

Press Release

The Humanitarian Community in Sri Lanka Express Grave Concern and seeks a safe corridor for Civilians trapped in Mullaitivu

Heavy fighting between Government forces and the LTTE in the Northern Sri Lankan region of the Vanni has resulted in death and injury to civilians trapped in the area. The escalation of hostilities between the Government and the LTTE in recent days has significantly increased the number of civilian injuries and deaths due to the fighting.

The humanitarian community is deeply concerned over the plight of an estimated 250,000 displaced in the Vanni. In addition to concerns over their physical safety, access to healthcare and other services has become limited as fighting has seriously affected the supply of critical food aid and medical supplies, and has exacerbated the already dire shelter, water and sanitation situation. The LTTE continues to prevent civilians from leaving areas under its control, denying the right to seek safety in other parts of the country.

The Humanitarian Community calls on the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to accord priority to ensuring the safety and security of all civilians. The humanitarian community calls on the Government and the LTTE to respect the 32 square km “safe zone”, within the Vanni, announced by the Government on Thursday the 22nd of January. Over the last week civilians have been moving into this area, but reports of shelling and fighting in the safe zone continue.

We call upon the LTTE to allow full freedom of movement to all civilians, and to allow safe passage for those wishing to leave the conflict area. We ask the Government to provide civilians with information on safe routes out of the conflict zone, with internationally assisted humanitarian corridors that would provide safety measures for civilians coming out of the conflict zone seeking protection.

We also request the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure reception of civilians in accordance with international standards.

Ends/.

United Nations (UN), Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), Arbeiter—Samartier—Bund Sri Lanka (ASB Sri Lanka)/ SOLIDAR, ACTED – Sri Lanka, CARE International, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), FORUT, Handicap International, Oxfam G.B, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya (Sarvodaya), Save the Children in Sri Lanka (SCiSL), Sewa Lanka Foundation, World Vision Lanka (WVL), World University Services of Canada – Sri Lanka (WUSC – Sri Lanka), ZOA Refugee Care Netherlands (ZOA)

29th January, 2009
