

## **Sri Lanka's IDP Centres Population Drops Dramatically in October as Resettlements Continue**

The number of conflict-displaced people in northern Sri Lanka dropped dramatically in recent weeks to about 157,000, compared to about 288,000 in June, the government reported.

Additionally, another 60,000 people are slated to go home over the next few weeks, the government said. The majority of the IDPs will be resettled by end of this year, according Mahinda Samarasinghe, Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights.

The civilians, most of them residents of northern Sri Lanka, were displaced last spring at the conclusion of the 26-year-long conflict between the government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam terrorist group. Many of those civilians were held hostage by the LTTE as a human shield.

Aside from the government's figures, the Financial Times quoted a Western diplomat in Colombo stating: "We weren't really expecting such a sudden acceleration in returns." The Financial Times reported that the diplomat, "confirmed the government's figures," and that Rishad Bathiudeen, Sri Lanka's resettlement minister, "told the Financial Times that 3,000 were being sent home every day."

As of Nov. 4, 2009, there were 157,453 IDPs in displaced person centers in Sri Lanka, according to the government.

The government defeated the LTTE in May and freed the civilians, who then moved to newly established Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) centers.

Parts of the North, however, remain uninhabitable due to landmines, contaminated water and a lack of other facilities. The government has launched a large-scale redevelopment and repair program