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## HRC session on Sri Lanka ill-timed and unwarranted - Human Rights Minister

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The convening of a special session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) to discuss "The human rights situation in Sri Lanka" is ill-timed and unwarranted is the view of the Sri Lanka Government. The Minister for Disaster Management and Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe said the realities in Sri Lanka, where more than 250,000 civilians had been liberated from the clutches of the most ruthless terrorist organization in the world, and the aftermath of the largest known hostage rescue operation in the world, gave no cause for any special discussion of the human rights situation in the country.

"We feel this is a waste of time, energy and resources that could be used more purposefully to assist in relief measures for the IDPs in the country, by those who have genuine interest in their conditions, and the situation regarding human rights in Sri Lanka," he added. He was referring to the special session of the HRC sought by 17 of its 48 members, which is currently scheduled to be held on May 25 in Geneva. The special session is to be held under the rules of the HRC that requires such a session to be held if one-third or 16 members of the body call for such a session. Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe will lead the Sri Lanka delegation at this special session. The other members of the delegation will be the Attorney General Mohan Peiris, Secretary to the Ministry of DM & HR Prof. Rajiva Wijesinghe and Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to then UN in Geneva Dr. Dayan Jayatilleka. The countries that called for the special session are Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mauritius. The position of Sri Lanka is very clear that it does not believe in the need for such a session of the HRC, which would seek to divert attention from the more pressing need to provide relief to the large number of Tamil citizens who have been liberated from the hold of the LTTE, which the US State Department identified in 2008 as the most ruthless terrorist organization in the world. Sri Lanka expects the larger number of members of the HRC that did not sign the call for this special session, as well as policy and opinion in most other countries that do not have membership in the HRC, would be supportive of Sri Lanka's right as a sovereign country to eliminate terrorism from its soil, and would also show appreciation of the success that Sri Lanka has made in the larger global fight against terrorism, and through this the safeguarding of human rights. The members of the HRC that did not sign the call for the special session are: Angola, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Cuba, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Zambia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Qatar, Nicaragua, Saudi Arabia, Philippines and the Russian Federation. Political analysts said the signatories to the call for this special session had a clear Euro-centric political alignment, which showed the electoral pressures of the pro-LTTE Tamil populations in those countries, and the pressures that such countries can bring on their neighbours and on countries coming under the direct political and economic influence. They were of the view that this line up of countries, showed a clear division of the Afro-Asian and Non-Aligned nations against the western powers and countries under their influence, as well as the different position taken by the new emerging economies of Asia and Latin America against the traditional, and former colonial centres of power of the West. Courtesy : PRIU Courtesy: Defence.lk