



பிரஜைகள் குழு மன்னார் மாவட்டம்

CITIZENS' COMMITTEE
MANNAR DISTRICT

Main Road,
Mannar,
Sri Lanka.

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T.P & Fax No: 023-222-2038

Sri Lankan Army in Civil Organization's Social Awareness Program

The Mannar Citizens Committee (MCC) is one of the long standing civil bodies in the district of Mannar, in Northern Sri Lanka, consisting of respectable and leading citizens of the Mannar district. It has been working for the welfare, development and capacity building of the people in the district and voicing for equal treatment for all irrespective of any difference among the people. It has been working with victims and families of those whose rights have been violated, during and after the war. They had also been engaging with politicians, government officials, military and police in relation to issues of concern to people in the district.

We have observed discrimination in handling of state and private land matters in the Mannar district (and more broadly in Sri Lanka) and thought some awareness is necessary for the ordinary people and NGOs, especially those involved in dealing with housing matters under various housing schemes.

The Army (as well as the Navy) has arbitrarily occupied land without any land related laws and administrative procedures being followed in the Northern Province for number of years, including in the Mannar district. In the last few months, this has become very critical and controversial, with the Army trying to occupy more land and local people, politicians, clergy, civil activists protesting and thousands of people filing court cases against the military and the government.

In view of this, the MCC organized an awareness program about laws related to land, through the Center for Human Rights and Development based in Colombo.(CHRD). It was a three day program from 30th May to 1st June, at the MCC office. The first two days was for NGOs and the third day for government officials dealing with land work in all the five Divisional Secretariats in the Mannar district.

The program was intimated to the District Secretariat (Government administrative office for the district) and with the concurrence of the Additional Government Agent (Addl.GA), letters were sent to Divisional Secretaries and NGOs with a copy to the District Secretary (Government Agent) of Mannar. There was no objection of any sort from the government officials.

The Program for NGOs was held smoothly and the participants have expressed their fullest satisfaction as they have learned much about land matters and were able to clear some doubts on the subject.


On the first day, 30th May 2013, an intelligence officer of the Army had come to seminar, but the President of the MCC had told him that this was a program dealing with purely civil matters and that his presence was disturbing. He had left without saying any word.

On the third day (1st June 2013) we were awaiting for the officers from the Divisional Secretariats, when the Addl.GA telephoned and informed the Secretary of the MCC that the

Divisional Secretaries were instructed not to send the officials for the program based on the orders of the Army Headquarters in Mannar. Although the Resource Persons and the organizers waited for long time not a single government official came for the workshop. The Chief Resource Person, an retired Assistant Land Commissioner (a former senior government official) was surprised at this and remarked that the officials from the Mannar District Secretariat were allowed to participate in the workshop on the same topic held by him on the previous day. The other Resource person, an Attorney at Law, too expressed the same opinion.

MCC as a civil society organization that respects, believes and works to promote and protect Fundamental and Human Rights feel that it was an unlawful interference of the Army, to prevent the rights of people and government officials to know and learn about laws and administration of land related matters obtaining in the Country. It's to be noted that the Armed Forces have no legal authority to instruct government officials in relation to attending or not attending seminars of this nature, and this is an example of the Army (and military) interference and obstruction of civil administration and civil society activities in the Northern Province.

The MCC strongly feel this needs to be inquired into, and those who are responsible at all levels held accountable. If not, such unlawful intrusions by the military into activities of the government officials, as well as civil society, will continue.



Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Sebamalei

President

Mannar Citizens Committee (MCC)

(Address)

Tel: +94-23-2222038 / +94-77-4384882

Citizens Committee, Old Library Building, Mannar

Email: fr.sebamalai@gmail.com

**CITIZENS COMMITTEE
MANNAR**