



# 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: ICJ concerned about grave human rights situation and effectiveness of criminal justice system: Asks President to consider establishment of human rights field operation**

Meeting with the President of Sri Lanka yesterday, the Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) expressed serious concern about the grave human rights situation in Sri Lanka, including, renewed patterns of enforced disappearances and targeted killings of civilians, as well as shrinking space for civil society.

"I urged the President to recognise that the gravity of the human rights situation demands a swift and robust response from the Government. This should include prosecutions of those responsible for human rights violations and the establishment of an international human rights field operation to help deter and prevent human rights violations on all sides", said Nicholas Howen, ICJ Secretary-General.

The ICJ's Secretary-General urged the President to order renewed, impartial and thorough investigations into the killing of 17 *Action Contre la Faim* aid workers in Muttur in August 2006 and the killing of five young Tamil men on the foreshore in Trincomalee in January 2006, and to ensure those responsible are prosecuted.

"There are serious questions about the integrity, credibility and thoroughness of the police investigations. During our meeting the President made a commitment to establish a taskforce within the regular criminal justice system to vigorously renew these investigations. We will closely monitor progress on these and other similarly grave cases", said Nicholas Howen.

"Sri Lanka has a history of impunity - past governments have failed repeatedly to bring perpetrators to justice. The killing of the 17 aid workers and of the five young men in Trincomalee are test cases against which the current Government's will to punish those responsible for serious human rights violations and bring justice to victims will be measured", added Nicholas Howen.

While there can be no replacement for domestic action, including within Sri Lanka's criminal justice system, the ICJ believes that the establishment of an international human rights field operation in Sri Lanka would contribute greatly to the protection of civilians. It would help to verify and deter violations, strengthen state institutions and help to maintain space for local human rights actors.

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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“Yesterday I asked the President to consider the establishment of a human rights field operation. We have seen from such operations all over the world that they can save lives and build for the future, supporting those in the country who are protecting human rights”, said Nicholas Howen, ICJ Secretary-General.

In the meeting the ICJ raised its concerns regarding abuses carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), including child recruitment, political killings, abductions and repression of freedom of expression, assembly and association. Any field operation should have full access to work in areas controlled by the LTTE.

The ICJ welcomed the President’s invitation extended to the Secretary-General during the meeting to visit Sri Lanka. “I look forward to the ICJ continuing its open discussions with the Government of Sri Lanka, in Sri Lanka and Geneva”, said Nicholas Howen.

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