

Escalating violence threatens the safety of Sri Lanka's Children

Geneva, 16 May 2006 - Sri Lankan children in areas most affected by recent clashes are paying a high price for the escalating tension in the island. Thousands of children are still displaced from their homes following the recent violence in Trincomalee District in which six children were killed and others injured or severely traumatized.

UNICEF knows of at least nine children in other districts, including Jaffna and Vavuniya, who have been killed or injured in violent incidents. Some were victims of shooting while others lost their lives from attacks using grenades or claymore mines.

Schools in many areas remain suspended because of insecurity or occupation by families who have fled their homes. Violence and insecurity have also forced hundreds of families to abandon their livelihoods increasing their vulnerability and dependence on humanitarian assistance.

The ongoing violence underlines the urgency for the parties to the conflict to take immediate action to avoid slipping back into a state of war.

UNICEF calls on the parties to the conflict to cease the violence and to return to the Geneva talks. Negotiations offer the best hope of peace. Further, UNICEF calls on the parties to respect their obligation under international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians, particularly children, in times of conflict.

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