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## Sri Lanka says no to Ceasefire

The Government on Saturday rejected calls to extend the unilaterally declared 48 hour 'humanitarian pause' as the LTTE had not honored it and had actively prevented civilians from leaving the 'safe zone' during the said period.

Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa rejecting internationally originated calls to extend the pause said, that there was no purpose in extending the period as the LTTE was not prepared to let the civilians go.

He told UN Secretary General's Ban Ki-moon's Chief of Staff Vijay Nambiar "We cannot extend our decision to restrict offensive military operations because there was no result during the previous halt in the fighting"

During the 'humanitarian pause' only 134 people had crossed over, from the 'safe zone'. Soon after the period ended over 2800 civilians made their way to the cleared areas on Saturday alone.

Also the LTTE used the opportunity to attack troops located close to the 'safe zone' using small arms fire and snipers throughout the day on April 14th, the military said..

The Defence Secretary commenting on the matter said that the relevant international parties did not understand the ground realities in Sri Lanka, and was continuing to insist on extending the "humanitarian pause" when it was evident that the LTTE would not release civilians kept as hostages.

He further said that he had also taken steps to inform the UN Secretary-General's Chief of Staff Vijay Nambiar, that the LTTE had not only prevented civilians from leaving their territory during the period but also had directed fire at the troops.

While adding that there was no purpose in extending such a 'humanitarian pause' as the LTTE was not prepared to let the civilians go, Rajapaksa said that it would only allow LTTE to recruit people and strengthen defences.

Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher and US Ambassador Robert O Blake too has been briefed on the prevailing situation, he added.

The Defence Secretary added that the international community was being wrongly led by the LTTE propaganda machinery.

He asserted that what prevails in the 'safe zone' was a hostage situation and it needed well planned military manouvres from those who knew the ground situation well to free the civilians.

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