



COTANZ

Consortium of Tamil Associations in New Zealand

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Sri Lanka News Summary: 25th March 2008

A bi-monthly news summary of the human rights situation of Tamils in Sri Lanka

Agencies should be prepared to assist "up to 500,000 conflict-affected individuals comprising Internally Displaced Persons, returnees and economically affected persons", according to the Common Humanitarian Action Plan 2008, prepared by the Inter Agency Standing Committee country team for Sri Lanka.

[Half a million people could be affected by conflict in 2008](#)

[IRIN, Feb 25]

The UN and NGOs working in the conflict-ridden north and east are warning of a mounting humanitarian toll in 2008 due to the escalation in hostilities between Sri Lankan government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. "The humanitarian community is operating under extremely difficult circumstances, which have affected its ability to reach as many people as need support," a report stated. In some areas of the north access is near impossible.

[Colombo irked by US Rights report](#)

[TamilNet, Mar 14]

The 2007 Country Report of Human Rights Practices in Sri Lanka released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the U.S. State Department has created shockwaves within the Rajapakse Government according to media reports in Colombo. The report listed in detail rights abuses by security forces and collaborating paramilitaries. On Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life, the report said "[t]here were numerous, credible reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings," and said 44 aid workers were killed in Sri Lanka.

[Tamil journalists beaten in detention to extract confessions](#)

[TamilNet, Mar 13]

Reporters Sans Frontieres, a Paris-based media watchdog, accused Sri Lankan police of arresting five Tamil journalists on false information and beating them during detention, and said that the police action was intended to extract confessions from the detainees. Reporters Sans Frontieres urged Sri Lankan authorities to explain why the journalists are still being held.

[Kidnapping is a "normal phenomenon"](#)

[Nation, Mar 16]

Foreign Affairs Minister, Rohitha Bogollagama, has said that kidnappings are normal in society and no one should make an undue fuss about such incidents. He made this statement in reply to a question posed by a journalist at a news conference, when the journalist asked for the Foreign Minister's comments on the kidnapping of two women on March 10. "Kidnapping is something very common and therefore there is no need to fuss about it," he asserted. He also said that it was not the first time that a kidnapping had taken place in the country and therefore, there was no reason to be excited about it.

COTANZ represents Tamil associations throughout New Zealand and speaks out about the human rights situation of Tamils in Sri Lanka. There is a feeling within the New Zealand Tamil community that the Tamils in Sri Lanka have been abandoned by the international community.