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Lankan embassy refutes civilian casualty figures

Ben GARCIA

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Kuwait refuted the number of civilian casualties allegedly killed by government troops as claimed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE accused the government of killing 2,000 civilians in the span of 24 hours as fighting continues between Government Forces and rebel groups in the North of the country. That figure was carried on the front page of Kuwait Times.

"The number (of casualties mentioned) was too high and was exaggerated, too many to ignore; besides, they were not killed by government troops.

They were killed by rebels because they are virtually holding those people hostage.

They are using them as human shields. About 10,000 of them are not being permitted to leave battle zones.

They (rebels) are killing civilians, not the military," explained Sunil Sarath Perera, Minister Counsellor at the Sri Lankan Embassy in Kuwait.

"The Sri Lankan government has been conducting this operation to protect and defend our country from terrorist organizations such as the LTTE. The government, under the leadership of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, has already announced the complete annihilation of the LTTE, not the Tamil people.

Tamil people are being protected in this war; we (the government) are doing all we can to bring the civilian population out from danger zones.

But mostly the rebels are blocking this effort to save and place civilians in safer zones," he said.

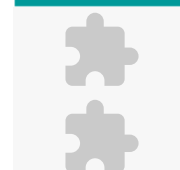
Perera said that about 190,000 refugees are getting all necessary help from the government, including enough food, medicine and clean water, thanks to outside help.

He also appealed to Sri Lankans in Kuwait to donate food and medicine for the thousands of refugees. "I also would like to personally appeal to our people here in Kuwait to help our government and support us in this endeavour. If they have medicines and tents or food available, we warmly welcome any donations," he said. With regards to the ongoing military operations, Perera told Kuwait Times that the military mission against the LTTE was nearly over.

"The military informed us that our mission (against rebels) is almost over. Probably in two or three days' time, we'll complete the operation.

We want that area to be free from LTTE so that development can restart and our people can live in peace," he said.

He also mentioned that 30 years ago, people in that area lived in peace until the LTTE began a campaign for a separate homeland, which he described as 'impossible'. Courtesy: Kuwait Times



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