

Sri Lanka--Thousands Caught in Conflict
OCHA
5 May 2009

According to reports from those remaining inside the conflict zone, fighting has intensified with both light and heavy weapons being used, according to OCHA quoted during the daily noon briefing at Un Headquarters in new York.

As of today, more than 188,000 people have crossed out of the conflict zone, with the vast majority accommodated in Internally Displaced Persons camps in Vavuniya. Over 186,000 are in camps, and some 1,700 wounded and their caregivers are in hospitals. Some 50,000 or more people are still trapped in the conflict zone. In Vavuniya, there have been positive developments in addressing basic needs for the influx of IDPs. Among them, the World Food Programme has been able to accelerate food distribution in Vavuniya, and the Government of Sri Lanka has agreed that cooked meals should be provided at Omanthai screening point. ()

Asked about reports of shelling, the UN Spokeswoman said that the United Nations was unable to confirm such reports independently, but added that it remains particularly concerned about the situation of the estimated 50,000 remaining civilians in the area, who are believed to be at serious risk. The United Nations also remains concerned about heavy fighting, she said.

Food, water and other basic supplies from United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations were en route on 30 April to help some 175,000 civilians, while 4,500 family-sized tents had been set up in the past four days by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes during a 29 April press conference in New York.

Mr. Holmes also said he had met with President Mahinda Rajapaksa and key Government ministers in the nations capital, Colombo, on Monday to push for a umanitarian pause in the fighting and give United Nations and other aid workers sufficient time to unload and distribute essential supplies. However, Sri Lankan officials had rejected that request, claiming that the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would exploit the lull to regroup militarily and continue their armed resistance. The United Nations would continue to press for a pause and full access to the zone for its staff.

Source:

<http://ochaonline.un.org/tabid/5362/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Press Briefing by Sir John Holmes:

http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2009/090429_Holmes.doc.htm

To see the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Situation Update as of 29-31 April 2009, please see the following link:

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MUMA-7RM2HX-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MUMA-7RM2HX-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf)