

STATUS OF MINORITIES IN SRI LANKA 2010

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INTRODUCTION

On 19 May 2009 Sri Lanka's 25-year-old war against Tamil Tiger separatists ended with the Sri Lankan government declaring victory over the rebels. More than a year after the end of the war there are immense hurdles still to be overcome. Corruption, nepotism, bad governance, and above all, the need for reconciliation between and within communities remain real concerns. Finally, the lack of a political solution to the ethnic conflict continues to be the main concern of the minorities. This report seeks to highlight the issues that impacted on the rights of minorities during the year 2010.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2010: MINORITY VOTING STATUS

Following the most crucial presidential election in post war Sri Lanka, President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who ran for his second term in office, garnered 57 per cent of the registered votes nationwide. The opposition candidate, Retired Army General, Sarath Fonseka, who was supported by a coalition of opposition parties such as the United National Party (UNP), smaller Tamil and Muslim parties and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna received 40.15 per cent of the votes.¹

Even though an opportunity to vote was presented to people who were unable to do so on previous occasions due to the inability to carry out election activities because of the conflict, the Presidential Elections in January still witnessed several problems for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and persons who have been resettled in the North and East being unable to exercise their franchise freely.

A breakdown of polling figures in the war-torn northern towns and villages shows that President Rajapaksa garnered 3,554 votes in Nallur, a prominent town in the Jaffna province whereas there was overwhelming support for the opposition candidate who received 11,543 votes. In Kalmunai, a predominantly Muslim eastern coastal town, votes cast for General Fonseka totalled 32,946 compared to 9,564 for President Rajapaksa.²

Interviews with Tamil voters conveyed their deep desire for a leader who respects their rights as equal citizens with equality of opportunity in relation to employment, education, land and security for themselves and their families.

¹ Rajapaksa's minority report, Aljazeera, 01 February 2010, <http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/2010/01/2010131124141436117.html>

² *Ibid*

END OF WAR: LESSONS LEARNT AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

To support the drive towards national unity and reconciliation after decades of division, a Commission titled “Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission” (LLRC) was established in May 2010. The Commission is considered to be part of an ambitious wider package of measures taken by the Sri Lankan government to drive the process of reconciliation and create the basis for a stable, prosperous future. Other measures include an accelerated programme of resettlement; rehabilitation and retraining programmes for former combatants, including child soldiers; and sustained investment in the north and east of the country to create the economic basis for unity and integration.

However, the LLRC's mandate does not explicitly require it to investigate alleged violations of humanitarian and human rights law committed during the conflict, particularly the last stages, nor has the LLRC shown any apparent interest in investigating such allegations in its hearings to date. When the commission went to the north and east, many of those who were able to speak on the record or file written submissions reported the disappearances of their family members after being taken away by armed groups working with the government, or after being detained by the police and army. These included numerous LTTE leaders seen surrendering to the Sri Lankan military and not heard of since.³ The commission has also heard testimonies alleging government shelling of hospitals and civilians, as well as reports of grave abuses of the civilian population by the LTTE. Unfortunately, the commission has failed to initiate an investigation on such complaints.⁴

DISPLACEMENT/RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

Nearly 300 000 were displaced in the last phase of Eelam War IV and according to Government reports only 21,000 are left.⁵ About 195,000 IDPs, forced from their homes during the final fighting, had returned to their homes by August 2010, in movements organized by the Government, but were still in need of protection and assistance. Returns are expected to continue in 2011.⁶

³ LLRC wraps up public hearings, Daily News, 17 February 2010, <http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/02/17/news38.asp>; The real lesson to be learnt for reconciliation, Jehan Perera, Sri Lanka Guardian, 19 October 2010, <http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2010/10/real-lesson-to-be-learnt-for.html>

⁴ Commission on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation, LLRC, http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/LLRC%20news/llrc_home.htm

⁵ The State of Human Rights in Sri Lanka in 2010, Asian Human Rights Commission, <http://www.humanrights.asia/resources/hrreport/2010/AHRC-SPR-010-2010.pdf>; Joint Humanitarian Update, OCHA, <http://ochaonline.un.org/srilanka/SituationReports/JointHumanitarianUpdate/tabid/5724/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

⁶ 2011 UNHCR country operations profile - Sri Lanka, UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e4878e6.html>

Nonetheless, displacement still remains an issue. More than 280,000 people (“new” IDPs)⁷ had fled the conflict in the northern Vanni region between April 2008 and June 2009. As of October 2010, more than 100,000 among them remained in displacement, including 26,000 people staying in temporary camps in the Vavuniya and Jaffna districts, 71,000 living with host families and 1,800 in transit camps in their districts of origin. 180,000 people who had returned to their homes remained in need of protection and assistance there. In addition, over 11,000 people who had been separated from the IDPs because of alleged LTTE affiliation remained in detention as the government has not observed due process.⁸

Among people who had been forced to flee their homes prior to April 2008 (“old” IDPs)⁹, at least 227,000 remained in displacement. More than 70,000 of them had been displaced from areas that were declared High Security Zones. Also included in the category of “old” IDPs were at least 60,000 Muslims whom the LTTE had expelled from their homes in the north in 1990 and who have since been in protracted displacement in the Puttalam district. More than 14,000 had returned to their homes in the Northern Province by October 2010.

Until humanitarian clearance operations started in earnest in late 2009, the contamination of conflict-affected areas with landmines and unexploded ordinance (UXO) was an important obstacle to IDPs’ return. Access to food, health services, sanitation facilities, livelihoods, education, and transport facilities was limited due to ongoing contamination with landmines and UXO of many areas surrounding return villages. In camps, sanitation was poor and there was a lack of health care and educational services. Lack of durable shelter and housing was a problem both in camps and in return areas, and there is no framework to resolve competing claims to land.

The government has not provided any services of lawyers for any persons within the camps who may wish to get legal advice on various matters that are affecting them. For example, many of these persons are reported to have lost many of their belongings. Some have deposited their cash or valuable items with the LTTE at one time when they were held hostage by them. Some of these items like their gold ornaments could be among the items that the government has recovered from LTTE held areas earlier. If any of the persons within the camps want to make appeals for judicial recourse in order to deal with matters such as these, they need the assistance of lawyers. There may also be many persons who want recourse to the courts for various violations they may have suffered in the course of their detention in the camps. It is also known that there are many who have lost their title deeds and other documents relating to their personal properties. In all these matters, legal advice could play a significant role if the people are to have access to courts.

⁷people displaced since 1 April 2008

⁸SRI LANKA: IDPs and returnees remain in need of protection and assistance, IDMC, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/%28httpInfoFiles%29/3E9AA76A742C878FC125781800313251/\\$file/SriLanka_Overview_Jan2011.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/%28httpInfoFiles%29/3E9AA76A742C878FC125781800313251/$file/SriLanka_Overview_Jan2011.pdf)

⁹ Those displaced prior to April 2008

Both in the north and the east, the basic administrative facilities such as policing and civil service have not been established to any adequate level and what exists is superseded by military administration.¹⁰

There were several instances of kidnapping girls for ransom.¹¹ In two instances, the girls were found dead several days after their kidnapping while the kidnappers were conducting various kinds of negotiations with their families for ransom. The fear of kidnapping prevails among many groups, including the business community. There have been strikes by shop owners and other businessmen in order to protest against various kinds of extortionist demands that had been made to them. Complaints have been made by lawyers in some areas of similar threats.

What makes life most difficult for most of the inhabitants of the north and east is the absence of an opportunity to speak out about the conditions they have lived in for a long period because of the fear that anything that they say even in their private circles may lead to great suspicions which may bring them new harm.

POLITICAL RIGHTS

The Constitution of Sri Lanka adopted in 1978 has specific provisions to safeguard the interests of the minorities in the country. These provisions were incorporated to allay the fears the minorities had, based on past experiences of discrimination. Two of the chapters in the Constitution have specific provisions to protect the rights of minorities viz – the chapters on Language Rights and Fundamental Rights. Besides this, there are other provisions, such as the provisions in the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which provided for the establishment of Provincial Councils with power devolved to the Provinces on subjects specified in the Ninth Schedule to the Amendment. The Proportional Representation scheme that is followed during Parliamentary and local government elections as laid down in the Constitution is another means by which the rights of minorities for adequate representation in the legislature is expected to be ensured as against the first past the post system that prevailed prior to 1978.¹²

In the last Parliamentary Election in April 2010, one of the key appeals that the United Peoples' Freedom Alliance (UPFA) made was that they be given two third seats of the new Parliament so that they can amend the Second Republican Constitution, in order to change the highly criticized electoral system. People appeared to have accepted the necessity of changing the electoral system which in turn created intra-party conflict for preferential votes with heavy campaign expenses on the one hand and the disassociation of elected members from the citizens on the

¹⁰ The State of Human Rights in Sri Lanka in 2010, Asian Human Rights Commission, <http://www.humanrights.asia/resources/hrreport/2010/AHRC-SPR-010-2010.pdf>

¹¹ SRI LANKA: IDPs and returnees remain in need of protection and assistance [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/3E9AA76A742C878FC125781800313251/\\$file/SriLanka_Overview_Jan2011.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/3E9AA76A742C878FC125781800313251/$file/SriLanka_Overview_Jan2011.pdf)

¹² Rights of Minorities in Sri Lanka - Legislation and their Implementation, M.C.M. Iqbal, <http://www.ruleoflawsrilanka.org/resources/writings-of-m-c-m-iqbal/rights-of-minorities-in-sri-lanka-legislation-and>

other. Chairman of the electoral system reform select committee minister Dinesh Gunawardena says it has been proposed by the committee to change the five way electoral system to one.¹³ Currently there are five types of elections to select the president, parliament, municipal councils, urban councils and pradeshiya sabhas. The new reforms propose all these to be included in one electoral system. It has been decided to select 140 MPs from seats, 70 from Districts and 15 from the national list. 70% of them would be selected from the electorate system while the rest would be selected on preferential votes. For the first time in the history of local government polls there will be multi-member wards. There will be re-demarcation of Grama Niladhari divisions and also areas under the jurisdiction of local government bodies, with provisions for increasing the political representation of minority communities. Under this system, it is possible for a first member, a second member and in some cases, a third member to be elected from one ward.

However Sri Lanka's largest Tamil political party- Tamil National Alliance (TNA) said that it planned to take the battle against the proposed Local Government Elections (Amendment) Bill to the Supreme Court, charging that it would lead to a 'twin-party system'. It is believed that the proposed changes would lead to an elimination of the minorities. Accordingly, several fundamental rights applications were filed, but were unsuccessful. According to the TNA, the new amendment will not only affect the rights of Sri Lankan Tamils but also those of Muslims.¹⁴ Furthermore the leader of TNA said that his party had no confidence in the ongoing delimitation initiative of the government. He also charged the country's main opposition party, the UNP, of colluding with the government to eliminate the minority parties.

LANGUAGE RIGHTS

In the Chapter on Language in the Constitution, it is stated that the official language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhalese with a rider that Tamil shall also be an official language while English is referred to as the link language. Sinhala and Tamil are however declared to be the National Languages of the Country. Besides, provisions have been made pertaining to the use of national languages in the Parliament, the medium of instruction in schools and universities, the language of administration, language of the courts etc.

Yet violation of language rights continued. To check such violations the Official Languages Commission Act No.18 of 1991, which established the Official Languages Commission was enacted. It made provision enabling for those who "wilfully neglect to transact business, receive or make such communication in Tamil" to be punished by a Court of Law. This Act has however provided that no prosecutions for violation of language rights could be made without the sanction of the Attorney General. Consequently this Commission could not effectively check violation of language rights nor could it deal effectively with violators.

¹³ Sri Lanka electoral system changes, Lanka e News,
<http://www.lankaenews.com/English/news.php?id=4123>

¹⁴ Sri Lanka's Tamil National Alliance to fight the electoral reforms bill in court, Santhush Fernando, Asian Tribune, 24 October 2010,
<http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2010/10/24/sri-lanka%E2%80%99s-tamil-national-alliance-fight-electoral-reforms-bill-court>

The Attorney General has been understandably averse to prosecuting an officer of State whose “wilful neglect” could be difficult to prove. Any such officer could always say that he does not have the resources to use Tamil in his official work. Consequently, Tamils continue to receive replies to official correspondence in a language they do not understand. Often, Tamil has no place in name boards in Government or Semi-Government institutions departmental circulars or even on street name boards. This is in total disregard of the specific provisions of the Constitution which requires the use of both official languages.

Even the Police who are enforcers of the law put up traffic and other signs blatantly violating the language rights of the Tamils. Often notices to viewers on TV are not in Tamil. None of these institutions can claim to be ignorant of the fact that Tamil is also an official language and that those who do not know Sinhalese would not be able to understand these signs and notices.

LAND RIGHTS ISSUES

Many factors related to land have been closely linked to the ethnic conflict, exacerbating tensions between the different groups. These factors include: the thousands displaced from their land; the existence of High Security Zones (HSZs), Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and *ad hoc* high security areas; the creation of land settlements under development programmes such as the Mahaweli Scheme etc.

In the North and East, civilians have faced numerous obstacles accessing, controlling and owning land. Due to the conflict and security threats, large numbers of people were displaced and were forced to flee their land. This land, left unoccupied, was then taken by various actors, including the Sri Lankan military, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), other armed actors and IDPs. For example, during the conflict, and even at the present moment, large tracts of land in the North and East are classified as HSZs and *ad hoc* high security areas, used for military installations and camps¹⁵. There are also new High Security Zones that have been created in Silavathurai and Mullikulam in Mannar (occupied by the navy) and Shanthapuram and Thirumukandy in Mullativu districts (by the Sri Lanka Army-SLA). Because of military occupation of land, thousands of IDPs are unable to return to their land. In some cases, some have been displaced for decades, for example the ‘old IDP’s’ in Puttalam. Several individuals and organisations have raised the issue of the use of large areas of land for military purposes which have resulted in the military returning certain areas to the original residents¹⁶. However, this remains an *ad hoc* process and needs to be addressed speedily. Statements by government officials, including Cabinet Ministers and the Sri Lankan Army Commander, indicate that the Government plans to keep HSZs and have military cantonments in the North and East for the foreseeable future. This raises questions regarding the fate of IDPs in the area¹⁷. Also

¹⁵ CPA Special Report: 'Trincomalee High Security Zone and Special Economic Zone, September 2009', Transcurrents, http://transcurrents.com/tc/2009/09/cpa_special_report_trincomalee.html

¹⁶ Trincomalee High Security Zone and Special Economic Zone, Bhavani Fonseka and Mirak Raheem, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/19510508/Trincomalee-High-Security-Zone-and-Special-Economic-Zone>

¹⁷ Nothing is final about families settling in the NE – Hulugalle, Sri Lanka Watch, http://srilankawatch.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1012&itemid=1; Jaffna HSZs to

statements by the Commander of the SLA on housing families of military personnel in the North and East, and a statement by Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella regarding the continuation of the HSZ in the North and East, raise questions about Government intentions for this area¹⁸. This is despite assurances by the Government that people should return to their land. It also raises the critical question of the nature of plans made for the North and East of Sri Lanka and the process that has been followed and will be followed in the future.

Cases of new land settlements, land grabbing by powerful actors and encroachment have been reported in the North and East. A recent study by the Centre for Policy Alternatives documented several cases where land has been used for new settlements or where land in the Eastern Province has been illegally taken by politicians or religious actors.¹⁹ There are fears that similar trends will occur in newly cleared areas in the North. These were further exacerbated when the SLA commander stated that land in the North and East will be given to service personnel and their families.²⁰ This has raised fears of possible attempts to displace original owners and change ethnic demographics.

Landlessness and encroachment of land are also issues that need to be highlighted. Sri Lanka has had several programmes in the past to give state land to the landless. However, a continuing problem in several parts of the country, including the North and East, is encroachment on land belonging to others. With the end of the war, many people were able to return to their land and land tenure was examined for assistance packages. This helped highlight the whole landlessness issue. Furthermore, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) introduced a new scheme to provide land. This is presently underway in all provinces, except the North. It is yet to be seen how the GoSL will address landlessness in Jaffna, where as much as 85% of the land is private and there is limited state land to be provided to the landless.

In relation to land, there are several laws which discriminate against women. The Land Development Ordinance (LDO) ensures preferential treatment of male heirs in succession. The non- recognition of joint ownership under the LDO has also given rise to a number of problems, where women are discriminated against and have limited control over land. However there are

be abolished today, The Sunday Times, 10 January 2010,
http://www.sundaytimes.lk/100110/News/nws_01.html

¹⁸ Land Mines and Land Rights in Sri Lanka, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
http://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/pdf/ma_development/wk-landrights-oct2010/LMAD-wk-Sri-Lanka-case-study-Nov2010.pdf

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ Nothing is final about families settling in the NE – Hulugalle, Sri Lanka Watch,
http://srilankawatch.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1012&itemid=1 : Recently army commander Gen. Jagath Jayasuriya said that permanent army camps are being constructed in govt owned land in the north and east and will also create facilities for married officers to live threwh with their families.

other laws such as the State Land Ordinance that permit joint ownership between wife and husband, thereby avoiding further discrimination and possible future disputes.²¹

Although the Government has presented plans such as the “Uthuru Wasanthaya” (Northern Springs) and Nagenahira Navodaya (Eastern Revival) which give a general sense for the future of the area, they do not indicate what is actually planned for the North and East. Government statements and programmes indicate that there is a focus on economic development and revival, with government funds being spent on road and infrastructure development and construction, tourism and business. The Sampur HSZ and SEZ are examples where no public information was circulated prior to their creation and they are rumoured to be driven by economic incentives.

There are also larger governance, legal and policy issues that need to be addressed when dealing with land. The Government is yet to fully implement the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which is meant to shift land powers from the Central Government to the Provincial Councils, and to also constitute the National Land Commission. For more than two decades no progress has been made in this regard or on amending legislation, such as the Land Development Ordinance and the Prescription Ordinance in order to reflect current problems and issues. The Government is also yet to formulate a National Land Policy or National Resettlement Policy.

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

In the context of the internal armed conflict, violence against civilians based on ethnicity and/or religion occurred throughout the country. Both parties to the conflict failed to take steps to prevent or stop incidents of communal violence involving Buddhist, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Both the government and the LTTE targeted places of worship of various faith communities with attacks taking place during religious holidays and festivals.

While not directly connected to the civil conflict, violent attacks on churches, clergy, and individual Christians have taken place during the past few years, reportedly carried out by members of, or persons affiliated with, extremist groups espousing Sinhala nationalism. Attacks on Christians have ranged from harassment and threats to vandalizing properties and arson. Cases were rarely investigated and perpetrators are rarely brought to justice, resulting in a culture of impunity. There are continuing reports that in the rural areas, churches have been attacked and Christians (who comprise approximately 7 percent of the country's population) have been physically assaulted by individuals or groups, particularly for alleged attempts to convert Buddhists to Christianity. In recent years, there have been allegations that groups and individuals have engaged in "unethical practices" to encourage people to change their religion, and that these actions take advantage of impoverished and unemployed populations and lead to increased tensions among religious communities in Sri Lanka. These practices allegedly have

²¹ Land Mines and Land Rights in Sri Lanka, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, http://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/pdf/ma_development/wk-landrights-oct2010/LMAD-wk-Sri-Lanka-case-study-Nov2010.pdf

included, for example, the offering of money, employment, access to education or health care, or some other material good as an incentive to convert or join a particular church.

The Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Bill, put forward by the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) in 2004 was reintroduced to Parliament in 2009 minus a few provisions that were previously deemed unconstitutional. Whilst in its 3rd reading stage, the Bill was referred for discussion to the Consultative Committee on Religious Affairs and Moral Upliftment and the JHU indicated that it would like to bring it up for a vote in 2010 but this did not happen.

SINHALISATION²²

A new feature of post-war Sri Lanka is the influx of Sinhalese as visitors to the north, and the proliferation of Sinhala Buddhist religious symbols in traditionally minority areas. This has upset many Tamils and Muslims in the north and east.

There also is concern among Muslims and Tamils in both the north and east about the emergence of Buddhist religious symbols in the area. People in these areas, in the east of Sri Lanka, in particular, say that statues of the Buddha and Buddhist shrines are appearing in places where previously they did not exist²³. In both the north and east it is now common that, wherever a Bo tree is found, a Buddhist shrine is erected. Minority Rights Group International received reports that sometimes these trees are planted by state agents and shrines are built subsequently.

The concerns raised by minorities are not about challenging the right of Sinhalese people to move, travel, assemble, practice their religion and enjoy their culture across the country. It is related more to the politicization of religion and race. Many are concerned about the state involvement in the promotion and encroachment of a Sinhala Buddhist culture in minority areas. The state does not prevent Tamils and Muslims from practicing their religion and culture; yet the activities described above challenge international human and minority rights guarantees relating to the promotion and protection of minority cultural and religious rights, particularly in minority- dominated areas.

DISPLACED NORTHERN MUSLIMS

Between 60,000 and 100,000 Muslims who were forced by the LTTE to leave their homes in the north of Sri Lanka in 1990 were in 2010 still living in protracted displacement in Puttalam district. With the end of the conflict, return became a realistic possibility for the Puttalam IDPs. In December 2009 the Minister of Resettlement announced that organised returns would start in earnest within the month. Many have returned. Yet, they have not had adequate support. For instance, during the rains in January their dilapidated houses became unliveable and they had to

²² No war, no peace: the denial of minority rights and justice in Sri Lanka, Minority Rights Group International, www.minorityrights.org/download.php?id=921

²³ SRI LANKA: IDPs and returnees remain in need of protection and assistance [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/3E9AA76A742C878FC125781800313251/\\$file/SriLanka_Overview_Jan2011.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/3E9AA76A742C878FC125781800313251/$file/SriLanka_Overview_Jan2011.pdf)

seek alternative shelter with little success. As of November 2010, the government was planning to support the return of two large groups of Puttalam IDPs in the near future.²⁴

There were no measures in place to facilitate local integration or sustainable return for this group of IDPs. Ownership of property in Puttalam may be one factor favouring local integration, but as long as IDPs do not also have access to other rights such as voting rights in the same way as the local population, they will be unable to fully integrate locally.

Moreover, there had been no organised return movement for those who prefer that option, and IDPs returning spontaneously generally did not receive the same return package as “new” IDPs. According to unconfirmed reports, Muslim IDPs returning to Mannar received a LKR 20,000 (\$180) cash grant, while those returning to Mullaitivu received five tin sheets for shelter and those returning to Jaffna received nothing (IDMC interview, 24 November 2010)²⁵. Given the difficult situation in the return areas, even for returnees from the “new” caseload who are receiving a return package, similar assistance to Muslim IDPs – as well as other “old” IDPs – would be essential if they are to achieve sustainable return and not face discrimination.

CONCLUSION

Minorities in Sri Lanka have a long history and have both contributed to the development of the country and gained from it. They also have historical grievances about discrimination and human rights violations. Though minorities in Sri Lanka share a common language, the two main communities – Tamils and Muslims – are ethnically and religiously different. They have different and sometimes conflicting needs and problems. Minority rights protection in Sri Lanka is complex and requires will and commitment on the part of the government.

The end of the armed conflict offered an ideal opportunity for the present government to take up this challenge. But 18 months after having achieved what was unthinkable for many Sri Lankans in ending the armed conflict, the government is showing few signs of tackling the underlying causes, i.e. minority grievances. This report has examined some of the dominant concerns and fears of minorities.

The real question we should be asking ourselves right now is whether we can create more opportunities for ourselves to establish a sustainable peace with the end of war in Sri Lanka by creating a culture of inclusiveness, equality and respect for all communities in the motherland. A broader, stronger and longer home grown reconciliation process will be a good ‘first step’ in this direction.

²⁴ Displacement of northern Muslims, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/79EFB5170CF83196C1257816005109D4?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/79EFB5170CF83196C1257816005109D4?OpenDocument)

²⁵ *Ibid*