

Statement by the Tokyo Co-Chairs

The Tokyo Co-Chairs (Norway, Japan, US and EU) jointly express their great concern about the plight of thousands of internally displaced persons trapped by fighting in northern Sri Lanka. The Co-Chairs call on the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka not to fire out of or into the no-fire zone established by the Government or in the vicinity of the PTK hospital (or any other medical structure), where more than 500 patients are receiving care and many hundreds more have sought refuge. They also call on both sides to allow food and medical assistance to reach those trapped by fighting, cooperate with the ICRC to facilitate the evacuation of urgent medical cases, and ensure the safety of aid and medical workers. The LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka must respect international humanitarian law.

International efforts to persuade the LTTE to allow the civilians freedom of movement have failed. There remains probably only a short period of time before the LTTE loses control of all areas in the North. The LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka should recognize that further loss of life – of civilians and combatants – will serve no cause.

To avoid further civilian casualties and human suffering, the Co-Chairs:

- call on the LTTE to discuss with the Government of Sri Lanka the modalities for ending hostilities, including the laying down of arms, renunciation of violence, acceptance of the Government of Sri Lanka's offer of amnesty; and participating as a political party in a process to achieve a just and lasting political solution; and
- call on the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to declare a temporary no-fire period to allow for evacuation of sick and wounded, and provision of aid to civilians. The Co-Chairs will work with the Government of Sri Lanka, India, the United Nations and others to ensure:
- the internally displaced people from the north are transferred to temporary camps where UN agencies, the ICRC, and humanitarian organizations will have full access and the IDPs will be treated according to international standards and resettled in their original homes as soon as possible; and
- an inclusive dialogue to agree on a political settlement so that lasting peace and reconciliation can be achieved.