

PEACE SUPPORT GROUP

PRESS RELEASE

PSG Calls for Immediate Halt of Hostilities

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The Peace Support Group is deeply disturbed and saddened by the deteriorating security situation in the north and east of Sri Lanka and calls on the parties to the CFA, the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, together with the SLMM, the Norwegian facilitators and the Co-Chairs to take immediate steps to ensure that the commitments to the CFA are reaffirmed. It is imperative that adherence to minimum international human rights and humanitarian norms are ensured, especially the lives and livelihoods of civilians of all ethnic communities in the north and east.

We strongly condemn the closure of the Mavil Aru anicut by the LTTE. This is an issue that could and should have been resolved through negotiation. We also condemn the use of military force by the GOSL which extended to air strikes against LTTE positions in Mullaitivu and Batticaloa. The military engagement between the GOSL forces and the LTTE has resulted in the loss of life and large scale displacement which continue to mount in the Trincomalee district in particular. There are reports from Muttur and Serunuwara of shortages of food and water and of the lack of adequate medical facilities. These reports indicate that a humanitarian crisis is brewing.

The LTTE maintains that its decision to close the anicut was due to a dispute regarding the issue of water to Tamils living in areas under their control. The Government of Sri Lanka states that its military actions in these areas have been based on its obligation to provide 'humanitarian' needs to the people.

Since both the GOSL and the LTTE state that their actions are for the well-being of the people living in areas under their control, we call on them to make these rhetorical commitments a practical reality for these people by ceasing all hostilities immediately. Despite the heightened tension and military engagement on the ground, we appreciate the continued affirmation of the CFA by the GOSL and LTTE . We strongly urge them therefore to return to a path of negotiations, not only on the opening of the anicut at Mavil Aru and the provision of water to all the people of that region but also on a framework for power and resource sharing that will end this conflict on a long-term and sustainable basis.

We also call on the international community to play a stronger role at the present moment in ensuring that minimum international human rights and humanitarian norms are observed by both parties and that the peace process in Sri Lanka is revived.

Signed

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