



Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation

TRO is a registered charity (Number L 50706) with the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Over 100 Civilians dead or injured - School and Refugee camps hit by Sri Lanka Army Multi-Barrel rocket and artillery attack

Over 100 persons have been killed or injured in an artillery (multi-barrel rocket) attack by the Sri Lanka Armed Forces in Vaharai, Batticaloa District. 40 bodies have been recovered, including 6 babies between the ages of 3 and 6 months. 76 persons have been admitted to the local hospital.

The multi-barrel rockets attack, which began at about 11:30 am and lasted for over 30 minutes, struck Kathiraveli Vikneswara Vidyalayam (a school), Vaharai Health Center and TRO's Sonobo Children's Home (12 children in the home were injured). There are over 5,000 families of internally displaced persons (IDP) in the immediate area. Most of the dead and injured are IDPs from Muttur.

Sri Lanka Army personnel at the border checkpoint have refused to allow seriously injured civilians to be transported to Batticaloa General Hospital. In Vaharai only a very small hospital unit is functioning.

The school has been functioning as an IDP camp managed by TRO. There is a lack of other appropriate shelter due to restrictions placed on the transportation of building materials to the area by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL). Since hostilities began in August, TRO has been caring for over 45,000 IDPs in the Vaharai area. These IDPs lack adequate shelter, food, fuel and other basic necessities. TRO is also providing medical assistance to the injured and traumatized civilians.

TRO is the only NGO operating in the area due to GoSL restrictions on access by international NGO personnel to LTTE-controlled areas. The GoSL is requiring all international staff to apply for "work permits" (this is in addition to the "work visas" they already possess). To date, work permits have not been approved by the GoSL to work in the LTTE-controlled areas. The UN and the ICRC have only intermittent access to these areas. The restrictions on the transportation of fuel imposed by the GoSL are hampering relief operations and ambulance service.

TRO urgently appeals to the UN and ICRC for assistance in transporting the injured to hospitals for treatment. TRO also appeals to the Government of Sri Lanka to allow access by the UN, ICRC, other humanitarian organizations and the SLMM (the monitoring mission of Nordic countries).

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