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News Focus: SRI LANKAN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

"When Good Men Do Nothing"

British Tamils call for **urgent international action** as Sri Lankan Government closes humanitarian aid supply route and attacks against civilians continue.

The Government of Sri Lanka has now kept the main arterial land route, the A9 highway, closed for more than 3 months, denying free movement, and blocking the transportation of food, medicine and other essential supplies to around 600,000 Tamil civilians who live in the North of the island.

It is reported that 60,000 Sri Lankan military personnel have effectively cordoned off the entire Northern Jaffna peninsula.

According to UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency) supplies of food and water are "alarmingly low" in some areas. Reports also indicate that there are severe shortages of food and other essentials in Vakarai (Eastern Sri Lanka). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has deplored the tragic loss of lives (at least 45 refugees including 6 children) and the injuries to hundreds of civilians resulting from the recent shelling of Vakarai (Eastern Sri Lanka), where several thousand internally displaced people had sought shelter.

Amnesty International's Asia Pacific Director Purna Sen says: "It is appalling that the military should attack a camp for displaced people - these are civilians who have already been forced from their homes because of the conflict."

CIVILIAN DEATH TOLL MOUNTS

- **10TH NOVEMBER 2006:** Nadarajah Raviraj, a leading Tamil parliamentarian who highlighted the humanitarian crises in the Northeast, is shot down in Colombo
- **2ND NOVEMBER 2006:** 900 patients flee as Sri Lankan Air Force bombs the area around Killinochi General Hospital
- **19TH OCTOBER 2006:** Medicines Sans Frontiers is forced to withdraw its services to Tamil civilians in the Jaffna peninsula
- **14TH AUGUST 2006:** 51 school children killed as Sri Lankan Air Force targets orphanage
- **5TH AUGUST 2006:** 17 Tamil Aid-workers are reported to have been 'Gunned Down' by Sri Lankan security forces

Amongst others The British Tamil's Forum represents some 3,000 Accountants, 2,500 Doctors, 5,500 Nursing and other Health & Social Care Professionals, 3,000 Engineers, 5,000 Small Businesses, 250 Firms of Solicitors and Legal Practitioners and over 10,000 other Tamil Graduates working in key positions in the UK's public, private and voluntary sectors.

OPEN LETTER TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE TONY BLAIR, MP, THE PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister

"When good men do nothing" is a phrase attributed to the English philosopher Edmund Burke, and his condition for what he called The Triumph of Evil. Burke said all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

As British Tamils, we implore you not to sit by and allow evil to triumph in Sri Lanka. We urge you and your government not to turn a blind eye to the on-going human rights violations being carried out against the civilian population and to do more to oppose those who target civilians with violence and deprivation.

This appeal has the backing and support of a wide range of groups and organisations working to support the advancement of an estimated 150,000 strong Tamil community in the United Kingdom.

You will be aware North and East of Sri Lanka is where Tamil people traditionally lived in Sri Lanka and it is our collective belief that since independence from Britain in 1948 the British Government has had a duty to recognise the long-standing suffering of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

We would therefore urge you and the Foreign Secretary to intervene and compel the Government of Sri Lanka to:

- Take immediate action to open the arterial routes and to ensure that the passage of all food, medical and other essential humanitarian relief supplies reaches Vakarai and the Jaffna peninsula.
- Ensure that the civilian population is respected and protected in all circumstances, in accordance with the principle of distinction between civilian and military targets and thus avoid indiscriminate attacks.
- Allow and respect the freedom of movement of the Tamil population in the North and East of the island.
- Ensure the safety of all Aid workers, health professionals and others and allow all such personnel free access to all war affected areas.
- Stop attacks on hospitals and all other health institutions and their surroundings and to recognise and regard such sites as safe zones.

Signed The British Tamil's Forum

Register your support at: www.tamilsforum.com

British Tamil's Forum Members: Agricolas and Friends Association, Ambal United Sports Club, Association of Christian Tamils, Batticaloa Underprivileged Development Society, Britania Hindu Temple Trust, British Association of Tamil Schools, British Tamil Association, Chavakachchery Hindu Old Boys Association, Concord Cricket Club, Coventry Tamil Welfare Association, Dollish Hill Cricket Club, E-17 Football Club, Eastham Tamils Cricket Club, Eelam Boys Football Club, Eelam Cricket Club, Elanthalir Volleyball Club, Enfield Nagapoosani Ambal Temple, European Tamil Federation, Harrow Boys Football Club, International Association of Tamil Journalist, International Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation, Jaffna Boys Cricket Club, Jaffna Hindu College Association, Jaffna Hindu College Old Boys Association, Jolly Stars Sports Club, Karri Welfare Association, Katpaka Vinayakar Temple, Kingston Boys Sports Club, Kingston Institute of Tamil Culture, Ladder, Lewisham Cricket Club, Lewisham Town Cricket Club, London Divan Kovil, Mahajana Football Club, Mahajana Old Boys Association, Mallakam Development Association, Mallavi Sports Club, Malvern Football Club, Manalkadu Football, Mannar Suban Sports Club, Maruthanila Mandram, Medical Institute of Tamils, Millenium Cricket Club, Northern Cricket Club, Olympics Sports Club, Oxford Centre for Tamil Education & Finearts, Paramparai of Palugamam, Pungudutivu M.V Old Boys Association, Ratnam Foundation, Redbridge Tamil Society, Santos Sports Club, SEDOT, Sivayogam Trust, Skyrose Sports Club, Southall Football Club, Southall Lankians Cricket Club, Sri Rajarajeswary Amman Temple, Sri Venkateswara Temple Birmingham, Srimurugan Sports Club, St.Antony's College Kayts Alumni Association of Europe, Standing Committee of Tamil Speaking Peoplem, Sunrise Sports Club, Surbiton Sports Club, SUSTAIN, Tamil Action Committee, Tamil Aid, Tamil Councillors Association, Tamil Health Organisation, Tamil Peace Support Group, Tamil People's Forum, Tamil Refugee Action Group, Tamil School Sports Association, Tamil Union Cricket Club, Tamils for Labour, TECH, Technical Association of Tamil Forum, The Federation of Tamil Associations, Thenmaradchi Development Association, Union College Old Students Association, Vaddu Cricket Club, Valvai Blues Sports Club, Veeman Benad Sports Club, Watchme Football Club, Wembly Football Club, West London Tamil School, West-3 Football Club, White Pigeon, World Culture Association.