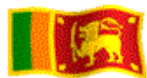


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Ceasefire not our aim - Miliband

CONCERN, CIVILIANS IN NFZ ONLY:

Lakshmi DE SILVA

No one was here to call a ceasefire to save Prabhakaran but we are here to discuss the protection of civilians that was our absolute and paramount interest. The LTTE should stop fighting, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Secretary of State David Miliband told at a press conference at the Foreign Affairs Ministry yesterday. "The LTTE was a proscribed and banned organization in our countries and they are holding citizens in the No Fire Zone.

The LTTE had killed civilians in buses and shopping areas. Our concern was about the civilians, held by the LTTE in the No Fire Zone and other civilians in the IDP camps, Miliband said.

"We would discuss with the Sri Lankan Government, UN agencies, ICRC and the opposition how the international community could support the civilians in the NFZ," he noted.

Answering a question about attacks on Sri Lankan embassies in Europe he said: "We condemn attacks not only in our country but in any other country."

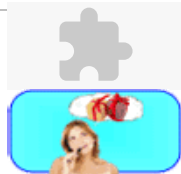
There were also innocent Tamils who were not supporting the LTTE and we cannot lock them up but we were trying to bring about a political change.

Foreign Secretary of France Dr. Bernard Kouchner said: "We are anxious about civilians held by the LTTE and we are concerned about the civilians who should rebuild their lives. Sri Lanka had suffered for more than 25 years and we are concerned about ending that situation. We are ready to help free hostages held by the LTTE. Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama said the UK Government had donated 2.5 million Sterling Pounds for the welfare of the civilians of the north and within three days, the French Government had built a field hospital.

Clearing of land-mines was being done and resettlement of civilians of the north in their original places of habitation would be completed before December 31, 2009.

The rehabilitation of combatants to bring them back to normal society would be done under a legal structure, the Minister said.

Minister Bogollagama said that bilateral and multilateral agreements on the work to be done in the post conflict scenario were aimed at working together with the UK and French Governments had been reached so that the people who had suffered under terrorism could be rehabilitated. The two Foreign Ministers accompanied by Minister Rohitha Bogollagama were scheduled to visit the IDP camps in Vavuniya yesterday and open the field hospital donated by the French Government and were scheduled to meet President Mahinda Rajapaksa at Embilipitiya later in the day.



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