



**HUMANITARIAN LAW PROJECT**  
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16 November 2006

**Mr. Paul Hunt,**

Special Rapporteur on the right to health

**Mr. Jean Ziegler,**

Special Rapporteur on the right to food

**Mr. Walter Kälin,**

Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of  
internally displaced persons

Dear Sirs:

International Educational Development (IED) and the Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL) alert you that since our letter to you on 9 November 2006 the humanitarian crisis of Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka has seriously worsened. Of the hundreds of thousands of Tamils facing starvation some have already died. We have taken the liberty to forward to you in separate emails several press accounts of the unfolding tragedy.

We also draw to your attention the many statements and concerns raised by Mr. Jan Egelund, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, that can be viewed on the main UN website. We especially point out his statement about the absolute obligation of States to ensure the unimpaired distribution of humanitarian relief.

In our view, this overall situation appears to be close to genocidal, if one considers practically no Tamil farming due to the scale and scope of the High Security Zones (HSZ) in the areas where Tamils farm; the essential elimination of the Tamil fishing industry; blockages of emergency food (highway A9 is not the only point of blockage); the failure of needed agricultural supplies, such as seeds and fertilizers, to reach Tamil farmers whose planting season should begin soon; and the severe restriction on post-Tsunami aid to the heavily affected Tamil



NorthEast. The Tamil communities had been still struggling to even modestly recover when the government military forces began sustained military operations against them and further blocked food and medicine.<sup>1</sup> Nearly one third of the Tamil population on the island of Ceylon is in exile, tens of thousands are attempting to flee to India, and the entire remaining NorthEast Tamil population is in danger of starvation.

The government of Sri Lanka is emboldened because practically no pronouncements made by the international community about the appalling atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan government's military forces indicate that the victims are Tamil and the attacks against them are made by the Sri Lankan forces. Indeed, if one reads most of these pronouncements, a person who does not follow this war (and truly THIS war is a forgotten one) could reasonably conclude that instead of the government forces repeatedly attacking Tamils huddled in camps for the internally displaced and facing starvation, the LTTE has repeatedly attacked Sinhala civilians huddled in camps for the internally displaced and facing starvation. Again, the war is not in the Sinhala portions of the island, so, of course, there are very few Sinhala victims.

For some inexplicable reason, the government of Sri Lanka has had a free ride since 1987 -- and has been "successful" in converting what is, of course, a war, into "terrorism and counter-terrorism" -- demonizing the Tamil victims in a blatantly racist way, and getting the rest of the international community to go along with this. This is totally unacceptable, and should this continue, will destroy the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations human rights programme.<sup>2</sup> Now, the government is seeking more and more foreign aid for military *materiel* (jet bombers, rockets, etc) to counter "terrorism." Accordingly, from the government's perspective, the Geneva Conventions and humanitarian law do not apply -- when, of course, they do. Bombings and starvation could mean the total annihilation of the Tamil people -- genocide will have occurred, everyone was on notice, and no one did anything.

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<sup>1</sup> We also view the United States government as complicit in a possible genocide due to the directive to the American Red Cross about withholding donated Tsunami relief funds from any Tamil areas, even those under the control of the government of Sri Lanka. Freezing the Tamil Relief Organization funds is also suspect in this regard.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, the government has had strong support in this, especially from the United States whose geopolitical interests in Palaly Airfield, Trincomalee Harbour, and other strategic parts of Sri Lanka in the Tamil areas should be well known, but is, apparently, a well kept secret.



In light of the serious crisis of Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka, we again implore you to undertake decisive and strong actions under your respective mandates, or perhaps jointly, as soon as possible. In so addressing the situation, we hope you will properly identify the victims as Tamil and the war as a war.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Yours truly,

Karen Parker, JD  
Chief IED delegate, UN  
President AHL