

Stop the Genocide of Tamils

On January 2nd 2008, the Sri Lankan government unilaterally withdrew from the ceasefire agreement that was in existence since February 2002. This ended hopes for a peacefully negotiated settlement to the country's long running civil war. The Sri Lankan government's decision to annul the ceasefire agreement was criticized by the international community fearing that the termination of the ceasefire agreement would intensify the conflict and place the lives of innocent Tamils at risk.

Today, a silent tragedy unfolds in Sri Lanka. Since the ceasefire agreement of 2002, 3541 Tamil civilians have been killed, or have become disappeared and countless number of Tamils have been injured. However, the unilateral abrogation of the ceasefire agreement by the Sri Lankan government has led to atrocities unforeseen in the past. Between January 2nd 2008 and January 16th 2009:

1200 Tamils have been killed or have disappeared.

977 have been injured.

4772 haven arbitrarily detained.

This slow genocide needs urgent world attention.

Indiscriminate Bombings

Sri Lankan defence officials boast of having carried out over 700 air sorties in 2008, in the Tamil homeland. Sri Lanka has shown its total disregard for Tamil civilians in its continuous indiscriminate aerial and artillery bombardments of the Tamil homeland. The overwhelming majority of victims of these indiscriminate bombings have been Tamil civilians. Furthermore, the Sri Lankan state has targeted civil infrastructure vital to the civilian population. Schools, hospitals, internal displacement camps, and places of religious worships have all come under intense indiscriminate artillery and aerial bombardments.

The relentless waves of indiscriminate attacks by the Sri Lanka government has killed and maimed hundreds of Tamil civilians. Recently, the indiscriminate artillery barrage of a civilian settlement in Puthukkudiyiruppu has killed four civilians from the same family. Two of the victims were children. On January 18th 2008, a similar indiscriminate artillery barrage on civilians killed 18 civilians and wounded more than 42. According to International Herald Tribune, between January 20 and 23, 2009 alone, nearly 100 Tamil civilians have been killed by Sri Lankan government's aerial bombardment and artillery barrage of a hospital and other sites declared by warring parties as safe zones. The rate of massacres have been growing exponentially, with the civilians massacred reaching more than 300 by January 26,

2009. Countless incidents, like these continue and Tamil civilians continue to pay the ultimate price for Sri Lanka's indiscriminate bombings.

Internally Displaced Persons

As a result of the recent military aggression by the Sri Lankan government, aid agencies estimate that more than 300,000 innocent Tamil civilians are internally displaced in the Vanni region of Northern Sri Lanka. Several leading aid agencies and international non-governmental organizations have described the developing situation as a "humanitarian nightmare". There are thousands of Tamil civilians, young and old, who are living under trees, churches, temples and temporary displacement camps in appalling and disturbing living conditions by any standards. The government has implemented a genocidal strategy through the following:

- Targeted massacres of Tamil community leaders, media personnel, and humanitarian workers
- Massacres and indiscriminate artillery and aerial bombardment
- Expulsion of non-governmental organizations
- Embargo on food, medicines, fuel and other essentials
- Media blackout of the affected areas

Tamil Children and Military Aggression

Sri Lanka's military campaign has killed hundreds of children and many more have been orphaned. In addition, the genocidal war has also hampered the education of Tamil children. More than 61,000 Tamil children have been uprooted from their homes with no access to schools as over 500 schools have stopped operating due to the conflict. They are malnourished and are living under constant fear. Furthermore, the government's blockade of the affected areas means that school supplies do not reach these children as well. Sri Lanka is denying the right of children to education, in violation of international conventions.

Food and Medicine as Weapons of War

The Sri Lankan government has expelled international and local NGOs and has refused aid workers access to the displaced Tamil civilians living in the Vanni. Over 300,000 Tamil civilians have been forced to uproot from their homes and live under trees, schools, churches, temples and temporary displacement camps in appalling conditions.. Furthermore, the Tamil IDPs continue to be affected by the Sri Lanka Government's embargo on all essential items, including food, medicine, fuel, and clothes. Recently, John Campbell, from the World Food Programme (WFP), compared the conditions in Northern Sri Lanka to that of Somalia. Amnesty

International and Human Rights Watch have all denounced the government for blocking food to the displaced people.

Due to the embargo, there is an acute shortage of medicines in the Vanni region and this has led to hundreds of deaths that could have been otherwise prevented. A situation has arisen where people maimed and injured by indiscriminate bombings and claymore mine attacks simply cannot be treated with this shortage of medicines.

Arbitrary Arrests.

The notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act continued to be used as an excuse to arbitrarily arrest Tamil citizens. Since the abrogation of the ceasefire agreement on January 2nd 2008, a staggering 4772 have been arbitrarily arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and many of these people have been disappeared.

Attack on Freedom of Expression

The killing of journalists and media assistants has become a common occurrence in Sri Lanka. Further state enforced censorship, intimidation and threats to freedom of expression have flourished. Tens of journalists and media assistants have been killed in cold blood for disagreeing with the government on various issues. Sri Lanka is currently ranked 165 on the press freedom list of Reporters Without Border, which makes Sri Lanka one of the most dangerous places for the media. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestinian territories are considered safer places for the media compared to Sri Lanka. Journalists, like J.S. Tissainayagam, that condemn the government for its poor human rights record have been branded "terrorists" and are currently languishing in prisons.

Killing of Aid Workers

On August 4th 2006, 17 ACF aid workers were murdered in the town of Muttur, located in the North East of Sri Lanka. This slaughter accounts for the most dramatic crime ever committed against a non-governmental organization. Shortly after, three investigation proceedings were launched in Sri Lanka and none of them resulted in providing a conclusive report, due to the government's lack of cooperation with the investigations..

A call for an international investigation to one of the most gruesome killings of aid workers in the world have been ridiculed by the Sri Lankan government. The aid group and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) have blamed the government for the massacre.

In addition, at least, 10 Tamil Rehabilitation Organization and two ICRC Humanitarian workers have been killed by Government Sri Lanka and its paramilitary forces.

The Assassination of Democratically Elected Tamil Parliamentarians

Successive Sri Lankan governments since independence have targeted the democratically elected representatives of the Tamil people. Under the rule of Mahinda Rajapakse, Tamil parliamentarians have been targeted and silenced. Since Rajapakse assumed power four Tamil parliamentarians have been brutally assassinated:

- Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian, Joseph Pararajasingham, 70, was shot and killed by Sri Lankan Government paramilitary operative while he was attending the Christmas Eve mass in Batticaloa on 24th December 2005.
- Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian for Jaffna District, Nadarajah Raviraj, 44, was shot and killed in Colombo on November 10th 2006 by a Sri Lankan Government paramilitary operative.
- Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian of Jaffna District, Kiddinan Sivanesan, 50, was killed on March 6th 2008 in a Claymore attack carried out by the Sri Lanka Army Deep Penetration Unit on A-9 road.
- United National Party (UNP) parliamentarian, Thiyagarajah Maheswaran, was assassinated on January 1, 2008 while worshipping at a Hindu temple with his family.

Usage of Cluster Munitions

On December 3rd 2008, governments across the world gathered in Oslo, Norway to sign the most significant dis-armament and humanitarian treaty of the decade. The Convention on Cluster Munitions now makes it illegal to, produce, transfer and stockpile cluster munitions. As the civilized world was gearing up to ban the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, Sri Lanka was headed in another direction. The Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) in its indiscriminate bombing campaigns has been emboldened by the silence of the international community and therefore has unleashed the now banned cluster bombs on the civilian population. The SLAF has utilized cluster bombs against Tamil civilian settlements at least 4 times since January 2008, resulting in the death of several civilians and destruction to property.

Recommendations

We call upon all political parties in Canada to:

1. Organize an all-party summit to initiate immediate intervention strategies in Sri Lanka.
2. Ensure that the Canadian Government takes a principled policy decision in support of the Internally Displaced Tamils in Vanni, Sri Lanka and that it calls upon the Government of Sri Lanka to immediately halt the war and allow NGOs to assist the IDPs.
3. Endorse the Canadian Humanitarian Appeal for Relief of Tamils' campaign to alleviate the hardships of the IDPs.
4. Urge the Canadian Government to insist upon Sri Lanka to allow media access to affected regions to allow independent reporting of the humanitarian situation.

We call upon all the NGOs and Human Rights Organizations based in Canada to:

1. Appeal to the Canadian Government to intervene immediately to put an end to this Humanitarian tragedy.
2. Urge the Government of Sri Lanka to immediately allow the NGOs to the affected areas, to lift the economic embargo enforced by it.
3. Endorse the Canadian Humanitarian Appeal for Relief of Tamils' efforts to alleviate the sufferings Tamils in Sri Lanka

We call upon the United Nations to:

1. Adopt a United Nations Human Rights Council Emergency Resolution calling for an end to the massive human rights violations against Tamils.
2. Establish a UN monitoring mission in Sri Lanka with a mandate to report on all human rights violations and humanitarian issues.

And finally, and more importantly, we call upon all our fellow Canadians to write to media, Members of Parliaments, and other policy makers imploring them to urge the Government of Sri Lanka to immediately:

1. Allow the local and International NGOs and other humanitarian workers to provide much needed assistance to those displaced
2. Lift the embargo on food, medicine and other essential items.
3. Stop the indiscriminate bombing and shelling of civilians
4. Halt the war and to seek a negotiated political solution to the conflict