



CANADIAN TAMIL CONGRESS ■ CONGRÈS TAMOUL CANADIEN

31 Progress Avenue, Suite #202, Scarborough M1P 4S6 T: 416-240-0078 F:416-240-1601 e-mail:info@ctconline.ca

For Immediate Release

Special Session on Sri Lanka - United Nations Human Rights Council

May 25, 2008, Toronto, ON/Geneva, Switzerland – In a critical development on the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Sri Lanka, the United Nations Human Rights Council is to convene a special session on the deteriorating humanitarian situation faced by over 300,000 Tamils refugees in the North and East. The special session follows a visit by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon to Sri Lanka where his call for unfettered access by aid groups to the camps was promptly rejected by the Sri Lankan government, and his scheduled meeting with elected Tamil MPs blocked.

The request for a special session was submitted by Germany, with the support of 17 other countries, including the Canada, France and the UK. In turn, the Sri Lankan government has deemed the call for the session an effort by Western democracies to interfere in an internal situation.

“We welcome Canada’s support of this session, since the statements by the Sri Lankan government are disconcerting”, says David Poopalapillai, spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress. “The Government of Sri Lanka claims that the war with the LTTE is over, however we are getting credible reports indicating that the war on Tamil civilians continues. Why are aid agencies, media and independent monitors being barred? What is the government of Sri Lanka trying to hide?”, he added.

Currently over 300,000 Tamil civilians are being held in government run internment camps that UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has described as lacking adequate food, medical and sanitation facilities. Over 14 aid agencies, including Save the Children and Oxfam, have raised the alarm about the Government of Sri Lanka not providing access to aid groups to assist civilians in these camps.

The Canadian Tamil Congress calls on the International Community to hold the Sri Lankan government accountable for gross and flagrant violations of Human Rights. “The Tamil community’s faith in the international community can only be restored if steps are taken to save the IDP’s from further suffering. It is also incumbent upon the International community to ensure that those who committed war crimes and crimes against humanity are held to account,” stated Harini Sivalingam, a Tamil Canadian Representative in Geneva.

For more information, please contact the Canadian Tamil Congress at (416) 240 0078.

-30-