
Care for IDPs: UN welcomes Government Plan

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The United Nations advocate for displaced persons today called for urgent measures to save civilians trapped in a tiny pocket of northern Sri Lanka by fighting between the Government and the LTTE.

Following a four-day visit to the island nation, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Representative for the Human Rights of Displaced Persons Walter Kälin expressed concern for the lives of civilians trapped in the 14-square kilometre area of the Vanni declared by the Government of Sri Lanka as a no-fire zone and said that a series of humanitarian pauses must be initiated immediately to allow civilians to leave and humanitarian actors to provide life-saving relief to the remaining population. He also reiterated his appeal to the LTTE and that of Mr. Ban and a raft of other UN officials to allow all civilians under its control to leave the zone, and called on the Government to scrupulously respect the no-fire zone for as long as a civilian population remains within it. During his visit to Sri Lanka, Mr. Kälin spoke to Government officials concerned with the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and visited transit sites and camps, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Noting that more than 52,000 IDPs have arrived in the Vavuniya area since November, he welcomed the Government's acknowledgement of its responsibility to protect and assist these persons, and he recognized measures already taken in this regard. He also said that extraordinary efforts will be required of the Government, the UN, non-governmental organizations and donors to meet the needs of this population as well as those of the tens of thousands expected to arrive in the coming weeks and months. He also welcomed the Government's commitment to create an action plan for screening IDPs for security, registering them and facilitating their return in accordance with international standards, according to OHCHR. "Such a plan surely will be instrumental in building the confidence among all Sri Lankan citizens and restoring the trust among affected Tamil populations that will be prerequisites to consolidate a lasting peace," OHCHR said. Courtesy: dailynews.lk