



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Sri Lanka – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 12 April 2011**

### **Information relating to a prison camp at Kadirgamar otherwise known as Kathirkam/Kadirgam in Sri Lanka.**

Research by the Refugee Documentation Centre revealed information referring to an IDP camp called Kadirgamar in Vavuniya province, Sri Lanka.

The most recently Eligibility Guidelines published by the *UN High Commissioner for Refugees*, in a section titled “Persons Suspected of Having Links with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)”, states:

“In the wake of the conflict, almost 11,000 persons suspected of LTTE links were arrested and detained in high-security camps, while over 500 former child soldiers were transferred into rehabilitation centres. By the end of May 2010, all former LTTE-associated child soldiers had reportedly been released from rehabilitation centres. Some of the adult detainees have also been released after completing rehabilitation programmes or because they were no longer deemed to present a risk, including some persons with physical disabilities. By May 2010, around 9,000 alleged former LTTE cadres reportedly remained in closed camps.” (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (5 July 2010) *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Sri Lanka*, pp.3-4)

The Summary of a *Human Rights Watch* report states:

“Faced with possible starvation or death by shelling or gunfire, many civilians escaped to presumed safety in government-controlled areas, surviving fire from LTTE forces attempting to prevent their flight, almost continual crossfire and scattered landmines. For the most part people fled in small groups, but a massive exodus of tens of thousands of people took place after the government broke through LTTE defense fortifications on April 20. According to the United Nations, 290,000 people crossed over to government-controlled areas from the conflict zone between October 27, 2008, and June 1, 2009. At several checkpoints, security forces screened and registered the displaced before transporting them to detention camps in the north, which the government euphemistically called ‘welfare centers.’ The largest detention camp was the multi-camp Menik Farm in Vavuniya district. The government denied the displaced in the camps their rights to liberty and freedom of movement. Individuals in the camps could not leave to work or live with family members or others elsewhere. The government started releasing significant numbers from the camps only in November 2009. By that time, the majority of the displaced had been confined to the camps for more than six months. Those who were displaced first, in March 2008, had spent more than 18 months in confinement. Both at checkpoints and in the camps, the authorities separated certain individuals from their families—presumably because of alleged ties with the LTTE—and sent them to ‘rehabilitation centers.’” (Human Rights Watch (2 February 2010) *Legal Limbo: The Uncertain Fate of Detained LTTE Suspects in Sri Lanka*, pp.2-3)

A report published by the *Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers*, in a section titled “Detention and Possible Enforced Disappearances of Under-18s and Others in IDP Camps”, states:

“Protection for the 300,000 people living in IDP camps in Vavuniya is provided by the Sri Lankan military. Nevertheless, pro-government armed groups such as the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP), People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and Tamil People’s Liberation Tigers (TMVP) and cadres belonging to the Karuna faction have apparently unhindered access to the camps. Abductions of IDPs, including under-18s, are being reported on a weekly basis with most incidents reportedly occurring at night when scrutiny is minimal. The precise motives for the abductions remains unclear, although some children appear to have been taken because of their alleged links with the LTTE, while others are kidnapped for ransom. The Coalition has also received several reports of pro-government armed groups including EPDP, PLOTE and TMVP attempting to recruit children from IDP camps into the Sri Lankan military on promises that their families will be released from the camps if the children join the armed forces. In addition, under-18s are believed to be among those who have been detained by the security forces in the IDP camps apparently for their alleged links to the LTTE.” (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (July 2009) *Sri Lanka - Issues Concerning Protection of Children Post Armed Conflict*, p.3)

An *Amnesty International* report, in a section titled “Arbitrary Detention”, states:

“The government of Sri Lanka has placed severe restrictions displaced people from leaving the physical confines of the camps, which are surrounded by razor fencing and barbed wire and guarded by armed military personnel. Although the government calls these facilities ‘welfare villages,’ they are effectively detention camps, where an entire category of persons (in this case Tamil people displaced from areas formerly held by the LTTE) are being arbitrarily detained in violation of international law.” (Amnesty International (10 August 2009) *Unlock the Camps in Sri Lanka: Safety and Dignity for the Displaced Now*, p.14)

A document published on the *World Socialist Web Site*, which is allegedly the testimony of two relatives of camp detainees, states:

“We are living with fear. We do not know what will happen at anytime. The foreign representatives who visit here do not know the real situation. We are not allowed to speak with them. When the UN secretary general [Ban Ki-moon] visited, the authorities took half the detainees out of Kadirgamar camp and cleaned it up. They showed him each family with a tent. They took him only to that camp.’ An elderly person who was leaving the camp with a relative who was released after nearly a month of requests, said: ‘I think we were the first people who crossed into the military-controlled area after the government announced that we could do so. But the treatment that the young and middle-aged people got and the words used against us made me think that I should have died starving rather than come here. ‘Now of course they have put up tin sheets and thatched roofs. When we came here it was almost like a jungle. Numbers of families had to live in one hut. Because it is hot, people can sleep anywhere but the problems start if it begins to rain. If it rains, you can’t even walk because of the muddy land. Since we came here many of the parents with children have never slept at night for fear that their children would be taken away. There were numbers of such incidents. We had no lights, so nobody knew what was going on.’” (World Socialist Web Site (24 June 2009) *Sri Lankan Tamil detainees give eye-witness accounts*)

A report posted on the *Global Tamil News* website comments on facilities in Kadirgamar as follows:

“Reports from Vanni say that basic facilities in the Kadirgamar welfare centre where displaced people from Vavuniya are put up, are lacking. Reports from Vanni say that basic facilities in the Kadirgamar welfare centre where displaced people from Vavuniya are put up, are lacking. Displaced people in zone 3 Arunachalam camp were transferred to Kadirgamar camp, and arrangements were made to accommodate many more in this camp, but the toilet facilities were not satisfactory, according to reports coming in. Many toilets are filled with rain water due to continuous rain and are not in a position to be used. Meanwhile only one bowser is in service to transport toilet waste in the Cheddikulam D.S. division and this is the reason for the present state say the officers of the Kadirgamar welfare center.” (Global Tamil News (14 January 2011) *Basic facilities lacking, Displaced people unhappy*)

A *Xinhua General News Service* report states:

“Sri Lanka's ministry of resettlement on Sunday denied that the last of the camps for the conflict displaced lacked facilities. A group of displaced people on Saturday protested against the government's move to send them from the Manik Farm camp to Kadirgamar camp located in the same area in the northern district of Vavuniya. The displaced claimed that poor facilities were prevailing in the Kadirgamar camp and resisted to leave Manik Farm camp.” (Xinhua General News Service (7 November 2010) *Sri Lanka denies slackened facilities at displaced camp*)

A report originally published by the Sri Lankan newspaper *Daily Mirror* states:

“Tamil war refugees residing in camps in Vavuniya categorically denied that Sri Lankan troops guarding the camps had raped or indulged in any other form of sexual abuse as alleged by a former inmate in an interview to The Observer newspaper of London. ‘It's a mischievous rumour,’ Rasendran from Pooneryn, who had been living in the Kadirgamar Camp for months, told visiting journalists on Wednesday [23 December]. ‘The troops never did anything of that sort. They don't even come into the camp,’ said Nithyanandan from Kilinochchi. Sharma, the priest of the makeshift Shiva temple, and himself a refugee, said that there was no truth in the allegations. ‘We face no problems with the army,’ he said.” (Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka) (26 December 2009) *Tamil refugees deny allegations of sexual abuse by Sri Lanka troops – paper*)

In a paragraph headed “Camps improve” this report states:

“Most of the inmates said that conditions had improved enormously since they arrived in April or May. The medical facilities were excellent with more than a hundred doctors on call.” (Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka) (26 December 2009) *Tamil refugees deny allegations of sexual abuse by Sri Lanka troops – paper*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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