



Lanka Update 2

February 2009

## Sri Lanka Situation Report

According to International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) statement 10/02/2009, The ICRC remains extremely concerned about the plight of civilians still trapped in the Vanni, an area that has been hard hit by intense fighting in recent days. Most of the region's population is now displaced and completely dependent on outside aid, yet none has reached the area since 29 January. It is imperative that both parties immediately allow food and other urgently needed items to reach those who are trapped.



Hospital in Vanni – www.tamilnet.com

ICRC organised the seaborne transport, the first ship evacuated 140 wounded and sick civilians from the combat zones Sri Lanka on 12/02/09 and it is estimated over 1212 injured are admitted in the Trincomalee Hospital and the nearby Methodist Girls College has been converted to treat the patients as the hospital does not have sufficient beds to treat the injured

All the ICRC expatriate staff members who had remained inside the battle zone to assist the injured had traveled out of the area with the second seaborne evacuation. ICRC was the only international agency with a permanent presence inside the zone in the Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu Districts, leaving 130 local ICRC staff members to handle the situation in the area.



www.newsimg.bbc.co.uk

According to UN agencies the last substantial supply convoy of 800 metric tonnes of food supplies traveled to the combat zone on 16/01/09, while a smaller convoy of 170mt entered on 29/01/09. Aid agencies are warning the situation of some 250,000 civilians still trapped in the zone will face humanitarian crisis, as they are completely dependent on humanitarian aid from the outside. Total livelihood in the area has been destroyed and the



total population is displaced and stay in over crowded area, which is less then 30 square KM.

At least 75,000 children are trapped in the Vanni conflict zone with out education hampered for some 30,000 students and 154 schools closed most of them are destroyed.

More than 570 civilians were killed in the military offensive, shelling and aerial

bombings in February inside the safety zone. Minority political party, TNA parliamentary MP for Vanni S.

Kanagratnam told the media, military was shelling deep into rebel controlled territory and deliberately targeting hospitals and internally displaced people. Sri Lankan defence secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa told Sky News - Alex Crawford, "NOTHING SHOULD EXIST BEYOND GOVERNMENT NO FIRE ZONE"

### **International Pressure**

The government has rejected international call for a ceasefire, demanding the rebels lay down their arms. The Tamil Tigers have said they will not do so until they have a "guarantee of living with freedom and dignity and sovereignty". The UN Secretary-General also calls for all parties to allow and facilitate the movement of 250,000 civilians currently in the area of fighting to safe areas, on 26 January.

US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and British Foreign Secretary David Miliband on Tuesday jointly called on the warring parties in the island of Sri Lanka not to target the civilian areas and to protect civilians, and called to respect the International law of armed conflict.

Tamils around the world have protested in their thousands about the fate of civilians trapped amid the fighting. More than 200,000 Tamils marched in Chennai – South India and staged protests – fasting/ business shut down and non violent demonstrations, similar protests were organized by Tamils in Europe, North America and South Africa. Triggered off by Muthukumar in South India, eight people have already committed self-immolation in response to the plight of Vanni people in Tamil Nadu, Malaysia and Switzerland.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu , urged for a fact-finding mission there under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General, in furtherance of the Security Council's primary responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.



### **Health**

The ministry of health has issued orders to doctors and other health staff to leave Mullaitivu district immediately. The Sri Lankan government said in a statement on 3 February that it was advising medical staff and their patients at hospitals and clinics in the combat area to move either into government controlled areas. The Red Cross says the hospital in Puthukkudiyiruppu town in Mullaitivu district has been hit by shells.

The US based Human Rights Watch, in its report issued on 20 February, have also put the civilian casualty figures at 2,000. Newly obtained information places total civilian casualties at 7,000, with 2,000 deaths, the HRW said.

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