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# AUTOMATIC CEASEFIRE, IF LTTE LAYS DOWN ARMS: MINISTER TELLS 'BBC HARDTALK'

Friday, 06 March 2009

Last Updated Friday, 06 March 2009

To Video:<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/n5ctrl/progs/09/hardtalk/samarahsinghe03mar.ram>

If the LTTE lays down their weapons tomorrow, there will not be any reason for us to fight. There will be an automatic ceasefire. As long as the LTTE is using weapons, as long as the LTTE is not allowing the civilians to leave, their freedom of movement being restricted, the civilians being shot and killed in cold blood and massive human rights violations being committed against the civilian population, our job is to ensure that this kind of terrorism is wiped out once and for all, said Disaster Management and Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe in BBC HARDtalk interviewed by Stephen Sackur last Monday, March 2, 2009.

Countering allegations on the use of heavy weapons, Minister Samarasinghe said, "There is absolutely no justification to use heavy weapons and, in fact, about ten days ago, the Armed Forces took a conscious decision not to use any heavy weapons. As you know, the LTTE is now restricted in fact to a very small area of about 48 sq. km. and we cannot use heavy weapons." "We have never targeted civilians and we will never target civilians, because, as I mentioned earlier, our fight is to liberate the civilians from terrorism. We consciously avoided civilian areas because, as I said earlier, what is the objective as far as the Government is concerned in targeting civilians, who are our own people?" "These are Sri Lankans whom we are trying to liberate from the clutches of terrorism," he added. Commenting on the allegation that civilians that have come from the LTTE held area are being kept for three years, the Minister put the record straight. He said: "The plan has always been to resettle them in the shortest possible time but we cannot afford to take short-cuts... The demining has to take place, the basic infrastructure has to be put in place, services have to be provided, 'go and see' visits have to take place. We cannot force anyone to go back to their villages. It has to be an informed choice that the people themselves make. We do not want to keep these people a day later than we can help to avoid." Courtesy: Dailynews.lk