

Amnesty International

27 March 2009

A human rights crisis is unfolding in Sri Lanka where tens of thousands of people are trapped in the middle of heavy fighting between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lanka Armed Forces in the north eastern Wanni region. The Tamil Tigers, swept by Sri Lankan forces from much of their de facto state in eastern and northern Sri Lanka, are now confined to a 35 square kilometer sliver of coastal land. With themn many cases, involuntarilyre thousands of civilians, nearly all ethnic Tamils, caught between the sea and two fighting forces with records of serious human rights abuses. Most independent observers estimate there are between 150,000 to 200,000 civilians still confined in this area; the Sri Lankan government has claimed that there are nly 50,000 to 60,000 civilians there. What is indisputable is that these people face grave risk of harm from military action, lack of food and health supplies, and the outbreak of disease. They must be immediately evacuated from the conflict zone and provided with shelter and support.

Most of the civilians now caught up in the conflict have already been forced to flee their homes in multiple waves of displacement during the 25-year-war in Sri Lanka, as well as after the Indian Ocean tsunami. They now face a potential humanitarian catastrophe as the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan government continues to disregard their well-being. The Tamil Tigers have used these civilians as a buffer against government forces, as well as a steady source of income, forced recruitment (including of children), and involuntary labor. For its part, the Sri Lankan government, buoyed by its initial rapid military advances, has pursued a conclusive military end-game without fulfilling its obligations for the fate of the civilians trapped in the conflict zone. ()

Full text of the report:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA37/004/2009/en>