



Tamil Information Centre

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Committed to Human Rights and Community Development

TIC Statement

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TIC Condemns Targeting Civilians and Impunity

The Tamil Information Centre (TIC) is extremely concerned that the escalating violence may affect the ceasefire and irretrievably damage the peace process in Sri Lanka. The TIC is shocked that the Sri Lankan government took the decision, following the suicide attack at the Army headquarters in Colombo, to launch air strikes on 26 April 2006 on civilian targets in Trincomalee District. At least 12 people have been killed and according to the Trincomalee Government Agent 10,700 families have been displaced. UNHCR has also conformed that a large number of people have fled from their homes.

The TIC condemns the suicide bomb attack in Colombo which killed eight people and wounded many others, including the Army Commander Sarath Fernando, and wishes to make clear that such attacks, particularly during a ceasefire, will in no way help the Tamil cause or the Tamil people.

But, whatever the provocation, launching air strikes against innocent civilians is callous and a crime under international law. It is regrettable that a government which claims to be a democratic institution elected by the people, has chosen to attack the people themselves without any consideration for their safety. This action will further erode the confidence of the Tamil people in the Sri Lankan government, which has miserably failed to provide them protection and has prolonged their suffering by denying them adequate relief and reconstruction aid.

A fact-finding mission of Sri Lankan civil society organizations to Trincomalee, including INFORM and Devasarana Development Centre, says that a gang of armed Sinhalese persons attacked the Tamils in Trincomalee, after a bomb attack in the market place on 12 April. According to eye-witness accounts, the security forces stood by and allowed the burning and killing to take place. More than 20 people were killed, over 100 homes destroyed and more than 3,000 people made homeless in Trincomalee town and the villages of Nadesapuram, Thuvarankadu and Andalkulam. Some 30 shops belonging to Tamils and Muslims were also burned and a Hindu temple in Nadesapuram was attacked. The fact-finding mission says that in the current climate of insecurity, attempts by politically motivated groups to incite religious and ethnic hatred should be dealt with immediately and that steps should be taken by the government to end impunity.

The TIC joins other human rights agencies within and outside the island in urging the Sri Lankan government to take immediate, adequate and honest measures to provide relief to the people affected by the air strikes and launch an impartial investigation into the attacks on civilians in Trincomalee. The TIC calls upon the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to put people's interests first, and resume peace talks without delay. The TIC also calls upon the international community to use its influence on the parties to stop targeting civilians, end all violence and re-enter peace negotiations.

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