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Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Research Response Number: LKA33744
Country: Sri Lanka
Date: 19 September 2008

Keywords: Sri Lanka – Freedom of movement – Checkpoints

Questions

1. Can you please provide information on the ease with which people could travel in the east and north of Sri Lanka during 2002, and also in subsequent years until 2006?
2. Please include any information about check points.

RESPONSE

1. Can you please provide information on the ease with which people could travel in the east and north of Sri Lanka during 2002, and also in subsequent years until 2006?
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Sources indicate that travel to the north and east of Sri Lanka was possible between 2002 and 2006 due to the signing of the peace agreement between the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) in 2002. This agreement, whilst not adhered to by either party, at least reduced full scale military activity in then LTTE-held areas, although there was low-level conflict in the Eastern Province caused by the 2004 departure of 'Colonel Karuna' from the LTTE, and the subsequent struggle for control of the area (for background on the LTTE-SLA conflict, the ceasefire, and the resumption of military action, see: 'Sri Lanka conflict' 2008, *Reuters Alertnet*, 1 April
http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/LK_CON.htm?v=in_detail – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 3; and: Human Rights Watch 2007, *Return to War: Human Rights Under Siege*, HRW website, August, pp. 23-24
http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/srilanka0807/srilanka0807webwcover.pdf – Accessed 8 August 2007 – Attachment 4).

Available information suggests that checkpoints are a constant feature of life in Sri Lanka, and that they are more likely to be found around areas of conflict and borders between SLA

and LTTE-controlled areas. As such, many of the towns in this area would be surrounded by checkpoints, notably the eastern areas around Batticaloa, Ampara, Vaharai, Polonnaruwa, and Trincomalee, and the northern areas around Vavuniya, Mannar, and Kilinochchi. Checkpoints are set up on major road routes between town and within towns in conflict areas, and some appear to be permanent while others are set up and removed according to circumstance. A map of Sri Lanka showing the locations of these towns is provided as Attachment 1, and a map of Sri Lanka showing the locations of major permanent government checkpoint as of March 2007 is provided as Attachment 2 (For checkpoints, see: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2003, *Issue Paper: Sri Lanka – Developments since the February 2002 Ceasefire*, IRB website, March http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/ndp/ref/index_e.htm?docid=72&cid=0&version=printable&disclaimer=show – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 7; Human Rights Watch 2006, *Improving Civilian Protection in Sri Lanka: Recommendations for the Government and the LTTE*, HRW website, September, p. 25 http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/srilanka0906/srilanka0906webwcover.pdf – Accessed 19 September 2008 – Attachment 15; and Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *LKA101784.E – Sri Lanka: Security measures in place to control the movement of Tamils between northern and southern regions of the country (August 2005 – September 2006)*, 22 September – Attachment 19; for maps, see: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations Cartographic Section 2007, 'Sri Lanka', UN Cartographic Section website, January http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/srilanka.pdf – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 1; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2007, 'Logistics Map – Operation: Sri Lanka', OCHA website, June http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/srilanka/catalogue/Files/Map%20Centre/Geographic%20Maps/Administrative%20Maps/LK00899_SL_Logistics_final.pdf – Accessed September 2008 – Attachment 2).

Background on ceasefire agreement and conflict in Sri Lanka, 2002-2006

An April 2008 report from Reuters *Alertnet* provides brief background information regarding the 2002 ceasefire between the SLA and the LTTE, on the 2004 split in the LTTE, and on the resumption of open hostilities in mid-2006:

> "A ceasefire was agreed in 2002 and the rebels dropped their demand for an independent state, settling for regional autonomy. But they withdrew from Norwegian-brokered peace talks a year later, saying not enough was being done to improve conditions for Tamils.
>
> The government currently controls the Jaffna peninsula at the far northern tip of the island.
>
> Below that, the Tigers run a de facto state in the northern Wanni forests. Until recently, they had also controlled territory in the east but they lost this to the government after fighting resumed.
>
> …Internal divisions on both sides have stymied negotiations. After the ceasefire Kumaratunga fell out with her government over the peace process and a renegade eastern Tiger commander known as Karuna split from the rebel movement in 2004.
>
> The Tigers say Karuna's fighters have become government-backed paramilitaries. The government denies this.
>
> Tensions rose after Mahinda Rajapakse won presidential elections in late 2005 and promised to take a hard line with the Tigers.

The rebels pulled out of peace talks indefinitely the following April, and in July 2006 the military began advancing on rebel-held territory in the east" ('Sri Lanka conflict' 2008, *Reuters Alertnet*, 1 April http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/LK_CON.htm?v=in_detail – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 3).

An August 2007 Human Rights Watch report titled 'Return to War: Human Rights Under Siege' provides information on the "resumption of major military operations in April 2006" in Trincomalee district, and the resumption of violence in the north in August 2006 resulting in "a closure of the A9 highway, the main north-south arterial road". The conflict subsequently engulfed Vaharai, Batticaloa, Mannar and Vavuniya:

> The resumption of major military operations in April 2006 started a new phase of the conflict. Government forces, which had shelled the Sampur area in the eastern district of Trincomalee after a suicide bomb assassination attempt on Army Commander General Sarath Fonseka in Colombo on April 25, bombed the area around Mavil Aru in the east on July 26, after the LTTE turned off water from a sluice gate. The LTTE responded with a counterattack on the government-controlled, mostly Muslim town of Mutur. On August 11, 2006, the LTTE launched an attack on the Jaffna peninsula leading to a closure of the A9 highway, the main north-south arterial road. LTTE artillery attacked Palaly airbase causing a suspension of flights to Jaffna. The closure of the A9 and air flights, combined with LTTE threats to attack shipping to Jaffna, led to a severe worsening of the humanitarian situation on the peninsula. Only the eventual resumption of food and essential supplies by ship spared the 600,000 Jaffna residents further hardship.

> A government offensive to take over the Sampur area led to waves of displacement from April 2006. The number of displaced from Sampur increased as fighting intensified in August. Many sought shelter in the LTTE-controlled area of Vaharai, on the coastal road between Trincomalee and Batticaloa, but later fled that area when the government defeated LTTE forces there in January 2007. Government troops succeeded in cutting off the LTTE supply route to the strategic port of Trincomalee and thereby struck a major blow to the rebels' hold over the east, which was already considerably weakened following the Karuna split in 2004. The LTTE tried but failed to block the departure of civilians from LTTE areas.

> During the fighting, LTTE forces fired heavy weapons from populated areas, including near displaced persons camps, placing civilians at unnecessary risk. The army often responded with or initiated indiscriminate shelling. On November 8, 2006, this dynamic resulted in the deaths of more than 40 displaced civilians and injuries to nearly 100 others who had sought refuge outside a school. Fearful of continued shelling, more than 20,000 people fled LTTE-territory by walking for days through jungle or risking their lives on overcrowded boats. Several drowned at sea. Many families continue to live in uncertain circumstances in areas under the influence of the Karuna group. In February 2007 the government began using threats and intimidation to force civilians who fled fighting in the east to return home. Government and military officials threatened to cut aid and withdraw security for displaced persons who refused to return, causing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to seek assurances from the government (see Chapter III, "Internal Displacement").

> Since March 2007 a string of firefights and mortar duels accompanied by aerial bombing by the Sri Lankan military in the districts of Mannar and Vavuniya in the north has been inflicting heavy casualties on both sides. The onslaught on the north marks a decisive shift in the theater of fighting, which until then had largely been concentrated in the east (Human Rights Watch 2007, *Return to War: Human Rights Under Siege*, HRW website, August, pp.

21-22 http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/srilanka0807/srilanka0807webwcover.pdf - Accessed 8 August 2007 – Attachment 4).

Freedom House's 2005 *Freedom in the World* report for Sri Lanka, which assesses events of 2004, notes that "the February 2002 ceasefire is still in place and has contributed to somewhat greater freedom of movement and a reduction in human rights violations by security forces in the north and east of the country" (Freedom House 2004, *Freedom in the World - Sri Lanka (2005)*, Refworld website, 20 December http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,FREEHOU,,LKA,,473c5528c,0.html – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 5).

Freedom of movement and checkpoints, 2002-2006

An August 2002 story sourced from *Reuters* and located in the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* reports on the reopening of the A9 highway through LTTE-held areas in the north of Sri Lanka following the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the SLA and LTTE in February 2002. The report also notes that crossing the Omanthai checkpoint between SLA and LTTE-controlled areas "is similar to stepping into another country". The report also states that Sinhalese travellers are permitted to enter LTTE-held areas:

> Sri Lanka's "Highway of Death" is slowly returning to life, transforming a broken artery into a lifeline for hundreds of thousands of minority Tamils.
>
> The highway runs from the centre of the island through jungle territory controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), fighting for a separate Tamil state in the north and east, to northern Jaffna peninsula.
>
> The road is flowing again with thousands of people and tonnes of goods, a result of the peace bid that has given Sri Lanka its best chance to end 19 years of ethnic war.
>
> Just six months ago — before a ceasefire between the government and Tamil Tiger rebels — the A9 highway was blocked by barbed wire and studded with landmines, a physical state that reflected the mistrust between the two sides.
>
> …"This is the first time in 14 years I can go to Jaffna," said S. Jebathasan, a Tamil who was forced by the fighting to flee to Colombo years ago. "I am going up to see my house, to see if it is okay. My neighbours have been looking after it," he said at the Omanthai checkpoint into Wanni.
>
> Two officials from the Tamil Tigers — who say they need a separate state because of discrimination at the hands of the majority Sinhalese — ask visitors if they are Sinhalese or Muslim.
>
> "This is my first visit to Jaffna. I want to see the place. I have got the opportunity because of peace," said Sinhala civilian Mihiri Kumarasingha.
>
> …There is so much traffic along the A9 that the Tigers even have police doing speed checks, using a stopwatch to time a vehicle between two points.
>
> There was also a steady stream of signs warning of mines all the way to Kilinochchi, the main town in the north where the Tigers have their political offices ('Sri Lanka's 'highway of death' returns to life' 2002, *Dawn*, 5 August http://www.dawn.com/2002/08/05/int10.htm - Accessed 16 September 2008 – Attachment 6).

In March 2003, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada assessed the freedom of movement situation in Sri Lanka in an Issue Paper. The paper notes that the re-opened A9 Highway is open only during the day and not on Sundays, and that both the SLA and LTTE operate checkpoints, although the road is open to all. Travellers into LTTE territory are required to obtain documentation at LTTE checkpoints, and the LTTE reportedly levies taxes on goods entering their territories. The IRB report quotes sources suggesting that, in the north and east, checkpoints exist in most government-controlled areas (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2003, *Issue Paper: Sri Lanka – Developments since the February 2002 Ceasefire*, IRB website, March http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/ndp/ref/index_e.htm?docid=72&cid=0&version=printable&disclaimer=show – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 7).

An October 2004 account of a cycling trip around Sri Lanka provides a description of the Batticaloa area as heavily fortified by the military and full of checkpoints. It may be of interest to note that checkpoints are not mentioned anywhere else in this account, although the cyclists did not enter LTTE-held areas in the north:

> Once you've crossed the large and well guarded Mahavelli bridge you enter a different Sri Lanka. There are numerous fortified military camps along the very narrow and quiet road, leading east. There are some well marked mine fields on this section. Beyond the busy village of Velachanai is the coast. Basic accommodation can be found at the villages of Kalkudah and Passekudah. This once was Sri Lanka number one beach resort. All that is left now are the burned out ruins of the hotels and guesthouses. The beach is white, lined with palm trees and completely deserted.
>
> Until Batticaloa military presence is strong. Every junction has a checkpoint surround by barbed wire and mine fields. Heavily armed soldiers patrol the streets. The 30 km road south to Tamil Tigers (LTTE) stronghold Batticaloa follows the coast but you won't see much of the ocean.
>
> South of Kattankudi the minefields disappear and the army is less visible ('Polonnaruwa – Arugam Bay (the East Coast)' 2004, cyclingaroundtheworld.nl website, October http://www.cyclingaroundtheworld.nl/srilanka/re_srilanka.html - Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 8).

Several reports from the pro-LTTE website TamilNet provide information regarding checkpoints, roadblocks, and travel restrictions in Sri Lanka, particularly in the then LTTE-controlled east and north. These districts are home to the majority of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka, and it might be inferred that many of the problems with checkpoints reported by TamilNet involve Tamils rather than Sinhalese travellers. Nonetheless, this is not specified in the reports, which mainly refer to the establishment of new checkpoints, and one report specifically states that a group were prevented from passing a checkpoint in Trincomalee district because they were Sinhalese (for this report see: 'SLA restricts civilian travel to Muttur east' 2005, TamilNet website, 3 November http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=16251 – Accessed 16 September 2008 – Attachment 9).

- An April 2005 report claims that the SLA has installed new checkpoints around Batticaloa and Polonnaruwa:

Sri Lankan armed forces say that they have stepped up security in the district to prevent the escalation of violence. But many local residents and Tamil National Alliance (TNA) politicians charge that Colombo is saying this as a pretext to create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in areas controlled by the Sri Lankan armed forces in Batticaloa.

…Two months ago, Sri Lanka army (SLA) set up a new check point in Welikanda, about 60 kilometres northwest of Batticaloa, on the main highway from the eastern district to Colombo.

People traveling by bus have to disembark and queue up to have their national identity cards checked and their luggage searched here.

SLA checks all civilian vehicles near the Oddamavadi Bridge, 34 kilometres north of Batticaloa. Travelers have to alight from buses here too.

…This is also the Main Supply Route (MSR) for the Sri Lanka army. Liberation Tigers control most of the territory through which the MSR runs. There are sixteen SLA camps between Batticaloa and Welikanda – a distance of about 60 kilometres.

SLA makes spot checks on long distance buses at several places on this road at night. Passengers fear that paramilitaries and robbers could don military fatigues and rob the buses after dark.

SLA used to close the Batticaloa-Polannaruwa road between Oddamavadi and Mannampitiya from six p.m. to seven p.m. before Colombo signed a cease fire agreement with the Liberation Tigers. SLA still closes the road between Batticaloa and Valaichenai where it passed through its garrisons in Mylambaaveli, Kommathurai and Morakkottaanchenai – a distance of 32 kilometres - from six p.m. to seven a.m.

"People traveling from Batticaloa to other parts of the island are now subjected to severe checking at Oddamavadi and Welikanda. They are made to get off buses and wait in queues at these checkpoints. This is a return to the war days when the people of Batticaloa were inordinately and inhumanly harassed in the name of security. ", said Mr. Senathirajah Jeyanandamoorthy, Tamil National Alliance MP for Batticaloa.

…Two weeks ago the Sri Lanka army built a new road block and a check post bunker at Santhiveli, 26 kilometres north of Batticaloa. Traffic has to now pass through this road SLA road block.

Further south in Akkaraipattu, 64 kilometres from Batticaloa, Special Task Force (STF), the elite counter insurgency arm of the Sri Lankan armed forces, has a check post by its camps in the old hospital on the road to Thirukkovil. All vehicles entering the Thirukkovil region are checked and registered here ('Where the truce promise rings hollow' 2005, TamilNet website, 20 April http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=79&artid=14713 – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 10).

- A July 2005 report claims that the SLA subjected civilians "to severe questioning and body search" at checkpoints in the Batticaloa and Amparai districts:

    Sri Lankan Army (SLA) soldiers manning the check points between LTTE controlled and SLA held areas in the eastern districts of Batticaloa and Amparai imposed restrictions on transporting batteries, wires and electric devices from SLA held areas

towards Vaharai and other LTTE held areas in the East since Saturday. Civilians were subjected to severe questioning and body search by SLA, Special Task Force (STF) soldiers and the Police. Security is tightened in Batticaloa, Amparai districts, Police sources said.

All entry points to LTTE held areas in the east were being closely monitored. Each and every individual traveling through the checkpoints are being interrogated and many types of electrical items are being confiscated, sources said.

Civilians travelling through checkpoints in Mankerny, Chenkalady Black Bridge, Batticaloa Manmunaithurai (Boat service) and Kaluwanchikudy bridge complained of rigorous body search and verbal harassment by the soldiers ('SLA bans transporting batteries, wires in Batticaloa' 2005, TamilNet website, 17 July http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=15410 – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 11).

- A September 2005 report claims that the "Mannar Citizens' Committee (MCC) Friday complained…that Mannar town has become a garrisoned city with the deployment of several hundred additional government troops and establishment of new checkpoints and sentries". The report also quotes the MCC claiming that "[c]ivilians are harassed by troops during checking at roadblocks" ('Mannar has become a garrisoned city, says Citizens Committee' 2005, TamilNet website, 17 September http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=15887 – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 12).

- A November 2005 report claims that SLA soldiers prevented civilians from entering the Muttur East region of Trincomalee district "because they were Sinhalese". According to the report, "[s]oldiers told them that they will not allow Sinhalese persons to enter the LTTE held areas without the permission of the defence higher authorities" ('SLA restricts civilian travel to Muttur east' 2005, TamilNet website, 3 November http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=16251 – Accessed 16 September 2008 – Attachment 9).

- A December 2005 article claims that SLA soldiers at Uyilankulam camp "refused entry into the LTTE held Wanni region for about six hundred traders of Nanattan division in the government controlled Mannar district to go to Killinochchi to attend a conference". The report quotes "sources" who claim that "army officers manning had told traders' association representatives that they had to get permission to allow them to enter LTTE area" ('SLA blocks Mannar traders from entering LTTE area' 2005, TamilNet website, 7 December http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=16500 – Accessed 16 September 2008 – Attachment 13).

- A January 2006 report quotes "civil society sources" claiming that the SLA "has constructed three additional checkpoints along the road leading to Vakarai in Batticaloa district and travellers to the Liberation Tigers' controlled area are being subjected to increased harassment during security checks at these checkpoints". According to this report, the same "sources' also claim that "[y]ouths and young women arriving from LTTE controlled area are detained for several hours while their National Identity cards are checked" ('Vakarai residents complain of increased SLA harassment' 2006, TamilNet website, 18 January

– Accessed 16 September 2008 – Attachment 14).

A Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) report from July 2006, located on the Reliefweb website, states of the situation in Trincomalee, Ampara, and Batticaloa, that "[s]earches on vehicles are still ongoing. New checkpoints are being setup and as a result, vehicles are being searched increasingly, including those vehicles belonging to humanitarian agencies" (Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies 2006, 'Sri Lanka: CHA monthly situation report Jul 2006 – eastern province (Ampara, Trincomalee and Batticaloa)', Reliefweb (source: CHA), 1 August http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/YAOI-6SP4AB?OpenDocument&rc=3&cc=lka – Accessed 17 September 2008 – Attachment 22).

A Human Rights Watch report from September 2006 provides information on the ability of Sri Lankan civilians and international NGOs to move through checkpoints in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts, as fighting intensified between SLA and LTTE forces:

> In mid-August, some 35,000 people, primarily Tamils fleeing fighting in Trincomalee district, moved into Batticaloa district. The Sri Lankan military subsequently closed the checkpoints and provided only sporadic access to a very few agencies to access the civilian population in LTTE-controlled areas. By the end of August, only the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross were given permission to provide assistance to the civilian population in the LTTE areas, and then only in direct collaboration with local government officials. Humanitarian agencies estimated that approximately 200,000 permanent residents of Batticaloa district plus about 25,000 displaced persons from outside the district were no longer accessible to the humanitarian agencies. The checkpoints also prevented civilians from crossing into government controlled areas, keeping farmers from taking produce to markets and denying those needing medical care access to hospitals. At the same time, the LTTE tried to prevent displaced persons from going into government-controlled areas by announcing that they were going to shell army positions. As a result some displaced persons later walked through the jungle to reach Valaichchenai on the coast north of Batticaloa town (Human Rights Watch 2006, *Improving Civilian Protection in Sri Lanka: Recommendations for the Government and the LTTE*, HRW website, September, p. 22 http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/srilanka0906/srilanka0906webwcover.pdf – Accessed 19 September 2008 – Attachment 15).

The UK Home Office's November 2007 *Country of Origin Information Report* for Sri Lanka provides information from 2006 on checkpoints and freedom of movement in Sri Lanka, quoting sources including BBC Sinhala, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Reliefweb:

> …On 23 October 2006 *BBC Sinhala* reported that the police in Sri Lanka had opened a series of offices in eastern region to issue special permits to those planning to travel to Colombo. Vehicle owners are to be issued with a permit before leaving the east and are required to hand over the parts of the four-part permit to check points as they travel towards the capital. Travelling time was foreseen to be drastically increased.

> …Following the suicide attack on the Army Commander Lieutenant-General Sarath Fonseka on 25 April 2006, the authorities have returned to pre-ceasefire security arrangements. As a result, many checkpoints have been reinstated on the main roads and in the towns in the North and East or in Colombo, making it particularly difficult for Tamils to travel in government controlled areas. For those who were born in LTTE-controlled areas (this is indicated on the National Identity Card), it is difficult to cross the checkpoints and they face varying levels of harassment…Apart from the insecurity related to the armed conflict, the LTTE has also

restricted movements of civilians out of the LTTE-controlled areas, thus preventing them from moving into government-controlled areas (source: UNHCR).

…Tamils, whose national identity cards are written in Tamil, are instantly segregated at check points for a sometimes lengthy grilling. Members of the majority Sinhalese community have an easier time from the Sinhalese-dominated security forces (source: Reliefweb) (UK Home Office 2007, *Country of Origin Information Report – Sri Lanka*, 15 November, sections 28.12, 28.14, 28.16 – Attachment 16).

A 2007 report from the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee provides information on freedom of movement in Sri Lanka between April 2006 and April 2007:

On 1 September 2006, UNHCR issued a formal demarche to the Government expressing its concerns about lack of humanitarian access to Vakarai and restrictions on civilians' freedom of movement due to cessation of public bus services and the closure of army checkpoints.

…In Mannar, hundreds of Catholic pilgrims who had traveled to Madhu Church for an annual religious festival in August became stranded when the LTTE refused to allow them to return to Jaffna due to the closure of the Madhu and Uyilankulam FDL checkpoints. On 16 August, the ICRC negotiated for the checkpoint at Madhu to be opened for several hours to allow about 300 pilgrims, mainly from the south, to leave. However, the LTTE did not allow 750 pilgrims, most of them from Jaffna, to leave via the Madhu checkpoint as they had entered Madhu with passes from the Muhamalai checkpoint. The pilgrims were stranded until 10 November, despite the fact that the checkpoints at Uyilankulam and Omanthai had been opened intermittently for public movement.

…The FDL checkpoints at Uyilankulam and Madhu were closed on the 11 August 2006 following the resumption of hostilities on the Jaffna peninsula (United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2007, *Conflict-Related Internal Displacement in Sri Lanka: A study on Forced Displacement, Freedom of Movement, Return and Relocation*, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website, July, pp. 17, 19, 57 http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/CEC4E2879AB1E061C125735B005FB3D7/$file/Conflict-Related+Displacement+in+Sri+Lanka_1.pdf – Accessed 16 September 2008 – Attachment 17).

Two responses from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada provide information on freedom of movement in Sri Lanka in late 2006, as the security situation worsened due to the conflict between the SLA and LTTE:

- A September 2006 response states that the government of Sri Lanka is re-imposing security measures that were in effect prior to the 2002 ceasefire agreement, including an increase in the number of checkpoints and roadblocks, and road closures. The report also notes that freedom of movement between government- and LTTE-controlled areas has decreased significantly, that the main road between Colombo and Batticaloa is particularly laden with checkpoints, and that the A9 highway to Jaffna had been closed at various times (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *LKA101784.E – Sri Lanka: Security measures in place to control the movement of Tamils between northern and southern regions of the country (August 2005 – September 2006)*, 22 September – Attachment 19).

- A December 2006 response states that the government of Sri Lanka has issued travel pass systems for the Mannar, Vavuniya and Amparai districts (Immigration and

Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *LKA102196.E - Sri Lanka: the Implementation of Travel Pass Systems*, 7 December – Attachment 18).

It may be of interest to note a December 2007 article from the Colombo *Daily Mirror* which reports a Supreme Court decision which found in favour of a driver "illegally arrested and detained" at a checkpoint near Colombo. According to the report, the judgement found that "the erection of permanent barriers on the road was not authorised by the law":

> The Supreme Court yesterday said the real purposes of checkpoints were not being served by some officers manning them, thereby causing inconvenience to the people.
>
> Delivering judgment in a case in which a motorist was illegally arrested and detained, the Supreme Court said the incident showed the abuse of power by the police and the harassment of innocent road users.
>
> …The Court also said the erection of permanent barriers on the road was not authorised by the law and that movements of VIPs had affected the free movements of the public (Selvanayagam, S. 2007, 'Innocent road users harassed at some checkpoints: SC', *Daily Mirror*, 4 December http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=444 – Accessed 19 September – Attachment 20).

A previous response, *RRT Research Response LKA31159* of 8 January 2007, provides information on the conflict between the SLA and LTTE in 2006, including information on freedom of movement and security (RRT Country Research 2007, *RRT Research Response LKA31159*, 8 January – Attachment 21).

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