

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 711

Calling on the United States Government and the international community to address the human rights and humanitarian needs of Sri Lanka's Tamil internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently living in government-run camps by supporting the release of such IDPs, implementing and facilitating an independent oversight of the process of release and resettlement, and allowing foreign aid groups to provide relief and resources to such IDPs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 31, 2009

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois (for himself and Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Calling on the United States Government and the international community to address the human rights and humanitarian needs of Sri Lanka's Tamil internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently living in government-run camps by supporting the release of such IDPs, implementing and facilitating an independent oversight of the process of release and resettlement, and allowing foreign aid groups to provide relief and resources to such IDPs.

Whereas May 2009 marked the conclusion of the 26-year struggle between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

(LTTE) and the Sri Lankan Government, and Sri Lankan Government committed itself to caring for and ensuring the speedy return of the civilians internally displaced as a result of the fighting;

Whereas the Sri Lankan Government is seeking to identify former combatants who were part of the LTTE and as part of the vetting process the Sri Lankan Government has set up make-shift camps to house over 280,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) who fled their homes as the war drew to an end;

Whereas as part of the United Nations Human Rights Council 11th Special Session on Sri Lanka held on May 27, 2009, the Sri Lankan Government made commitments to the world to improve the conditions for the people housed in the camps and stated that the “bulk” of the IDPs would be resettled within 180 days;

Whereas the first 60 days of this resettlement process, as committed to by the Sri Lankan Government, has passed and the Sri Lankan Government is still detaining over 280,000 IDPs in 30 military-guarded camps in the four northern districts of Vavuniya, Mannar, Jaffna, and Trincomalee;

Whereas allegations are being reported that the current and actual standard of treatment and living conditions afforded to IDPs is grossly wanting when compared to the principles set as standards by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for guiding states and organizations dealing with internally displaced populations;

Whereas Human Rights Watch believes that the Sri Lankan Government should immediately release the more than

280,000 Tamil IDPs held in detention camps since March 2008; and

Whereas principles, established by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs, for sufficient provision of equal treatment, family reunification, access to essential food and water, sanitation, healthcare, education, safety, acknowledgment of the special needs for vulnerabilities of children and women are not yet met: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) urges the Sri Lankan Government to guar-
3 antee the safety and speedy release of internally dis-
4 placed persons (IDPs) in camps and to ensure the
5 rights and privileges of these refugees in the reestab-
6 lishment of their homes and properties;

7 (2) calls on the Sri Lankan Government to turn
8 the operation of the camps over to civilian authori-
9 ties and allow the day to day presence of inter-
10 national government agencies, the International
11 Committee of the Red Cross, and independent non-
12 governmental organizations to assist in the care of
13 the IDPs;

14 (3) calls on the Sri Lankan Government to
15 allow an independent group to assess the accuracy
16 of the allegations of large numbers of deaths, dis-
17 eases, and sicknesses due to poor sanitation and in-
18 appropriate healthcare in the camps containing the

1 IDPs and to prepare a plan of action to resolve the
2 problems;

3 (4) request the Sri Lankan Government to es-
4 tablish reasonable conditions to allow foreign agen-
5 cies access to the IDPs and to ensure the rebuilding
6 process of war torn areas in Sri Lanka; and

7 (5) urges the Tamil people to continue to be pa-
8 tient while the government reestablishes normalcy
9 and urges the Sri Lankan Government to move for-
10 ward in creating political reforms that will resolve
11 the political concerns of the Tamil people.

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