

LTTE obstructs NGOs, says British Refugee Council. (1994, May 8).
Sunday observer.

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Sunday
Observer
8.5.94

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The Sri Lanka Monitor a bulletin published by the British Refugee Council has condemned the interference of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the activities of the International aid agencies working in the war-torn North.

The bulletin has stated that the International aid agencies working in the North have come under increasing pressure from tough new 'Tiger policies'.

According to the bulletin the local staff of the foreign NGO organisations have been threatened, fuel syphoned from lorries and aid convoys searched and 'taxed' by the LTTE.

The bulletin also added that the NGOs in the North fear that in future they will be dictated by the LTTE where to work, how much to spend and to employ whom.

The Sri Lanka Monitor states:

"In the latest of a series of incidents on 10 March, a convoy from international refugee agency UNHCR was stopped at a new Tiger checkpoint three miles south of Puliyankulam where Mullaitivu cadre demanded Rs. 2,500 (\$60) tax and Rs. 250 'checking fee' per lorry. Ten days later an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) convoy was stalled at Puliyankulam for 12 hours after refusing to pay. Three months supply of vaccines for Kilinochchi hospital were spoiled."

"Private traders pay the same Tiger taxes plus 20% of the value of the load. Another Rs. 10,000 per lorry goes to Tamil group and Army ally PLOTE before they cross the No-chchimoddai checkpoint

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North of Vavuniya into Tiger-controlled territory. Over 50 traders' lorries cross No-chchimoddai every day.

"The three-year military blockade of the North has generated a massive payday of millions of rupees a month for the Tigers and corrupt Army officers filtering contraband across the frontline. Over 40 staple goods including petrol, medicines and batteries are banned. Military advisers are currently urging President Wijetunga to lift the blockade and strangle the Tigers' cash flow.

"In a joint letter to the LTTE's Central Committee delivered in early April, aid agencies say humanitarian assistance should be exempt from the Tiger's tax regime and that Non-Governmental agencies (NGOs) must

maintain their independence and ability to choose and implement their own projects.

"There is growing pressure from LTTE for international NGOs in the North to work through local partner NGOs on Tiger-approved projects. Local staff have been threatened, diesel syphoned from vehicles and convoys searched.

"The Tigers say as the de facto government they have the overview of local needs and priorities and are seeking only to 'coordinate' NGO programmes. They point to Mullaitivu district where international NGOs are working in only six refugee camps close to Puthukudiyiruppu while there are another 20 camps desperately needing assistance further

south in the Weli Oya area. NGOs fear that in the future they will be told where to work, how much to spend and who to employ.

"The Tigers have looked long and hard at the \$1 million donated by the German government to the Jaffna-based Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation and almost \$1 million UNHCR plans to spend on 'micro-projects' in Kilinochchi through American NGO Care International and perhaps decided it is time to take over. LTTE's Director of Finance Kutti has plans to introduce his own blockade banning a range of products from the south to boost local production. But, if LTTE pushes the NGO's too hard, they cannot push back. They can only pull out."