

Sri Lanka: 40,000 more flee battle zone
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An estimated 40,000 more people have fled Sri Lanka's north-eastern coastal pocket, where the military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are engaged in fierce fighting, the United Nations refugee agency has reported.

This would bring the estimated total of those having fled the conflict zone, where civilians have been trapped for months in perilous conditions, to over 100,000, according to Ron Redmond, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The newly escaped groups were expected to reach the districts of Vavuniya and Jaffna, which are hosting most of the internally displaced people (IDPs) within 48 hours. A few thousand have already arrived in each district. As civilians are transported into the sites, UNHCR is still ascertaining the total number of new IDPs in the two districts, Mr. Redmond said in Geneva.

With more similar movements expected, UNHCR and shelter agencies are working with the government to identify more land, including in the district of Mannar, to alleviate overcrowding at the existing IDP sites, he added. UNHCR, together with the government and partners, is providing emergency shelter support and non-food aid to the new arrivals while carrying out protection monitoring at the sites and stockpiling relief items in preparation for additional displacement, the agency says. ()

In addition, other sectors were not well-financed at all: shelter stood at 18 per cent, water and sanitation at 16 per cent, and health at just 15 per cent.

The World Food Programme (WFP) said it had enough food to feed 100,000 people for the next two weeks and more was being sent from Colombo, the capital of the island nation.

Source: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=30537&Cr=Sri+lanka&Cr1=unhcr>