

## **Queen's professors demand action in Sri Lanka**

Queen's law professor Sharry Aiken and a small group of colleagues are spearheading an assembly of Canadian University scholars who are calling on the Government of Canada to end the bloody conflict in Sri Lanka.

"The largest Tamil diaspora outside of Sri Lanka is in Canada," states Professor Aiken. "The fact that so many Canadian Tamils are continuing to lose family members and friends in the ongoing crisis is what prompted us as concerned Canadian academics to stand in solidarity with them."

A statement signed by 125 professors from across Canada notes that most independent observers estimate that more than 200,000 Tamil civilians, many already displaced multiple times, have been under siege in the tiny coastal strip. Confirmed reports indicate that more than 6,400 civilians, including 700 children, have been killed since January 2009.

"I witnessed protests by tens of thousands of Tamils in London, England two weeks ago," says Samantha King, Professor of Kinesiology and Health Studies at Queen's University. "Many of these people are refugees from the conflict in Sri Lanka. The suffering they have endured over the years is unthinkable. I signed this statement because I want the Canadian government to act swiftly to help bring about a political resolution to the crisis."

The scholars call on the Federal Government of Canada to work with both parties in the conflict to implement an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, and urge the International community and the UN to take responsibility for the protection of Tamil civilians.

"The gravity of the situation in Sri Lanka is worrisome, with thousands of civilians killed and hundreds of thousands of civilians at risk," says Darryl Robinson, Law Professor at Queen's University. "Even in times of armed conflicts, there are rules that restrict conduct and protect civilians. Countries like Canada can help influence the situation, but the government needs to know that its citizens are not indifferent and complacent and that we are expecting action to help alleviate the crisis and to avoid violations."

To view the statement and complete list of supporters, please see the attached backgrounder.

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