

The fate and freedom of Civilians caught up in war
A message, by the Rt. Revd. Duleep de Chickera Bishop of Colombo

Two recent incidents of violence unleashed against innocent and defenceless Tamil civilians by the LTTE must be condemned unreservedly by peace loving Sri Lankans of all communities.

The suicide bomb attack at a check point at Surantanpuran killed ten civilians and twenty soldiers engaged in receiving Tamil civilians who had crossed over and injured many more. The deliberate firing at civilians crossing over from uncleared areas killed nineteen and injured sixty-nine. Many of those affected in both incidents were helpless children and many of the injured are said to be in a very critical condition.

These utterly senseless acts are clearly meant to intimidate the very people the LTTE claim it wants to liberate and are a brazen violation of the civilians right to movement and life. The LTTE must immediately stop this ruthless suppression of Tamil civilians.

I offer the deepest sympathies of our Church to the relatives of the deceased and the assurance of our prayers to those who mourn and are injured. You are a people that have suffered untold deprivation and oppression over the years and it is our prayer that there will soon be an end to your misery. May the God of compassion give you strength to face these terrible tragedies and keep you steadfast in mercy and hope.

As this war intensifies and the LTTE becomes even more desperate, the chances of civilian casualties will keep increasing. This correspondingly leads to a growing sense of helplessness amongst all who long for an end to war and human suffering. In these circumstances there are four realities that all Sri Lankans should strive to ensure.

These are;

- a) a demonstration of sorrow that war requires the daily killing and death of Sri Lankan combatants, who are none other than sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.
- b) equally intensified and sustained policies and strategies as a sacred duty that protects civilians.
- c) the democratic space for persons of religious and ideological conviction, committed to non-violent methods of dealing with conflict, to be heard with respect.
- d) a prompt and professional programme of reconstruction accompanied with a return to civil administration that offers freedom and dignity to all.

I earnestly invite all communities of our beloved Sri Lanka to work and pray to keep these realities alive during these very difficult and daunting days.

With Peace and blessings to all

11th February 2009

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