

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TAMILS

8 - 8 - 96

Dear Sir/ Madam,

On the 18th of July the Sri - Lankan army started raining down shells on the town of Kilinochchi. As a result seven people were killed and eleven seriously injured. **The hospital in Kilinochchi, the refugees last remaining refugee centre was reduced to rubble and 200 hospitalised patients were forced to flee for their safety.** The entire population of Kilinochchi, including the 280,000 refugees from Jaffna have also been bombed out of their last haven of safety and, according to Red Cross officials, are now living in the open without food, water or medicine.

For many of the refugees it is now for the second time, within twelve months, that they have had to take all of their belongings and move on, to a future without shelter or security. **For the old and weak the ordeal is more than too much and their dead bodies are often left where they dropped out of exhaustion.** It is not just food, water or medicine that the government is denying the Tamil people, it is also a life and death in dignity that has been taken away from them.

Because of a successful international propaganda campaign and a media blackout in the north and east the government has hidden from the world at large the plight of the Tamil people. **This is a war without witness, and the Tamils a people without a voice. The government has effectively made their suffering silent and unobserved.** It is up to us, the expatriate Tamils, to speak out where they cannot.

President Kumaratunga's government is facing an insurmountable crisis. The Sinhalese people are increasingly restless, facing rising unemployment (of well over 50%), increasing cost of living and no near sight of an end to the war, which they were promised would be over by Christmas '95. The international community is also becoming impatient with the President, who having been elected on a peace platform now seems to be bending toward a military solution which will cost the aid donors over £600million , this year alone.

This is a crucial time. While confidence in the Government is falling we should voice our own condemnation of the inhumanity and brutality of the Sri - lankan regime. **At this important time, when the credibility of the Sri - Lankan government is being questioned, for the first time since the war began, we should show the international community that the Tamil people have no confidence in the President and her ministers.** In doing so we can put pressure on the international community, which already has strong doubts, to force the government, while it is weak, to allow aid workers and journalists through to the north and east. Only then will the full extent of the tragedy be exposed and an end put to the long suffering of the Tamil people.

Please show your support by bringing your organisation as full participants to the march, details of which are given on the leaflet.

For any more information please contact the International Federation of Tamils on the Following number: 0181 - 470 - 8593 (Telephone and Fax.).

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Tamils despair as peace plan falls victim to new war against rebels

Sri Lanka's president is turning to the gun, writes Suzanne Goldenberg in Colombo

SRI LANKAN Tamils, who once saw President Chandrika Kumaratunga almost as a saviour, fear that she is falling back on a military solution to end the 13-year civil war.

Tamil Tiger guerrillas have government forces tied down just outside Kilinochchi, the last population centre under rebel control. It seems clear that both sides are suffering heavy casualties in the army's slow advance on the northern town.

The defence ministry claimed that it lost 16 soldiers on Tuesday while killing 69 guerrillas. The rebel Voice of the Tigers radio said 200 soldiers had been killed since the battle for Kilinochchi began nearly two weeks ago.

The scale of civilian suffering is also bound to be high. The International Committee for the Red Cross said it fears that 100,000 people have fled Kilinochchi and are living out in the open. With food and medical shipments to the north blocked for nearly three weeks, fears are growing for their welfare. Gérard Peytrignet of the ICRC said yesterday.

The capture of Kilinochchi is vital if there is to be a land

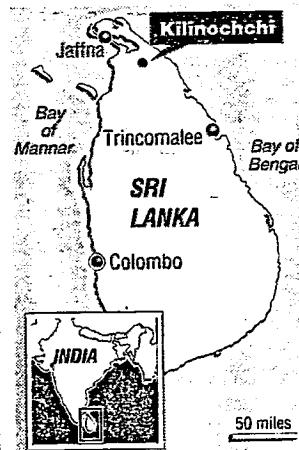
link between the northern Jaffna peninsula, seized from the Tigers last December, and the government-controlled mainland.

The confrontation follows the Tigers' attack on the Sri Lankan army last month, when the rebels overran the military camp at Mullaitivu and killed more than 1,100 troops.

Mrs Kumaratunga came to power two years ago as the only Sinhalese politician to talk of a negotiated peace. Her peace plan, which would devolve powers to regional councils, was the boldest attempt yet to satisfy the demands of the Tamil minority for self-government.

But Tamil leaders say her plan lacks support even among members of her ruling People's Alliance — let alone the opposition United National Party. They also fear that she is now leaning towards a military solution to a war that is projected to cost 50 billion rupees (£600 million) this year alone.

"The government is running out of options to the point that it winds up trying to kill as many Tigers as possible, with the only aim that they kill more Tigers than



Tigers kill soldiers," said Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, a consultant at Colombo university's centre for policy research and analysis. "The expectations were so great that I think the disappointment is commensurate."

An all-party parliamentary committee has been mulling over the constitutional reform package since January. Tamil politicians fear that when it resurfaces, it will be significantly diluted. That would discredit their own claims to serve the interests of their people better than the Tamil Tiger guerrillas, who have rejected the plan outright.

"Bringing in the package was a courageous move, but

the package alone is not going to solve anything," said D. Siddharthan, leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party. Eelam is Tamil for homeland.

Increasingly desperate political parties are beginning to distance themselves from the government's reform package and to look at other ways of trying to end the war.

Douglas Devananda, leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party, the largest of the former guerrilla groups in parliament, is urging his fellow Tamils to forget Mrs Kumaratunga's ambitious plan, and settle instead for a smaller portion of autonomy promised under an old abandoned proposal.

Yesterday, the leader of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation also turned his back on the peace plan.

"Hopes initially pinned on the parliamentary select committee are evaporating slowly giving rise to frustration and despair among the Tamil people and also sensible sections of the Sinhalese community who are serious about finding a solution to the conflict," said N. Srikantha, the Telo leader.

"The chauvinism that has become an integral part of the polity of this country, is adamantly opposed to the aspirations of the Tamil people. And the war goes on," he said.