



**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

5/15/2009

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

BY FAX AND MAIL

Dear Mr. President:

We write as Members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the U.S. House of Representatives to urge you to personally intervene in the humanitarian catastrophe currently unfolding in Sri Lanka, which has intensified again in the last days.

As you know, some 50,000 civilians are currently still trapped between the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and the Tamil Tigers terrorists who used the civilian population as a human shield in a strip of land only 1.7 square-miles large, which is constantly being shelled. While humanitarian groups, international observers and journalists are totally excluded from the area, credible accounts at our recent congressional commission hearing on Sri Lanka outlined the humanitarian disaster that is happening right before the eyes of the international community.

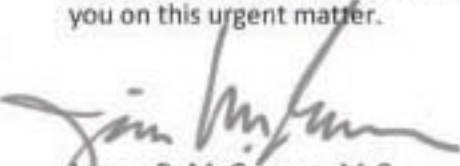
All credible efforts by members of the international community, including those by the United States through our outstanding Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Robert Blake, and those of Britain, France, Norway and the European Union, were either rebuffed or went mostly ignored by the Sri Lankan government, which has made a determination that it will resolve this issue militarily.

It has become increasingly obvious that the Sri Lankan government believes that there will be no political price to pay for its impunity. We believe this must change and that there are concrete measures the United States can take right now to hold the Sri Lankan state accountable for its actions, now and in the future.

We therefore applaud your strong and powerful statement on Sri Lanka, and we join you in calling on the Sri Lankan Government to grant international humanitarian organizations access to the region and to assist in the evacuation of the civilian population out of harm's way, and to remind the Government of Sri Lanka of its legal responsibility as a sovereign nation to protect and provide for its citizens. As the situation is deteriorating daily, we further call on you to instruct our Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, to immediately call for an emergency session of the UN Security Council to discuss the ongoing situation in Sri Lanka, as the refugee stream and the large numbers of internally displaced people will clearly impact the stability of the entire region. We ask you to publicly instruct the U.S. Executive Director to the International Monetary Fund to use his vote and voice to suspend any further action on the pending \$1.9 billion loan to Sri Lanka. We also ask that you instruct Ambassador Rice to work with our friends and allies within the U.N. to use all existing human rights mechanisms to fully investigate and document the unfolding situation, including, but not limited to, any possible war crimes or crimes against humanity committed by either side. We must make clear to all parties that there will be no impunity for these serious crimes after the end of hostilities.

Lastly, we ask that you instruct the Department of Justice to look into the possible legal ramifications regarding the fact that three of the key Sri Lankan actors in the implementation of the Sri Lankan military strategy are reported to be U.S. citizens for purposes of legal accountability should credible evidence link them to any of the above mentioned crimes. These key actors include President Rajapaksa's two brothers, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, who is the Minister of Defense, and Basil Rajapaksa, his senior advisor, as well Army General Sarath Fonseka, the military commander on the ground.

Thank you for your immediate attention to these requests. We look forward to hearing from you on this urgent matter.


James P. McGovern, M.C.
Co-Chair, TLHRC

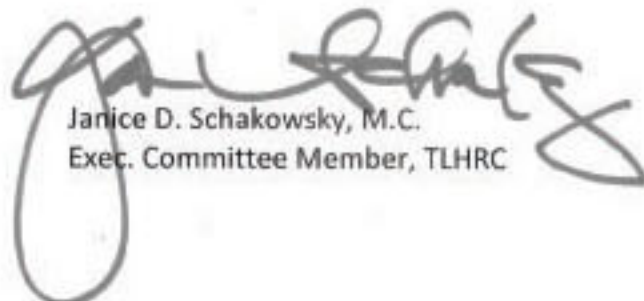
Sincerely,


Anh "Joseph" Cao, M.C.
Exec. Committee Member, TLHRC


Tammy Baldwin, M.C.
Exec. Committee Member, TLHRC


Donna F. Edwards, M.C.
Exec. Committee Member, TLHRC


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