

7 August 2006

IASC CT strongly condemns the killings of 15 Aid Workers

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the execution style killings of 15 aid workers of the French organization Action against Hunger (ACF) in Muttur. It is a totally reprehensible act which stands as a dark page in the history of humanitarian work in Sri Lanka.

The lives of these 15 aid workers were callously taken as they served their communities. They had a right to protection. Along with them we know of many civilians who have been killed since the fighting started. We call for a cessation of hostilities so that all grieving families can recover their dead and give them a proper burial.

We are deeply concerned about the grim reality facing civilians and aid workers in the north east especially in and around Muttur. Such acts of brutality reduce the ability of aid workers to operate in these areas where often there is the greatest need.

We reiterate our request for respect of the ceasefire. Safe passage for civilians, aid workers and relief items must be provided at all times. It is imperative that this happens immediately so as to reduce the suffering of the civilian population in these areas.

We call for an independent investigation to bring the perpetrators of this outrageous act to justice and to restore confidence to the humanitarian environment.

On behalf of the humanitarian community in Sri Lanka we offer our sincere condolences to the bereaved families and our colleagues in ACF at this tragic time.

***The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Country Team (IASC CT) in Sri Lanka is chaired by the UN RC/HC and includes the following agencies and organisations:**

FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, ICRC, IOM, WORLD BANK, OHCHR, CHA, FCE, SEWA Lanka, OXFAM, NRC, CARE, ACF, ZOA, SOLIDAR, SAVE THE CHILDREN-SL, MERLIN