

# INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

*" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "*

## COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE – COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

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**Sri Lanka: The International Commission of Jurists called on the United Nations Human Rights Council to convene a special session on the dire human rights crisis in Sri Lanka**

"There is a continuing and acute need for the Human Rights Council to act on Sri Lanka notwithstanding a reported end of fighting between the Sri Lankan Army and the Tamil Tigers," said Wilder Tayler, Acting Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). "Even though the fighting may have dissipated, any nation's reconstruction requires respect for international law, accountability and the rule of law principles, which today remain largely absent in the wake of this lengthy conflict."

Since 2006, the ICJ has urged the UN human rights mechanisms to respond boldly to the mounting humanitarian and human rights crisis in Sri Lanka. The protracted conflict has escalated with the killing of more than 7000 civilians and the injuring of some 14000 since the Sri Lankan Army offensive against rebel Tamil Tigers started on 20 January 2009, in what was described as a "civilian bloodbath" by the UN spokesperson.

To the outrage of many, the UN Human Rights Council has remained indifferent to the widespread violations of international law and the suffering inflicted on civilians during the conflict in Sri Lanka. Only recently has the Council been considering a need to meet in emergency special session on the crisis in Sri Lanka. Despite more than two-week efforts to convene the Council's special session, a support of at least 16 of the Council's 47 member states has so far been lacking.

On 16 May 2009, the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa declared that the quarter-century civil war had ended, while fierce final battles reportedly continued on 17 May 2009, culminating with the apparent killing of the Tamil Tiger rebels' leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. It is in this context, that all members of the Council should facilitate the convening of the special session on Sri Lanka to address the situation of gross and systematic violations of human rights throughout the conflict and prevent recurrence of such atrocities. The special session should also address impunity and seek enhancement of a regular justice system and provide a venue to consider assistance in reconstruction and development, to be based on the rule of law principles.

"Following the meeting of the UN Security Council and its unanimous statement of 13 May 2009 expressing grave concern over the humanitarian crisis, it is now the Council's turn to fulfil its mandate and to help ensure that human rights become a bedrock of peace, and security," said Wilder Tayler.

The ICJ calls on all Council's members, including those that are members of the UN Security Council, to exercise similar leadership in order to effectively address the crisis in Sri Lanka from a human rights perspective.

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The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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