

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Session document

3.2.2009

B6-0078/2009

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure

by Pasqualina Naipoletano, Robert Evans

on behalf of the PSE Group

on the situation in Sri Lanka

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Sri Lanka

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution on the situation in Sri Lanka of 18 May 2006 and its resolution on Sri Lanka of 7 September 2006,
 - having regard to the Ceasefire Agreement signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE which entered into force on 23 February 2002,
 - having regard to the Oslo Declaration of December 2002, in which the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE agreed to explore a solution based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Government of Sri Lanka unilaterally withdrew from the internationally negotiated ceasefire agreement in January 2008 thereby deliberately escalating the current violence,
- B. whereas, since the beginning of the Government's military offensive in October 2008, the situation in Northern Sri Lanka has deteriorated dramatically, resulting in hundreds of deaths and some 250 000 civilians being caught in deadly crossfire between the Sri Lankan army and the separatist LTTE in the Mullaitivu region,
- C. whereas on 28 January 2009 Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapakse ruled out a new ceasefire for humanitarian reasons,
- D. whereas the situation for hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in the Vanni is becoming increasingly dangerous,
- E. whereas, according to Amnesty International, both Government forces and the LTTE are violating the laws of war by displacing civilians and preventing them from escaping to safety,
- F. whereas the LTTE have committed numerous atrocities killing many innocent civilians,
- G. whereas, according to the United Nations, UN national staff inside the safety zone has been shelled on several occasions during the past two weeks causing the deaths of dozens of civilians,
- H. whereas in September 2008, the Government has ordered the withdrawal of all UN and non-governmental humanitarian organisations, with the exception of the ICRC and Caritas, from the Vanni,
- I. whereas Lasantha Wickrematunga, editor-in-chief of The Sunday Leader, was gunned down in Colombo on 8 January, posthumously blaming the Sri Lankan Government, a

claim which has not been refuted or verified,

- J. whereas the Government of Sri Lanka denies media agencies and journalists access to the war zone making independent observation impossible,
1. Deplores the resumption of large-scale and widespread violence in the wake of the Government's unilateral withdrawal from the internationally negotiated ceasefire agreement in January 2008; urges both sides to put an end to the present fighting in Northern Sri Lanka and accept an immediate ceasefire;
 2. Notes that the Government has made significant military gains in recent months, including the capture Kilinochchi and the capture of remaining rebel territory in the Jaffna Peninsula, which make progress on a political solution even more urgent;
 3. Emphasises the need for Government forces engaged in counter-insurgency and domestic security operations to exercise maximum restraint in accordance with international law in order to minimise any risk of innocent civilian casualties, and to behave impeccably in all their actions;
 4. Condemns both the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE leadership for their disregard for the safety and welfare of civilians trapped in the crossfire in the Mullaitivu region; is deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Vanni and the growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs); calls on both sides to take immediate steps to allow the thousands of civilians trapped in the conflict zone passage to safer areas; is concerned at the 48 hours truce nominally declared by the Government not to have been observed by either side;
 5. Deeply deplores that people displaced by the conflict are experiencing acute shortages of humanitarian aid, especially food, shelter and medical care as there has been no food convoy in the area since 16 January; calls on the Government of Sri Lanka and on the LTTE to take urgent action to ensure that IDPs receive desperately needed humanitarian aid immediately;
 6. Condemns the confirmed shelling of compounds sheltering UN national staff and of a pediatric unit inside the safety zone which led to the death of at least nine civilians and wounding many more; 7. Demands that the Government lifts its ban on the presence of all UN and non-governmental humanitarian organisations in the Vanni; urges the Government to allow all aid agencies free access to all areas of the country;
 8. Is deeply concerned by the severity of the crisis that media outlets and journalists are currently experiencing in Sri Lanka; deplores the fact that Sri Lankan authorities do only little to ensure the safety of the country's media and media representatives; calls on the authorities to allow journalists and media to cover the conflict independently, without restriction and in safety;
 9. Strongly condemns the considerable number of high profile attacks on media representatives in Sri Lanka which have taken place in recent weeks, especially the murder of Lasantha Wickrematunga, editor-in-chief of The Sunday Leader, and the stabbing attack on Upali Tennakoon, editor of the weekly newspaper Rivira, and his wife;

10. Urges the Sri Lankan authorities to take prompt action in order to ensure that a thorough and independent investigation into the murder of Lasantha Wickrematunga as well as other attacks is carried out, and to make sure that those responsible are being held to account;
- 10a Deeply deplores the ongoing detention of leading journalist S. Tissainayagam, indicted since August 2008 for alleged violations of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in connection with two editorials he published in 2006; underlines that this apparent criminalisation of the exercise of freedom of speech has led Amnesty International to consider M. Tissainayagam a prisoner of conscience and that an appeal of President Poettering directly to Minister of Foreign Affairs Boggolagama remains, to this day, unanswered;
11. Calls for an immediate, comprehensive and verifiable end to hostilities, including political assassinations and suicide bombing; calls on the LTTE leadership to resume peace negotiations on a constructive basis with the Government of Sri Lanka without delay;
12. Calls on the Government of Sri Lanka, the United National Party and other parties to agree to work in close cooperation to take robust action against terrorism and to address legitimate Tamil grievances, and to come forward with a bold gesture of reconciliation towards the Tamil peoples of Sri Lanka;
13. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the Governments of the Member States to redouble their efforts to help bring a stable and just peace to Sri Lanka and restore security and prosperity;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President and Government of Sri Lanka and other parties to the conflict.