TO: President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Early in 2009, over 280,000 civilians fled the war zone in northeast Sri Lanka as the Sri Lankan military reconquered all the territory held by the opposition Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and killed their senior leaders, thus ending the 26-year-old conflict. Since the conclusion of hostilities in mid-May, the displaced civilians have been held in overcrowded, military-run internment camps. The Sri Lankan government will not allow the civilians to leave the camps until a screening process to detect suspected LTTE fighters among the civilians has been carried out. Aid agencies, journalists and human rights observers have not been given full access to the camps. Without independent monitors in the camps, the civilians are at risk of human rights abuses from the security forces.

We call on the Sri Lankan government to immediately allow the displaced civilians freedom of movement: those who wish to leave the camps should be free to do so. The camps should be placed under civilian, not military, management. Aid agencies, journalists and human rights observers should be promptly provided with full, unhindered access to the camps to carry out their functions and prevent possible abuses.

Name Address