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One of the worlds bloodiest conflicts has come to a violent conclusion in the island nation of Sri Lanka. Nearly all the leaders of the secessionist Tamil Tigers, including their notorious commander Velupillai Prabhakaran, have been killed or captured. The government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa has been claiming a glorious total victory - and denying allegations from doctors on the scene that tens of thousands of innocent civilians have been the victims of indiscriminate artillery fire and scorched-earth tactics.

Rajapaksa must give aid organizations access to hundreds of thousands of uprooted Tamils in the island's northeast. Overwhelmed doctors in overcrowded camps are amputating limbs without sufficient drugs and medical supplies. The people in those camps desperately need medical care, food, and water. And they should be allowed to return to their homes as soon as possible.

Once the humanitarian crisis is addressed, the European Union must follow up on its call for an investigation of war crimes against civilians. The Rajapaksa government has tried to draw a screen around its actions, banning independent journalists and international aid groups from the war zone. But the United Nations adopted a resolution in 2005 on the "responsibility to protect" populations that are not protected by their own governments. The massive killing and wounding of civilians on Sri Lanka represents exactly the sort of case that resolution was meant to address.

Ultimately, the only way for Sri Lanka to avoid another Tamil rebellion is to grant the Tamils some form of local autonomy in their region. Now that the Tigers have been crushed, the Sinhalese majority of Sri Lanka has no excuse for not addressing the legitimate grievances of the Tamil minority.

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