T he Government of Sri Lanka has now kept the main arterial land route, the A9 highway, closed for more than 3 months, denying free movement, and blocking the transportation of food, medicine and other essential supplies to around 600,000 Tamil civilians who live in the North of the island.

It is reported that 60,000 Sri Lankan military personnel have effectively cordoned off the entire Northern Jaffna peninsula.

According to UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency) supplies of food and water are "alarmingly low" in some areas. Reports also indicate that there are severe shortages of food and other essentials in Vakarai (Eastern Sri Lanka). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has deplored the tragic loss of lives (at least 45 refugees including 6 children) and the injuries to hundreds of civilians resulting from the recent shelling of Vakarai (Eastern Sri Lanka), where several thousand internally displaced people had sought shelter.

Amnesty International's Asia Pacific Director Purna Sen says: "It is appalling that the military should attack a camp for displaced people - these are civilians who have already been forced from their homes because of the conflict."

The humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka is dire. The Sri Lankan Government has now isolated the entire Northern Jaffna peninsula, cutting off access to medical supplies, food, and other essential aid. Many civilians, including children, are in great danger. The Government of Sri Lanka is responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of all civilians in the conflict zone.

We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to:

- Take immediate action to open the arterial routes and to ensure that the passage of all food, medical and other essential humanitarian relief supplies reaches Vakarai and the Jaffna peninsula.
- Ensure that the civilian population is respected and protected in all circumstances, in accordance with the principle of distinction between civilian and military targets and thus avoid indiscriminate attacks.
- Allow and respect the freedom of movement of the Tamil population in the North and East of the island.
- Ensure the safety of all Aid workers, health professionals and others and allow all such personnel free access to all war affected areas.
- Stop attacks on hospitals and all other health institutions and their surroundings and to recognise and regard such sites as safe zones.

As British Tamils, we implore you not to sit by and allow evil to triumph in Sri Lanka. We urge you and your government not to turn a blind eye to the on-going human rights violations being carried out against the civilian population and to do more to oppose those who target civilians with violence and deprivation.

This appeal has the backing and support of a wide range of groups and organisations working to support the advancement of an estimated 150,000 strong Tamil community in the United Kingdom.

You will be aware North and East of Sri Lanka is where Tamil people traditionally lived in Sri Lanka and it is our collective belief that since independence from Britain in 1948 the British Government has had a duty to recognise the long-standing suffering of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

We would therefore urge you and the Foreign Secretary to intervene and compel the Government of Sri Lanka to:

- Take immediate action to open the arterial routes and to ensure that the passage of all food, medical and other essential humanitarian relief supplies reaches Vakarai and the Jaffna peninsula.
- Ensure that the civilian population is respected and protected in all circumstances, in accordance with the principle of distinction between civilian and military targets and thus avoid indiscriminate attacks.
- Allow and respect the freedom of movement of the Tamil population in the North and East of the island.
- Ensure the safety of all Aid workers, health professionals and others and allow all such personnel free access to all war affected areas.
- Stop attacks on hospitals and all other health institutions and their surroundings and to recognise and regard such sites as safe zones.

Signed The British Tamil's Forum

Register your support at: www.tamilsforum.com