



Canadian Humanitarian Appeal for the Relief of Tamils (CanadianHART)

August 18, 2009
For Immediate Release

Canadian HART and Toronto Tamil Basketball Association Host Blood Drive

Tamil Community Organizes Blood Drive in Memory of the Lives Lost and Those Suffering in Sri Lanka

(Toronto, ON)- On August 23, 2009 Canadian HART and the Toronto Tamil Basketball Association (TTBA) will team up to host the Canadian Tamil Congress's second annual Tamil community blood drive.

This year's blood drive occurs at a time when the Tamil community in Toronto is mourning the humanitarian tragedy that recently unfolded in Sri Lanka and the current crisis of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Earlier this year, the 26-year long Sri Lankan civil war came to bloody end and cost the lives of over 20,000 innocent Tamil civilians. The overwhelming majority of casualties were Tamil as the fighting occurred in the Tamil populated areas of the North and East of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government's military operation against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was described by the United Nation's as a "blood shed." Several human rights groups, including Amnesty International, the International Committee for the Red Cross and Human Rights Watch have denounced the Sri Lankan army's treatment of Tamil civilians as the army used such methods as the bombing of designated 'safety zones' while refusing to allow NGOs to provide medical aid to injured civilians.

The Canadian HART and TTBA blood drive is in memory of the over 100, 000 Tamil lives lost over the period of the 26-year civil war as well as the 300, 000 IDPs currently being held in internment camps.

While the Sri Lankan government has declared the end to the civil war, the war on Tamil civilians continues as 300, 000 Tamils, including 120, 000 children, are being held in internment camps. Civilians who were displaced by the fighting were put into what the Sri Lankan government calls 'welfare camps.' However, several human rights monitoring groups have revealed that the camps set up by the government are best described as 'internment camps.'

Tamil civilians are not allowed to leave the camps and the camps are heavily guarded by the military in addition to being enclosed by barbed wire. Civilians are denied adequate food, water and medical care. A *Times News* report recently provided evidence that in Menik Farm, the largest of the camps, 1,400 people die per week due to preventable conditions. Women are frequently raped and children and youth are abducted. On August 10, 2009, Amnesty International released a detailed report documenting the "horrendous" conditions of the camps.

Kate Allen, UK Director of Amnesty International stated, "These are innocent people being treated in the most inhumane way."

On Sunday August 23 we ask that you donate blood in memory of the lives lost and the many Tamil lives that continue to be held hostage in the internment camps. The blood drive will be held at Centennial College Residence and Conference Room at 940 Progress Avenue from 10am-2pm. Please contact (416) 240-0078 to book an appointment.

Through community outreach and media campaigns, Canadian HART seeks to raise awareness about the human rights abuses against the Tamil minority population in Sri Lanka. Working in collaboration with Canadian unions, student groups, faith-based organizations and community organizations, Canadian HART aims to draw Canadian and international attention to the situation of Tamils in Sri Lanka and to push for an international presence and monitoring of the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka.