

Human Rights Watch

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The Sri Lankan army, despite government denials, is indiscriminately shelling the "no-fire zone" in northern Sri Lanka where thousands of civilians are trapped by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Human Rights Watch said today, citing new information from the region. ()

"We receive reports of civilians being killed and wounded daily in the no-fire zone, while the Sri Lankan government continues to deny the attacks," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "The Tamil Tigers' use of civilians as human shields adds to the bloodshed." ()

The Sri Lankan government continues its official denials of any attacks in the no-fire zone, including in discussions with top international officials.()

Collecting accurate information from the conflict zone is extremely difficult, as the government continues to block access for media and independent observers. ()

The situation of the civilians trapped in the conflict zone is aggravated by the acute shortage of food, sanitary facilities, and medication, as international humanitarian agencies cannot deliver sufficient supplies to the conflict area.

Last week, Human Rights Watch sent a letter to members of the board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) about the government's request for a US\$1.9 billion loan to address its financial crisis and, according to the Sri Lankan Central Bank's request, to "continue with the resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction work in the Northern Province." It has asked the IMF to finalize negotiations on the loan by March 31. In its letter, Human Rights Watch emphasized that the government's current policies and practices are counterproductive to the stated goal of the IMF loan and urged that IMF board members discuss concrete action the government needs to take to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the north.

Source: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/03/23/sri-lanka-no-let-army-shelling-civilians>

Photos depicting the human and physical destruction of the governments repeated and indiscriminate shelling of civilians in the Putumattalan area:

<http://www.hrw.org/en/features/sri-lanka-shelling-civilians>