

United Nations Nations Unies

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

STATEMENT ON SRI LANKA BY JOHN HOLMES, UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF

(New York, 16 January 2009): The United Nations is increasingly concerned for the well-being of tens of thousands of civilians caught up in the conflict raging in the northern Vanni area of Sri Lanka. As fighting surrounds the areas towards which families have been displaced, and with few choices about where to move, they are increasingly susceptible to harm due to the fighting. While they have had access to basic food, in large part due to the Government and the UN assistance transported through the lines of fighting, they have few if any reserves, and the conditions of their basic shelter, water and sanitation are increasingly inadequate as many have been displaced multiple times over the last months, weeks and days.

In accordance with International Humanitarian Law, the United Nations calls upon the LTTE to allow civilians to be able to move freely to areas where they feel most secure and for the Government to receive newly displaced people according to internationally agreed principles. In addition, the UN calls for civilians to be protected from the fighting and for civilians to continue to have access to basic humanitarian assistance.

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