

**Worldwide Condemnation
of
Government of Sri Lanka's Conduct of Military Operations
against
Innocent Tamil Civilians**

Annihilating the Tamils under the Guise of Combating Terrorism

The darkest chapters in humanity are now being written in Sri Lanka, by the blood of innocent Tamil civilians. The ugliest part is the miserable failure of the civilized world to save these lives. While the Sinhala Buddhist extremists are celebrating their victory with flags, firecrackers and dancing, it is pathetic to see the plight of three hundred thousand Tamils who are detained in concentration camps without enough food, water, or medical help, while their women are raped and their youth are beaten and tortured until they confess they have an LTTE connection, all without any witnesses or accountability. An unknown number have disappeared. International reporters confirm that mothers cry uncontrollably because their daughters are being raped by the Sri Lankan security forces when they are taken for questioning. Some of the daughters return, others do not. According to unofficial UN statistics, thirteen thousands Tamils could well already be missing from these camps. On a similar note, according to The Sunday Leader, Colombo, (Dec. 7, 2008), –“The government says that the “liberated” east is an example of democracy in action and a model for areas recaptured from the LTTE. The reality is State Terror waged by indiscriminate killings, and abductions, and there is total impunity for horrific abuses. The eastern province is under siege from all sides. While Government is showcasing the region as one that is returning to normal, the people are still caught in a vicious cycle of violence.”

WORLD BODIES ARE CONCERNED IN 2007 & 2008

UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Manfred Novak, in a statement to the UN Assembly Third Committee in October, 2007 said that torture is widely practiced in Sri Lanka. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Aston, has called on the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council to act on Sri Lanka, as the situation in the country has worsened. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, who

visited the island in 2007, was taken on a conducted tour by the government, but was prevented from visiting areas controlled by the Freedom Fighters. In her final Press Conference she lamented the dire state of human rights in the island and called for independent monitoring. The Sinhalese Human Rights Minister blindly rejected the idea. Ms. Arbour made an appeal along with the New York-based Human Rights Watch and the London-based Amnesty International to set up UN field operations with a strong mandate to monitor the human rights situation. The government rejected the call.

The Asian Human Rights Commission issued a statement on lawlessness which said that within the policing systems higher officers ranging from IGP to ASPs have shown an irresponsibility that is alarming.

US Senator Leahy pointed out that the Millennium Challenge Corporation suspended over \$11 million in aid intended for Sri Lanka, based on a

statement by Freedom House that the serious rights abuses and excessive restrictions on freedom of speech and association by the GoSL merits the removal of the country from the list of eligible recipients of such aid. US lawmakers have decided to bar all but a small amount of military aid to Sri Lanka till the Administration has certified that the Sri Lankan has made certain improvements in its human rights practices.

Thirty-three community organizations in Sri Lanka have written to the International Committee Coordinating National Institutions for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Geneva not to lend credibility and legitimacy to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. Human Rights Watch, in a Nov. 7, 2007 letter to US Reps. Nita Lowey and Frank Wolf, states, "Since mid-2006 resumption of military operations, civilians have borne the brunt of the fighting. More than 1,000 have reportedly disappeared. Several hundreds of thousands have been displaced. In the past 18 months there has been a significant jump in abuses by government forces, such as indiscriminate shelling and extra-judicial executions and forced disappearances. In addition, there is evidence that Sri Lanka Government forces have stood by while pro-government armed groups have carried out abuses, including forcibly recruiting children." Human Rights Watch said that the country needs international monitors to monitor human rights violations following downgrading due to lack of credible domestic institutions to address human rights violations. Deputy Assistant Director, Human Rights Watch, Elaine Pearson said Sri Lanka lacks credible domestic institutions to address human rights violations, and the National Human Rights Commission failed to address the hundreds of violations in Sri Lanka over the past two years.



Soldiers in war- ravaged Mullaitivu church January 2009

The Asian Human Rights Commission said in December, 2007 that “Human rights abuse have made Sri Lanka one of the most lawless places in the world and the government must do more to investigate them.” It complained of what it called “the constant killing of people in police detention and the falsification of information to justify crimes committed by state agencies” Describing Sri Lanka’s criminal Justice system as “dysfunctional”, the group said “as long as this situation remains, life will remain a nightmare to all civilians in the country.”

The North East Secretariat on Human Rights (NESoHR) reported as of August 2008 there were 1585 cases of extrajudicial execution since 2002, with a further 1147 cases of disappearances. The report suggests that since 2002 two-thirds of conflict related civilian deaths were due to extrajudicial killings and one third were due to other type of incidents, such as bombings and claymore attacks.

The International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP), formed to assist a national Commission of Inquiry set up to probe a large number of serious human rights abuses during the current Sri Lankan administration, withdrew in 2008, mentioning the lack of independence of the Commission, ineffective witness protection measures and shortcomings with investigations, persistent disregard for its recommendations by the government of Sri Lanka, and the Commission, and urged the government to take immediate steps for implementing corrective action.

THE MEDIA IS MUZZLED

The Telegraph, UK, Dec 4, 2008

“Behind the muzzled voices from a troubled Sri Lanka, all information that comes out of the Sri Lanka conflict is inherently untrustworthy, since it is provided only by the combatants, both of whom have a long record of telling lies in the name of propaganda. The effects of this dirty war are taking a terrible toll on Sri Lanka as a whole. There is the case of Tamil journalist J. S. Tissainayagam, who has been in jail since March under Sri Lanka’s sweeping anti-terror laws, for writing articles critical of the government in his magazine *North Eastern Monthly* which has now been shut down. It also says that in the name of the “National Interest” and “War Spirit” the Sri Lankan Government has effectively crushed all opposition, even from those who would ordinarily be considered patriots of the Sinhala cause.”

CanWest News Service, Dec. 8, 2008

Genocide and other mass atrocities are underway or risk breaking out in at least 33 countries, says a new comprehensive watchlist put out on the 60th anniversary of the United Nations’ Prevention of Genocide Convention. Since the world pledged “Never Again” in the wake of Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia are but three examples of places where mass slaughter has occurred. The list by the New York-based Genocide Prevention Project for the first time combines the findings of five leading independent watchlists to create a “Watchlist of Watchlists” [Sri Lanka made the list’s top eight and appears in each of the five expert indexes.]

BBC, Dec 9, 2008

A UN official in a rebel-held area of northern Sri Lanka has said that Conditions for displaced people there are “as basic as in Somalia”. John Campbell from the World Food Program told the BBC Sinhala Service that conditions “as basic as can be” are “much less than ideal”. The UN estimates that there are about 230,000 displaced people throughout rebel-held areas of the North.

Morning Leader, Colombo, Dec.10, 2008

In the UN Human Rights Council, the powerful states use their political influence and support to avoid the examination of human Rights violations in their countries and also to protect the countries which have bilateral links with them. Some states even insist that they are exempt from UN scrutiny because what takes place in their countries is an “internal affair.” Countries like Algeria, India, Pakistan, Russia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and a few other states are objecting to the right to self-determination of the people living within their domain but support the same in other countries.

Reporters Without Borders, Dec. 12, 2008

We are worried by the increase in direct and indirect censorship in Sri Lanka. Coming after a broadcast media bill reintroducing news censorship, the selective blocking of BBC and Sunday Leader reports is disturbing. The authorities must accept the free flow of news even when it contradicts what officials are saying and irritates certain politicians.

Stifling “truth” in the name of war, Sunday Leader, Colombo, Dec. 14, 2008



Shelling of crowded civilian encampments in ‘no-fire zone’ by Sri Lankan armed forces, March 2009

The people of Sri Lanka have plenty on their minds these days. With military clashes between the government and the Tamil tigers proceeding apace and major floods destroying thousands of homes and displacing tens of thousands of people, many of whose lives already had been disrupted by the ongoing fighting, Sri Lanka can hardly focus on an economic catastrophe the likes of which we have not seen in the last hundred years. The suppression of “truth” has led to the deterioration of political culture and the criminalization of the state. In a time of war, more

than at any other time, the government should be under greater scrutiny, both through government appointed bodies as well as a vibrant and free media. Precisely, when the state lacks the commitment towards minorities and its citizens at large, civil society needs to act; the clergy, academics, trade unions, professional organizations, the NGOs and the business community should take on the formidable responsibility of defending the truth.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK, Jan 6, 2009

Secretary of State for International Development, Douglas Alexander and Foreign Office Minister Lord Malloch Brown said, “We continue to monitor developments in Sri Lanka closely including the capture of Kilinochchi. This development makes it even more urgent that all parties achieve progress on setting out a political solution that addresses the legitimate concerns of all communities. This is the only way to achieve a strong and sustainable in Sri



Civilian casualties in the 'no fire zone' from shelling & bombing by the Sri Lankan armed forces, April 2009

Lanka in which all communities can prosper.”

Morning Leader, Colombo, Jan.7, 2009

The Tamil Civilian is entitled to indulge in a little cynicism. Pirabakaran and the LTTE waged this war claiming it was to liberate them from the jackboot of Sinhala Chauvinism. The Rajapaksa government now claims it is waging this war to liberate them from the atrocities of LTTE. Meanwhile for three decades it is these very civilians that continue to suffer in silence...

Needless to say, with impunity the order

of the day, Sri Lanka is fast descending into a Zimbabwe-style dictatorship window dressed in the garb of patriotism.

Reporters Without Borders, January 8, 2009

Reporters Without Borders expressed outrage at the murder of Sunday Leader Editor Wickrematunga, who was shot dead by two men on a motorcycle as he drove to work this morning. Sri Lanka’s image is badly sullied by this murder.

Ottawa Citizen, January 9, 2009

Sri Lanka has rejected its basic responsibilities. Sri Lanka is in the grips of a major humanitarian crisis. The resumption of all out war between the nationalist government of Mahinda Rajapakse and the LTTE has killed thousands of civilians and forcibly uprooted hundreds of thousands move from their homes. Much to the government’s irritation, aid agencies have described conditions on the ground as similar to those in Somalia.

A ceasefire needed in Sri Lanka – British Prime Minister, *Daily Mirror, Colombo January 15, 2009*

Responding to a question raised in the British Parliament, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said that he felt that a ceasefire was needed in SL and he will be discussing this at a meeting which was scheduled with the French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the German Chancellor.

Civilians fleeing Sri Lanka fighting have no safe passage quoting the ICRC, *Agence-France Press, January 16, 2009*

Tens of thousands of people are on the run because of fighting between troops and Tamil rebels in the northern Sri Lanka, where civilians have no safe passage, the Red Cross said. The ICRC said it was “extremely concerned” that the warring parties had not agreed on a safe route for civilians since Jan 9. “This has put at risk the lives of patients who cannot receive suitable treatment on the spot and therefore need to be transferred to Vavuniya hospital in Govt-controlled territory” the ICRC said. “Repeated displacements, often involving the loss of their personal belongings, have taken a toll” said Paul Castella, the ICRC head of delegation.

Sri Lanka: Situation of civilians nothing short of catastrophic, *ICRC April 21, 2009*

The ICRC is extremely worried about tens of thousands of civilians, including women, children and elderly people, many of them wounded or sick, who are trapped in the rapidly shrinking area along the coast that had been declared a “no fire zone” by the government. “What we are seeing is intense fighting in a very small area overcrowded with civilians who have fled there” said the ICRC’s Director of Operations, Piere Krahenbuhi. “The situation is nothing short of catastrophic. Ongoing fighting has killed or wounded hundreds of civilians who had only minimal access to medical care”.

The ICRC is concerned that the final offensive in the area controlled by government forces against The Liberation Fighters of Tamil Eelam could lead to a dramatic increase in the number of civilian casualties. “In the coming days the ICRC will strive to assist and protect the thousands of civilians fleeing the hostilities,” said MR. Krahenbuhi. “However, it is imperative that independent humanitarian organizations also be allowed to provide desperately needed services and relief for civilians still trapped in the “no-fire zone” today.

A 'full blown storm of medical and humanitarian needs' in Sri Lanka, *DoctorsWithout Borders, May 05 2,009*

As Colombo celebrates the end of the conflict as declared by the government of Sri Lanka, thousands of people are leaving the former conflict zone, arriving in Vavuniya district in desperate need of medical care. Traumatized and exhausted – with hundreds injured – a staggering 50,000 people have arrived in Vavuniya district since May 16. Many thousands more are still expected in the coming days.

“Despite increasing the number of staff, MSF teams are overwhelmed by the huge and sudden influx of people,” said Katrien Coppens, Médecins Sans Frontières’ (MSF) Operational Manager in Amsterdam. Since Saturday, MSF teams have been working alongside the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health doing triage at the main crossing point, selecting the most seriously injured, then treating and stabilizing them on site. On average there are 10,000 arriving at this checkpoint every day, and MSF is treating roughly 200 of the most seriously wounded and ill patients. About 30 percent are then transferred to the Vavuniya hospital. The rest are sent to the camps where there are Ministry of Health medical staff.

“The triage is extremely difficult. In order to prioritize the most critically ill and wounded, many patients in need of treatment simply cannot receive immediate care,” said Coppens. “There are 1,900 patients currently in Vavuniya General Hospital that has only a 450 bed capacity (many of them lying on mattresses on the floor and in the corridors). We had seen a gradual decrease in the number of patients arriving at Vavuniya hospital in the past two weeks, but it was just the calm before a full blown storm of medical and humanitarian needs,” says Coppens.

UN chief ‘appalled’ by weekend death toll in Sri Lankan conflict, *UN, May 11, 2009*

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today said he was appalled at the killing of hundreds of Sri Lankan civilians caught in the middle of hostilities between the army and separatist Tamil rebels over the weekend. The raging conflict in the north of the South Asian nation between Government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has claimed thousands of lives in the past several months.

Mr. Ban pressed both sides, in the strongest terms possible, to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law, reminding them that the world is watching events in Sri Lanka closely. He said that the LTTE must allow the remaining civilians in the conflict zone – estimated by the UN to be over 50,000 – to leave immediately, and urged the Government to bring the conflict to an end “without further bloodshed.”

The Secretary-General stressed that the terms for halting the military offensive must be made public and the LTTE must “give sober and positive consideration of those terms.”

ICRC Remarks, *ICRC website, May 20, 2009*

Over 250,000 displaced persons in urgent need of assistance. Now that hostilities have been declared over everything possible has to be done to facilitate access for humanitarian aid agencies so they can help hundreds of thousands of displaced people. Tens of thousands of people trapped in the zone of fighting have had to endure unimaginable hardship over recent weeks,



Use of poison gas by Sri Lankan armed forces April 2009

Wounded and sick people must be immediately collected and cared for, and detainees must be treated humanely. Between mid-February and 9 May, the ICRC evacuated almost 14,000 wounded or sick patients and accompanying caregivers. An ICRC surgical team is currently deployed at Mannar hospital. In response to the influx of hundreds of patients over recent days and weeks, the ICRC helped the health authorities extend the ward capacities of Mannar and Vavuniya hospitals, adding some 500 beds in totasome 20 camps. The ICRC, together with its partners in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, has been distributing drinking water, food packs, personal hygiene kits, baby-care parcels, emergency household items and kitchen utensils to around 40,000 people in the biggest camp, Menik Farm, near Vavuniya. Furthermore, tents and plastic sheeting have been distributed to serve as temporary shelter for around 17,000 people.

Q. Is it true that the ICRC currently has no access to the biggest camp, near Vavuniya?

A. Since last weekend, the authorities have restricted the entry of vehicles into Menik Farm, the biggest camp, which houses over 130,000 displaced people. The restrictions have led to a temporary standstill in the distribution of aid to the camp. The ICRC and other humanitarian aid agencies deplore this unacceptable situation, in particular because it is having a severe effect on the thousands of newly arrived displaced people who until very recently had to endure unimaginable hardship merely to survive in the conflict zone in the north-east. Together with the authorities, the ICRC and other aid agencies are trying to find a solution that will make it possible for distributions to resume as soon as possible.

Colombo: Government of Sri Lanka, UN agencies, NGOs and I/NGOs meet to discuss recovery strategy in the North and East of the country. *UNDP, May 21, 2009*

A meeting of the Sri Lanka Early Recovery Cluster Group (ERCG), co-chaired by the Ministry of Nation-Building and Estate Infrastructure Development and the United Nations Development Programme, took place at the Ministry this morning. The group, which includes the Government of Sri Lanka and representatives of UN agencies, NGOs and I/NGOs involved in early recovery, met to discuss ongoing and planned recovery efforts in the North and East of the country. The ERCG was established in February of this year to provide a platform for relevant parties, led by the Government together with UNDP, to share their strategies and plans for helping conflict-affected communities achieve self-reliance, economic growth and development.

Secretary-General, arriving in Sri Lanka, spells out humanitarian action, *UN May 22, 2009*

“We are here at a defining moment in Sri Lanka’s history. A long and terrible conflict has come to an end. Now is the time for the nation to unite to build a just and lasting peace. No one can do this but the Sri Lankans themselves, working together without regard to religion or ethnic identity. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am here to offer help and partnership. Civilian casualties have been heavy. Too many lives have been lost and too many communities destroyed during the long decades of conflict.

I remain deeply concerned about the safety and welfare of at least 300,000 displaced persons. I hope my visit today can help begin a process of national recovery, renewal and reconciliation for all Sri Lanka.



Tamil civilians fleeing 'no fire zone' April 2009

Second, I will urge the Government to expedite the screening and processing of refugees as quickly as possible. Families must be reunited and people must be able to begin rebuilding their lives and reintegrate into society. This will require a major commitment to reconstruction and rehabilitation. The United Nations is ready to help in any way it can, under proper conditions. Full transparency and full respect for human rights are essential.

Third, I will urge the Government and all elements of society to take powerful and immediate steps to initiate a political process of dialogue, accommodation and reconciliation. Old enmities must be overcome. Sri Lankans of every ethnic and religious identity must enjoy equal justice, rights and guarantees of security under the law, as President Rajapaksa declared in his recent address to Parliament. The world will be watching.

Press Conference on Sri Lanka on Visit of UN's John Holmes, UN, May 26, 2009

John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who accompanied the Secretary-General on his weekend visit to a major camp for displaced persons in Sri Lanka and B. Lynn Pasco, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs briefed reporters. Mr. Holmes told reporters that President Mahinda Rajapaksa and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had released a joint communiqué stressing, among other things, the need to protect the well-being of citizens displaced by fighting between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE).

An estimated 300,000 people had fled the conflict zone, according to Mr. Holmes. While in Sri Lanka, the Secretary-General had visited the Manik Farm campsite for displaced persons, including one area that had been settled for some time, as well as another area known as "Zone 4", where the most recently displaced were just arriving. "He was able to see for himself that, while a lot has been done in terms of providing basic services, there's still a long way to go in areas like shelter, and that a lot of the tents are still overcrowded. There's a lot more land needed, a lot more tents need to go up," he said, explaining that parts of the camp needed water and sanitation facilities, and that a sufficient variety of food must now be delivered to its residents. "The basic conditions of life are being met, but there's quite a lot of progress to go."

In his talks with the Sri Lankan authorities, Mr. Holmes said, the Secretary-General had raised the issues of resettlement, reconstruction and reintegration, which, as a prelude, would require political reconciliation between Sri Lanka's Sinhala and Tamil communities. He also raised the issue of unimpeded access to the camps. The Government was currently restricting the access of large vehicles to the camps, such as off-road vehicles favoured by United Nations agencies and other non-governmental organizations working in the area. Discussions on those and other well-known issues -- such as the overly military nature of camps, the need for more rapid progress in areas like screening and registration, more freedom of movement, and family reunification -- would be continuing for some time, he explained.



Manik Farm Tamil internment camp, May 2009

Enabling displaced persons to return to their homes was important to the process of rebuilding the people's confidence in their Government. Government aimed to return displaced persons to their places of origin by the end of the year, though there was also talk of an ambitious plan to do it within 180 days.

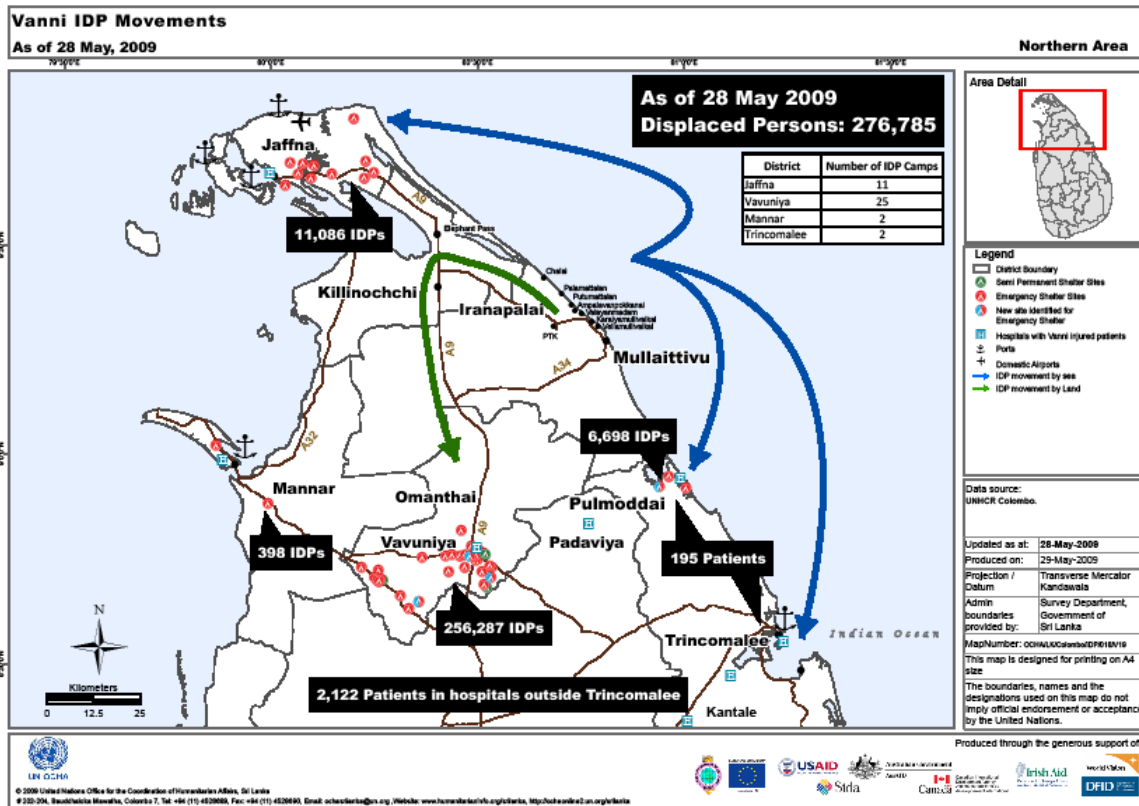
UN scaling up efforts to facilitate return home of displaced Sri Lankans, UN, June 02, 2009

The United Nations refugee agency and its partners are working to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of people who were uprooted by clashes between Sri Lankan Government forces and Tamil rebels are able to return to their homes. Some 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are living in 40 emergency shelter sites. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners have erected nearly 9,000 emergency shelters and over 14,000 tents so far, distributed non-food items and carried out protection monitoring activities.

“We continue to work closely with the Government to better respond to the emergency – from central Government level to the local Government officials who are involved with direct assistance activities on the ground,” UNHCR spokesperson Ron Redmond told reporters in Geneva today. Key priorities are to decongest and improve conditions in the camps, stabilize the population and prepare for their return home, he added. “UNHCR’s ultimate objective is to support efforts to restore normalcy in the lives of this population by ensuring that they can return home as soon as conditions are in place,” such as security issues, de-mining and reconstructing damaged homes, the spokesperson said.

The agency is also in talks with the Government to ensure that IDPs living in camps can move around freely, Mr. Redmond said. Further, the agency is encouraging authorities to wrap up

screening as soon as possible and separate ex-combatants to allow civilians to move more freely in and out of camps, he noted.



Yesterday, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reiterated his strong concerns over “unacceptably high” civilian casualties in the conflict between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE, while rejecting in the strongest terms any figure attributed to the UN. He “categorically” rejected any suggestions that the UN has deliberately under-estimated any figures. “Let me also say, whatever the total, the casualties in the conflict were unacceptably high – as I have also said repeatedly,” he added. Mr. Ban told the Assembly that during his 22-23 May visit to the South Asian island nation, he pressed the Government to heed international calls for an inquiry into alleged abuses and underscored the need for full accountability and transparency.

Vavuniya district, Sri Lanka: Treating the wounded and medical emergencies remains a priority, *Doctors Without Borders*, June 03, 2009

Over the last few weeks, while tens of thousands of people have emerged from the Vanni, the former conflict zone in northern Sri Lanka, MSF teams have been working alongside Sri Lankan Ministry of Health staff providing surgical and medical care to people who were caught up in the fighting. The situation remains extremely worrying inside the hospitals and among the 269,000 displaced people in Vavuniya District.

More than 500 wounded patients are receiving daily medical care in the three hospitals where MSF teams are working together with the Ministry of Health staff.

“Patients are mainly referred to our hospital by the Ministry of Health medical facilities in Menik Farm camp”, explained Severine Ramon, MSF coordinator for the field hospital. “We received more than 100 patients during the first week, mostly with wound infections, severe respiratory infections among children and dehydration because of diarrhea. But the current restrictions on access to the camps is limiting and slowing our ability to respond to the medical needs of the internally displaced persons.”

Top UN official urges Human Rights Council to protect civilians caught in war, UN, June 04, 2009

The top United Nations human rights official, highlighting the suffering of civilians caught up in armed conflict, has urged the Human Rights Council to protect this vulnerable group. “The condition of civilians in armed conflict continues to cause grave alarm,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay told the Geneva-based Council today. “Their suffering has been a tragic feature of confrontations in many countries and regions of the world. A neglect of basic human rights, as well as discriminatory practices, are often to be found at the roots of such conflicts.”

Ms. Pillay cited 11 countries where fighting is having a serious negative impact on the lives of civilians. Turning to Sri Lanka, Ms. Pillay stressed the importance of “unfettered humanitarian access to, as well as freedom of movement for,” the large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) held in closed camps. “A comprehensive process of accountability for human rights violations committed by all sides should be carried out,” she added. “To that end, I have called for an independent international inquiry.”

Sangam!

Association of Sri Lankan Tamils in the USA

www.sangam.org

July, 2009

(Note: The Ilankai Tamil Sangam has published similar quotes criticizing the SL government from Nov. 2007. Please visit the Sangam’s website www.sangam.org and click on archives to find them)