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# OVER 100 WOMEN SAY NO TO WAR

## Call for Responsible Behaviour from the State and the LTTE

**W**e voice our concern about recent developments which have yet again raised fears of war in the minds of Sri Lankans. It is disturbing to note that while both the Government and the LTTE claim to be committed to the CFA, the ensuing acts of violence diminish the integrity of an already weak peace process.

We say to both parties with no hesitation that despite their constant rhetoric that civilians will be protected their actions have completely disregarded the safety and security of civilian populations. The Government and the LTTE have both failed to give primacy to the situation of civilian populations caught in the midst or aftermath of hostile acts. We call upon both parties to ensure the safety and security of civilians at all times.

The litany of acts of violence over the past few weeks clearly shows that both parties have paid scant regard to the plight of civilians. The LTTE through the suicide attack on General Sarath Fonseka, the recent attack on the Navy ship, the preceding increase in claymore bombs and other attacks on military targets, extra-judicial killings of political opponents and child recruitment, and the Government through its failure to prevent recent attacks by armed groups on Tamils and their homes and businesses in Trincomalee, to investigate and prevent the daily occurrence of extra-judicial killings in state-controlled territory; and retaliatory aerial bombardment in the North and East, have disregarded the security and needs of the civilian population. We would like to highlight that every such violation further erodes trust between parties and makes the path to peace more difficult.

The events of the past weeks and the overall manner in which both parties have conducted themselves in the peace process do not inspire confidence in the general populace about the commitment of either to finding a negotiated settlement to the conflict. As stated in the recent report of Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, the LTTE's targeting and killing of political opponents raises doubts about its ability to enter the democratic process. At the same time, the failure of the Government to carry through its commitments to peace by preventing acts of violence perpetrated by various armed groups exhibits its shortcomings to fulfilling the undertakings made at the Geneva talks. Further, the inadequacy of

Government efforts to investigate as well as prevent the disappearances and killings of Tamils encourages impunity. This situation has led to the re-emergence of the phenomenon of headless corpses and deaths in custody which have not been addressed by the mechanisms put in place by the Government. The existing situation has heightened the capacity for misuse of cordon and search operations, and the indiscriminate detentions of Tamil civilians.

We would like to reiterate, particularly to those who seek to resolve the conflict through war that in cases of protracted conflicts negotiation takes a considerable period of time and often suffers numerous set backs before the issue is finally resolved.

We call upon all parties to the conflict and civilians to remember the period of war Sri Lanka experienced and come to the realisation that a resumption of hostilities will bring about even greater destruction. From human casualties, damage to infrastructure and adverse impact on the economy, to more checkpoints and cordon and search operations, a return to war will result in the suspension of "normality" and adversely affect every facet of life of all citizens of Sri Lanka.

A return to hostilities will also have serious economic repercussions for the country. As a report of the Asian Development Bank points out, the economy continues to be sensitive to the state of the CFA and economic forecasts for the next two years require the ceasefire to be in place and the political situation in the country to be stable, i.e. no outbreak of hostilities.

We therefore reiterate that both parties should abide by their obligations under the CFA and international law, and should do so regardless of the actions/inaction of the other. Duties and responsibilities of each party under the CFA and international law are independent of the actions of the other group and violation by one party should not be used as justification for violations or failure to act of the other party.

Both the Government and the LTTE should desist from further action which erodes the integrity of the CFA and instead strive to find means of common ground and continue to engage in seeking a negotiated resolution to the conflict. ■