



Jan Kohout
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
Presidency of the Council of the European Union

12 June 2009
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Dear Dr Kohout,

**Amnesty International report:
“Twenty years of make believe: Sri Lanka’ Commissions of Inquiry”**

We are aware you are following very closely the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding in Sri Lanka. Amnesty International continues to receive consistent reports of widespread and serious human rights violations facing the thousands of displaced people, including enforced disappearance, extrajudicial executions, torture and other ill-treatment, forced recruitment by paramilitary groups and sexual violence.

On 27 May the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that ignored the plight of more than a quarter of a million displaced Sri Lankans now confined in internment camps by the Sri Lankan military. Amnesty International shares the regret expressed by the Czech Presidency that the proposals presented by the EU to amend the Sri Lankan draft resolution could be neither discussed nor considered by the Council. This was due to a 'closure of debate' rule being invoked by Cuba and supported by a majority of Council Members. We are bitterly disappointed that the final resolution failed to call for a fact-finding mission to inquire into allegations of serious violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law by Sri Lankan forces and by the Tamil Tigers (LTTE).

However, the failure of the Special Session does not mean the end of the international community's responsibility to respond to this ongoing crisis. A new Amnesty International report, published today, details the consistent failure of the criminal justice system of Sri Lanka, and repeated Commissions of Inquiry, to address grave violations of human rights that have taken place in the context of the war with the LTTE. With this report, Amnesty International seeks to re-focus the debate within Sri Lanka and in the international community from one that is centred on the most recent atrocity, to one that is based on the need to prevent ongoing violations and ensure real accountability for past abuses. Redress for past abuses on both sides, and an end to the cycle of impunity, are essential to any lasting resolution of the conflict.

We hope that you will incorporate the findings and recommendations in this report into the EU's future strategy on Sri Lanka, and would be very happy to meet with you or your team to discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely

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Amnesty International EU Office

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Director
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Cc: Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy
Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations
Riina Kionka, Javier Solana's Personal Representative on Human Rights
Bernard Savage, Head of European Commission delegation to Sri Lanka and the Maldives