



16<sup>th</sup> June 2006

## Media Release

### Civilians Killing and Paramilitary Operations

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2006 64 passengers, including fifteen children, were killed and around 94 wounded when a civilian bus was caught in a claymore mine blast near Kebitigollawe, 23 km southeast of the Sri Lankan town of Vavuniya. The majority of victims are Sinhalese, officials said.



Sri Lankan Government officials blamed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for the attack.

The LTTE has, however, condemned the attack on civilians, blaming the attack on paramilitary groups.

In 'retaliation' for the claymore mine blast the Sri Lankan Air Force has aerielly bombed LTTE held areas. One area targeted was a tsunami refugee camp with 300 refugees (see the second figure; source: TamilNet).

Many organizations operating in the Northeast of Sri Lanka have alleged that paramilitaries, operating under the shelter of the Sri Lankan Army, have engaged in attacks on civilians. Conversely, the Sri Lankan Government has denied the existence of such groups.



In any investigation of the claymore mine blast discussed here, or when investigating many of the attacks on Tamil civilians, establishing the existence or otherwise of paramilitaries is crucial. COTANZ (Consortium of Tamil Association in New Zealand) therefore humbly requests the Government and Ministers of New Zealand to:

- To request the Sri Lankan government to investigate the existence of paramilitary groups and, if they exist, investigate their involvement in attacks on civilians; and
- To request the Sri Lankan government to make freely available the methods and findings of the investigation.