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## UN and civilians in Sri Lanka

Tuesday, 10 March 2009

Last Updated Tuesday, 10 March 2009

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) must release the hostages it has held for so long. Sir, The United Nations Secretary-General did send a representative to Sri Lanka, with the full co-operation of the Sri Lankan Government (letter, Mar 6). Archbishop Tutu and his co-signatories should read his report and add their voice to those demanding that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) releases the hostages it has held for thus long.

The Archbishop should note the evidence provided by UN officials of the LTTE firing on civilians in the safe zone, and urge it to desist from endangering civilians, as the more concerned and knowledgeable Catholic Bishop of Jaffna has done. Archbishop Tutu should also be careful about statistics, since even TamilNet, the voice of the Tigers, has far lower figures for civilian statistics for the four-week period he mentions. He and his co-signatories have used the figures cited &mdash; for a longer period &mdash; by Human Rights Watch, for which no substantiation has been provided, while it has been shown that Human Rights Watch has not been accurate in its recent claims about Sri Lanka and misquoting ICRC and UN officials without bothering to check with them. It is telling that amid all the critiques of government, the Archbishop and his friends do not mention that the LTTE has been holding civilians hostage, killing them when they try to escape and conscripting children. The role of cat&rsquo;s paw is inappropriate for a once- doughty Christian soldier.

Rajiva Wijesinha Secretary-General, Secretariat for Co-ordinating the Peace Process (Government of Sri Lanka) Courtesy: timesonline.co.uk