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## Release U.N. staffer, family, LTTE told

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B. Muralidhar Reddy COLOMBO: The United Nations on Monday said it holds grave fears for the safety of a U.N. national staff member and three dependent family members who were forcibly recruited over the weekend by the LTTE, inside the government-declared No-Fire Zone.

&ldquo;The forced recruitments included the 16-year-old daughter of a UN national staff member. &ldquo;The UN in Sri Lanka has protested to the LTTE that UN national staff, as well as children in general, are protected under national and international law from recruitment by armed groups, and has called for their immediate release,&rdquo; a U.N. statement said here. It said another of its staffer recruited two weeks ago is yet to be released despite repeated requests from the U.N. A few weeks ago the U.N. had charged the LTTE with forcibly holding several of its national staff members. In February, the U.N. had said 15 of its staff and 75 of their dependents &mdash; 40 children and 35 women &mdash; remain in the same area, having also been prevented from leaving by the LTTE. In response, LTTE political head B. Nadesan had claimed that a U.N. &ldquo;security officer&rdquo;, who accompanied the WFP humanitarian convoy, had attempted to pressure the Tigers on &ldquo;completely wrong moral grounds&rdquo; to organise an &ldquo;exodus of the family members of the local staff of the UN&rdquo;, leaving behind the remaining civilians in the &lsquo;safety zone&rsquo; to be subjected to &ldquo;genocidal attack&rdquo; by the military. Mr. Nadesan was quoted by pro-LTTE TamilNet as saying that the &ldquo;security officer&rdquo; was attempting to terminate the WFP humanitarian operations by attempting to evacuate the local staff of the U.N., leaving behind the civilians who are in urgent need of humanitarian aid and medical assistance. Separately, the military claimed that 1,011 civilians including 458 children have fled from the LTTE and sought protection with troops operating in general area Ampalavanpokkanai.Courtesy: Hindu.com