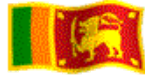


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US ACTING SPOKESMAN ROBERT A. WOOD SAYS:

End hostilities

The United States government is deeply concerned about the current danger to civilian lives and the dire humanitarian situation created by the fighting in the Mullaitivu area in Sri Lanka.

We call upon the Government and the Tamil Tigers to immediately stop hostilities until the civilians in the conflict areas are safely out.

Both sides must immediately return to a humanitarian pause and both must respect the right of free movement of those civilian men, women and children trapped by the fighting.

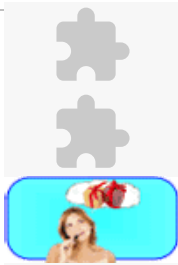
The United States calls upon the Government of Sri Lanka to assist its Tamil citizens by halting the alleged shelling of the safe zone, permitting international monitors to ensure the safe exit of the civilians.

The Government of Sri Lanka should also enforce international humanitarian standards in IDP camps, grant visas to international aid groups and permit entry into Sri Lanka of international monitors and media access to those camps.

The Sri Lankan Government, as the legitimate sovereign power, has before it an opportunity to put an end to this lengthy conflict. A durable and lasting peace will only be achieved through a political solution that addresses the legitimate aspirations of all Sri Lankan communities.

We urge the Sri Lankan Government to employ diplomacy to permit a peaceful outcome of this conflict, and call on them to put forward a proposal now to engage Tamils who do not espouse violence or terrorism, and to develop power sharing arrangements so that lasting peace and reconciliation can be achieved, the statement said.

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