

NGO Letter to the UNSC, UN Member States, and OCHA Concerning Crisis in Sri Lanka
22 April 2009

NGOs submitted [a letter concerning the crisis in Sri Lanka](#) to the UN Security Council, United Nations Member States, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Department of Political Affairs (DPA), and the Executive Office of the Secretary General (EOSG). The letter was undersigned by Global Action to Prevent War, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, International Crisis Group, MedAct, Operation USA, Minority Rights Group, TearFund, and WFM-IGP.

The letter provided recommendations to the UN Security Council and the Secretary General regarding the Crisis in Sri Lanka. The letter noted the dire situation facing civilians in the Vanni region of Northern Sri Lanka, in which the crisis has reached a point of extreme urgency. Tens of thousands of civilians (and possibly over 100,000) remain trapped in the Sri Lankan designated safe zone, an area not much larger than New York's Central Park. These civilians remain at imminent risk of mass atrocity crimes in an extremely untenable situation, in which they are used as human shields by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and indiscriminately shelled by Sri Lankan forces. The letter implores the UNSC and SG to remember their commitments to the Responsibility to Protect and crisis prevention, and act swiftly to ensure the safety of the trapped Sri Lankan civilians.

World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy signed onto the letter within its own individual organization capacity. The World Federalist Movement- Institute for Global Policy houses the Secretariat of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect.

Your excellency,

We, the undersigned non-governmental organisations working in or on Sri Lanka, write to urge you to act immediately in the face of the humanitarian tragedy now unfolding in that country.

The situation in the Vanni area of Sri Lanka has reached a point of extreme urgency. Tens of thousands of civilians, possibly well over 100,000, remain trapped in the so-called safe zone, an area not much larger than Manhattan's Central Park, held as human shields by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and exposed to indiscriminate shelling by the Sri Lankan military. According to available estimates, including from United Nations staff on the ground, as many as 5000 civilians have died in the fighting since mid-January, including at least 500 children. Dozens more are dying each day, and the remaining civilians are exposed to severe shortages of food, water, and medical treatment. With the government of Sri Lanka poised to launch a final offensive to finish off the LTTE, John Holmes, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, has stated that bloodbath seems an increasingly real possibility. The United Nations Security Council and the UN Secretary-General must take the following specific steps to live up to their respective

responsibilities to protect civilians and prevent mass atrocities:

The Security Council should formally include Sri Lanka on its agenda and agree on a statement that:

1. Urges the Sri Lankan authorities to allow international monitors in the conflict area and especially in eception centres, to reassure both fleeing civilians and surrendered LTTE fighters that they will be treated according to international standards;
2. Requests that the UN system conduct a needs assessment and accelerate contingency planning in the event of a massive civilian exodus from the afe zone;
3. Calls on all member-states to step up pressure on the LTTE, by tightening restrictions on foreign financing and support for the Tamil Tigers and engaging vigorously with the Tamil diaspora;
4. Creates an international commission of inquiry to investigate credible allegations of atrocity crimes and violations of the laws of war and declares that those most responsible for any preventable civilian carnage will be held accountable;
5. Encourage its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to conduct a field mission to Sri Lanka.
6. Calls on the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government to cease hostilities with immediate effect and to agree to a humanitarian pause of at least two weeks, in order to permit the reopening of access routes for food, water and medical supplies;
7. Demands that the LTTE cease forced recruitment and allow those civilians who wish to leave to do so;

The Secretary-General should:

1. Speak out strongly and unambiguously in support of the above, including by personally backing the UN-estimated figures of war-affected persons, including the number of casualties;
2. Ensure interagency coordination during the needs assessment and contingency planning processes;
3. If necessary, use his powers under Article 99 of the UN Charter and bring the situation in Sri Lanka to the attention of the Security Council;
4. Prepare to dispatch to Sri Lanka a high-level envoy as soon as a humanitarian pause is declared, to oversee any evacuation of civilians from the afe zone, to serve as the point person for the UN system, and to ensure that the warring parties abide by international norms and obligations.

Signed,

The Global Global Action to Prevent War
The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
The International Crisis Group
MedAct, Operation USA
Minority Rights Group
TearFund
World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy

[See full letter in PDF document.](#)