

Sri Lanka crisis: A statement by concerned Australians

Tuesday 3 March 2009, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 28 February 2009).

We are Australian citizens who share a deep concern about the escalating civilian crisis in Sri Lanka.

We call on the Australian government to demand the Sri Lankan authorities and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam declare an immediate ceasefire.

We are deeply concerned about the lack of medical staff and aid agencies serving the estimated 250,000 civilians trapped in the conflict zone.

In September 2008, the Sri Lankan government evicted United Nations and international aid agencies from these areas. While the local Red Cross is still operating within the conflict area, their presence is threatened by the ongoing conflict.

The departure of international witnesses within the conflict area will remove accountability for all parties to the conflict.

The Sri Lankan government has also issued orders to doctors and other health staff to leave the conflict area immediately.

We demand the Sri Lankan government allow international monitoring and medical and aid agencies unrestricted access to the conflict zones immediately.

In direct violation of the Geneva Convention, civilian hospitals in the conflict zones have repeatedly come under aerial bombing and shelling. Furthermore, on 2 February 2009 the Sri Lankan Defense Secretary Gotabaya Rajapakse stated that everything outside a government declared safety-zone is a military target and no exception will be given to medical facilities. We urge the Australian government to demand the Sri Lankan government stop the aerial bombing of hospitals and both parties cease placing civilians in direct cross fire in all areas.

Foreign and domestic media have been banned from entering the conflict zones since January 2008, when the government unilaterally withdrew from a cease-fire and commenced its military offensive. Without independent reporting, it is impossible to separate fact from propaganda by all parties to the conflict.

We call on the Australian government to pressure Sri Lankan officials to permit independent journalists unrestricted access to the conflict zones.

Furthermore, we recognise that the Tamil citizens of Sri Lanka have been subject to ethnic discrimination by successive Sri Lankan governments since Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948.

We acknowledge that all people, including the Tamils, have the right to self-determination and must freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

We acknowledge that a military solution to this conflict will not bring lasting peace to Sri Lanka. With the intention of ensuring long-term peace, we call on the Australian government to lead

political negotiations that recognise the legitimate aspirations and protects the human rights of all Sri Lankans.

Signatories include:

- * Mr. Julian Burnside, AO QC, Victoria
- * Prof. Wendy Bacon, Professor of Journalism, University of Technology, NSW
- * Prof. Chris Nash, Professor of Journalism, Monash University, Victoria
- * Mr. Antony Loewenstein, Independent Journalist and Author, NSW
- * Dr. Peter Slezak, University of New South Wales, NSW
- * Prof. Damien Kingsbury, Associate Professor, Deakin University, Victoria
- * Hon. Ian Cohen, Member of the Legislative Council, NSW Parliament, NSW
- * Hon. Lee Rhiannon, Member of the Legislative Council, NSW Parliament, NSW
- * Mr. Jeff Loewenstein, Barrister, Victoria
- * Prof. Stuart Rees, Emeritus Professor, Director, Sydney Peace Foundation, University of Sydney, NSW
- * Mr. Jake Lynch, Director, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, NSW
- * Mr. David Feith, Tertiary Education Lecturer, Victoria
- * Ms. Karen Coffield, Maternal & Child Health Nurse, Victoria
- * Mr. Michael Brull
- * Prof. John Whitehall, Paediatrician, Queensland
- * Dr. Bobby Sundaralingam, Radiologist & Nuclear Medicine Physician, Victoria
- * Dr. Ananth Sundaralingam, Senior Emergency Registrar, Victoria
- * Ms. Sue Bolton, Convenor, Socialist Alliance, Victoria
- * Dr. Brian Senewiratne, Consultant Physician, Queensland
- * Ms. Nesa Arumugam Eliezer, Freelance Writer and Author, Victoria
- * Mr. Nimalan Karthikeyan, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, NSW
- * Mrs. Gayathri Prathapar, Justice of Peace and Accountant, NSW

* Dr. Gareth Beal, Associate Lecturer, Creative Writing, Macquarie University, NSW

* Mr. Chris Riseley, Project Manager, Australian Volunteers International, Victoria

Non-Australians supportive of the Sri Lankan Crisis Statement:

* Ms. Karen Parker, JD, Specialist in Humanitarian Law and NGO Rep. UN

* Prof. Peter Schalk, Professor in History of Religions, Uppsala University, Sweden

* Mr. Michael Otterman, Visiting Scholar, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, NSW and author of 'American Torture'

Click here for complete list of signatories: <http://fastuntoaction.wordpress.com...>. If you want to sign this statement, please leave a comment on this page or email fastuntoaction@hotmail.com as soon as possible with your name and title.