

The imminent risk of mass atrocity crimes occurring in the designated civilian safe zone remains high, with estimates of 60,000- 100,000 civilians trapped in a 12 kilometer beach in Northern Sri Lanka. In an offensive intended to end the long violent conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Sri Lankan military is accused of using indiscriminate force against the Tamil civilian population in the remaining LTTE-controlled territory. Numerous reports indicate that the LTTE is using violent force to prevent those wishing to flee the conflict area from doing so. Human Rights Watch has observed massive human rights violations and failure to abide by international law obligations by both parties to the conflict.

Following calls by the UN and others for a humanitarian pause, a two day ceasefire from 12-14 April was called by President Mahinda Rajapakse to observe the Tamil and Sinhalese New Year. The brief lapse in hostilities ended after 48 hours, and reports of intense fighting in the designated civilian safe zone have raised flags of imminent mass atrocity crimes and large scale loss of life. Information from today, 20 April 2009 coming out of the rapidly shrinking space indicates that up to 25,000 civilians fleeing the safe zone as the Sri Lanka government once again issues an ultimatum of surrender to the LTTE within 24 hours.

ICRtoP will closely monitor the situation in Sri Lanka, both in relation to the protection of civilians and the application of the Responsibility to Protect. To see compiled articles, statements, and reports on the escalating humanitarian and human rights disaster in Sri Lanka, please see our Special Listserv of 9 April 2009, which can be found here:

http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/latest_news/2220 .

The latest statement by Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Sir John Holmes on Sri Lanka, dated 16 April 2009: http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs//2009/090415_Holmes.doc.htm

Latest News Update of 20 April 2009 with the following included articles, reports, and statements.

Listserv: http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/latest_news/2277

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