

# Resolution on Sri Lanka

2009/2527(RSP) - 05/02/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of the same day, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Sri Lanka. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the EPP-ED, ALDE, and UEN, and Greens/ALE, groups. It recalls that since the beginning of the Government's military offensive in October 2008, the LTTE (Tamil Tigers) has retreated into the northern area, forcing civilians deeper into territory they control and leaving hundreds dead and some 250 000 civilians caught in deadly crossfire between the Sri Lankan army and the separatist LTTE in the Mullaitivu region. The Tokyo Co-Chairs (Norway, Japan, the US and the EU) have called jointly on the LTTE to discuss with the Sri Lankan Government the modalities for ending hostilities, including the laying down of arms, renunciation of violence, acceptance of the Sri Lankan Government offer of an amnesty, and participation as a political party in a process to achieve a just and lasting political solution.

Parliament believes that the recent development may constitute a turning point in the crisis in Sri Lanka. It endorses the statement by the Tokyo Co-Chairs and hopes that peace and stability will soon prevail in the country. Members state that they believe that a military victory over the LTTE, as envisaged by the Sri Lankan Government, will not obviate the need to find a political solution in order to ensure a lasting peace. According to Amnesty International, both government forces and the LTTE have been violating the laws of war by displacing civilians and preventing them from escaping to safety. Members call on the government and the LTTE to abide by the rules of war, minimise harm to civilians during military operations and immediately allow the thousands of civilians trapped in the conflict zone safe passage and access to humanitarian aid.

They emphasise the need for international monitors to assess the humanitarian needs of a quarter of a million people trapped in the Wanni region and to ensure proper distribution of humanitarian assistance. Parliament reiterates its condemnation of the appalling abuse of children constituted by the recruitment of child soldiers, which is a war crime, and calls on all rebel groups to stop this practice, to release those whom they are holding and to make a declaration of principle that they will not recruit any children in the future.

It notes its concerns about press freedom and the killing of a senior editor, Lasantha Wickramatunga. Parliament welcomes the Sri Lankan Government's pledge to ensure full investigations into all alleged violations of media freedom in order also to address the culture of impunity over killings and attacks on journalists in Sri Lanka.

The government is urged to give urgent attention to the clearance of land-mines, and to take the very positive step of acceding to the Ottawa Treaty (The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction).

Parliament welcomes the commitment of the Sri Lankan Government to substantive provincial devolution, which will enable predominantly Tamil, as well as other, areas to exercise greater control over their administration within a united country. It calls on the government to bring about its rapid implementation, thus ensuring that all citizens of Sri Lanka have equal rights.