Nimalka Fernando and Ms. Chulani Kodikara</td>
<td>Women’s activists from IDP community</td>
<td>Problems faced by women during the resettlement</td>
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<td>Dr. Nimalka Fernando and Mr. Javid Yusuf.</td>
<td>Resettled Individuals from Vavuniya</td>
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In the aftermath of the ceasefire, many Muslims attempted to return to their native places in the North. The commission received testimony from those that returned to Musali in the Mannar district and Nachchikuda in the Kilinochchi district.

The following are some significant points with regards to return in the aftermath of the ceasefire.

1. Resettlement allowance of Rs. 25,000/- was paid from NECORD for those that came.
2. Land grants were made in certain areas in Mannar to returning Muslims.
3. Government provided funds to build mosque in Nachchikuda. (Buildings were intact after a decade.)
4. In Nachchikuda, people were able to return to their own houses.
5. In Mannar, all buildings were destroyed.
6. A climate of fear and uncertainty prevailed when Muslims returned to the North.
7. There were conflicts over land; areas considered traditional Muslim areas were marked with symbols of the local Tamil community. For instance, Oosimuukathurai became a contested area between the Muslims of Erukulampiti and the Tamils of Palimunai in the Mannar District. The Muslims accused the Tamils of claiming ownership to a traditional Muslim area through building a cross there.
8. Returning Muslims were systematically harassed by the LTTE. Although the stated policy was to welcome Muslim return, in practice this was not the case. A returnee to Nachchikuda described the manner in which he was prevented from engaging in any community activities other than those connected with the mosque. He said that he returned to his hometown in expectation of freedom but failed to find it.
9. In some places in Mannar handbills “appeared” asking Muslims to leave. Although the LTTE denied their involvement they did nothing to reassure Muslims that their security would be guaranteed.
10. Violence and extortion was practiced by the LTTE against the Muslims. One farmer -- Saleem of Puthukudiyanurppu in Mannar-- was killed by the LTTE (for refusing to pay ransom) on October 1st 2004.
11. Muslim in turn protested and attacked the area office of the LTTE in Moor Street, Mannar. The LTTE had vacated the office in expectation of such an attack. Some statements that
the commission received stated that the “people were so angry they would have cut them to pieces.”

12. The LTTE extorted taxes from those attempting to restart livelihood activities in the North. A report from Jaffna indicated that one entertainer was asked to pay 80% of his earnings per night to the LTTE.

13. Significant changes have happened to the landscape and environment during the conflict that will impact people’s livelihoods. For instance, we were told that while Nachchikuda was famous for the export of sea weed prior to the expulsion, there was no sea weed to be found when people returned in 2002. The LTTE had apparently permitted Indian Fisherman to extract the sea weed and there was no longer any to be harvested by local poonagari fisher people. Additionally, coconut estates were no longer baring fruit since the trees were old.

14. Some Muslims that returned were compelled to sell their land. The situation seemed to be bereft of hope (in 2004 and 2005) and none expected that the war would end. Many sold unofficially to the LTTE (without documentation) some sold with documentation.

15. The peace process did not take the concerns of returning Muslims into account.

16. The escalation of violence in post 2005 period compelled many of them to return and be displaced again.

17. The Tsunami of December 2004 and its devastating impact that was followed by the huge and disproportionate aid inflow exacerbated northern Muslims feelings of marginalization. During one of the commission hearings a participant pointed out that the houses they left behind today look like those destroyed by the tsunami. However the assistance that the Tsunami affected began to receive only months after the disaster, these persons have not received 16 years after the expulsion. To this date there is no talk of compensation. The northern Muslims shared the fate of many in the North in not being able to enjoy the peace dividend of the 2002-2005 period. They were unable to return and resettle in their places of origin or to make any plans for future settlement.

18. The host community in Puttalam, where the majority of Northern Muslims now reside, were restive in the context of the ceasefire and wanted the “visiting” population to leave. At that time the conditions under which the population lived in Puttalam were tense and difficult.
Appendix 10

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THE CITIZENS’ COMMISSION
ON THE EXPULSION OF MUSLIMS FROM THE NORTHERN PROVINCE BY THE LTTE IN OCTOBER 1990

The Law & Society Trust together with three northern Muslim partner organizations set up a Citizens’ Commission to investigate the expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province by the LTTE in October 1990.

The objective of the exercise was to produce authoritative documentation of the expulsion and its consequences that is sanctioned by the community, and to list the community’s grievances through a document endorsed by a Commission consisting of eminent civil society actors.

The Commission’s investigations looked into the history of the expulsion, the experience of two decades of displacement, and the problems of resettlement.

Cover Story:
The Baobab tree brought to the island by Arab traders is a symbol of Muslims’ long history in Mannar, especially on Mannar Island. The one featured in the picture was bulldozed by the army during the recent development processes on Mannar Island.

But when we visited in 2011, the tree although fallen on its side, and adorned with a plastic bag, was still alive and growing. We considered the tree to be symbolic of the northern Muslims—their past and their resilience.

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