

St. Jude's Church,
Mullaithivu-Paranthan Road,
Udaiyarkaddu,
Mullaithivu District,
Sri-Lanka,
13 January 2009.

His Excellency Ban Ki Moon
The secretary General,
United Nations
Your Excellency,

The Agonising Cry of the People of Wannu, Sri-Lanka

We the Roman Catholic Priests and Religious serving the people in Wannu, the theatre of on-going vicious battles, make the following ardent and urgent appeal.

1. The "uncleared" area of Wannu which consisted of Killinochchi, Mullaithivu, parts of Mannar, parts of Jaffna and parts of Vavuniya districts has now shrunken to parts of the Mullaithivu district alone, as a result of the on-going military operations carried out by the SriLankan security forces against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
2. About 491,000 people from the above-mentioned districts are now forced to live in the shrunken Mullaithivu district alone. Day after day, displacements continue unabated, as a result of the aggressive artillery poundings and aerial bombardments in and around civilian settlements.
3. In these indiscriminate attacks, babies in mothers' wombs, infants, children, women and men, young and old are killed and maimed and wounded everyday. Even schools, hospitals, places of worship, civilian settlements etc., the security and safety of which are guaranteed in the Geneva Convention on the Conduct of War, are not spared in this aggressive war.
4. The merciless Economic Embargo imposed on Wannu and the Eviction of the INGOs worsen the predicament of the innocent civilians. A shortage in fuel, food supply, medicines, shelter materials and drinking water weigh heavily upon an already beleaguered people.

5. As the geographical territory occupied by the people keep on shrinking daily, it is becoming almost impossible for the people even to move towards "safer" areas, away from the battle fields. A GREAT HUMAN TRAGEDY HAS EXPLODED IN WANNI. Such a gruesome experience is unprecedented in the recent history of these people.
6. In times of war, the parties to the conflict, particularly the Government which is a signatory to the Geneva Convention on the conduct of war has the bounden duty to uphold the Convention. The safety and security and human dignity of the innocent civilians cannot and should not be trampled upon by anyone, particularly by the Government, waging a war.
7. What is at the root of this on going war is the STRUCTURAL INJUSTICE, a vehement denial of EQUALITY and DIGNITY of the Sri Lankan Tamils, perpetrated by the successive Sinhala dominated Governments of Sri Lanka for decades.
8. Therefore, we earnestly urge Your Excellency to take immediate action to stop this senseless war and put an end to the untold sufferings of the innocent civilians in Wannai whose life has become a real struggle for survival. And kindly take the necessary steps to bring the parties to the conflict to the negotiating table in order to find a humane and just and lasting political solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

Your Sincerely,

.....

(Signed) Rev Fr. James Pathinathar,
(On behalf of the Priests and Religious of Wannai)