
Looking after Civilian Influx: British MPs appreciate Government relief efforts

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IDPs in Camps Better off than those in NFZ
The group of British Parliamentarians led by Des Browne MP welcomed the Government's agreement to allow the UN to visit the conflict zone to assess the humanitarian needs of the people there and to plan the evacuation of the remaining civilians.

They urged all parties to facilitate this agreement without delay. "We recognize the scale of the challenge facing the Government in delivering humanitarian relief to all civilians in the north, including those in IDP camps, those in screening centres and rehabilitation camps and those in the conflict zone itself," said Des Browne, the delegation's chairman in a statement issued by the British High Commission on their visit yesterday (6) evening. "We saw the considerable efforts the Government is making to accommodate and assist IDPs who have left the conflict zone. We spoke to a number of people in the camps who expressed their genuine relief at having escaped the LTTE and reached a place of safety. It is clear that IDPs in camps are much better off than their friends and relatives who remain in the conflict zone," the statement continued. They also expressed their readiness to support the Government's commitment to resettle 80 percent of the IDP population by the end of the year. The delegation included John Bercow (Conservative MP for Buckingham); Des Browne (Labour MP for Kilmarnock and Loudoun); Malcolm Bruce (Liberal Democrat MP for Gordon); Eddie McGrady (Social Democratic and Labour Party MP for South Down) and Mohammad Sarwar (Labour MP for Glasgow Central) The statement also said: "We are grateful to all those who met with us in Sri Lanka and to the Government for their support and assistance in organising our fact-finding mission." "We came without preconception and have listened to a range of opinions on the conflict and current humanitarian situation. Our primary concern is for those civilians who remain trapped in the conflict zone and are living in terrible conditions. The LTTE has ignored repeated calls for the release of these civilians. Only an end to intense fighting will offer them any respite. We urge the Government to use maximum restraint in their ongoing operations, including by upholding their commitment to refrain from the use of heavy weapons. We welcome the Government's agreement to allow the UN to visit the conflict zone to assess the humanitarian needs of the people there and to plan the evacuation of the remaining civilians. We urge all parties to facilitate this agreement without delay." "We recognize the scale of the challenge facing the Government in delivering humanitarian relief to all civilians in the north, including those in IDP camps, those in screening centres and rehabilitation camps and those in the conflict zone itself. We support the work they are doing in conjunction with the ICRC, UN and other humanitarian actors to assist IDPs and civilians affected by the conflict. We urge them to continue to improve access by international agencies thereby increasing capacity to minister to the identified needs of civilians." "We visited the IDP camps in Vavuniya. We saw the considerable efforts the Government is making to accommodate and assist IDPs who have left the conflict zone. We spoke to a number of people in the camps who expressed their genuine relief at having escaped the LTTE and reached a place of safety. It is clear that IDPs in camps are much better off than their friends and relatives who remain in the conflict zone. Many of the civilians we spoke to also raised concerns about conditions in the camps and their ability to access humanitarian assistance. We encourage the Government to maintain their commitment to full implementation of the recommendations made by Walter Kaelin, Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs, during his recent visit. In particular we stress the need for civilians to be able to leave the camps to return to their homes or to stay with family or friends as soon as possible. We stand ready to support the Government's commitment to resettle 80 percent of the IDP population by the end of the year." Courtesy: dailynews.lk