



## **The Great Escape from Terror**

In the 12 hours since 20 April 2009, I am, more than 30,000 Sri Lankan civilians have demonstrated in no uncertain terms their desire to live in freedom in their motherland, away from the stranglehold of their self-proclaimed liberators of the LTTE.

Given the opportunity by the Sri Lankan armed forces, these civilians have fled in their thousands to the Safe Zone in government held territory, despite shootings, bomb explosions and suicide killer blasts within the No Fire Zone to frighten them into remaining as hostages of the LTTE.

As this is written the exodus continues both by land and sea. It is reported that fleeing Tamil civilians have taken off in more than 100 boats from the coast of Pudumathalan despite firing at them by the LTTE. Sailing to the safety of Point Pedro these civilians have added to those who have voted with their feet crossing over to the safety zones in their tens of thousands in the past several hours.

This surge of civilians is an apt response to all those calling for a temporary pause in the humanitarian military operations of the government or a longer ceasefire, to enable the Tamil civilians to flee the armed grip of the LTTE. The record has shown that such well - intentioned pauses are non - effective with the ruthless terrorists of the LTTE.

This also underscores President Mahinda Rajapaksa's call to such pressure groups, both national and international, to turn their pressure on Prabhakaran for just a one hour pause in his ruthless grip on Tamil civilians, to see for themselves the surge to freedom that would follow.

The exodus to freedom that is taking place in the North of Sri Lanka just now, is no less a massive vote for freedom than the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.

The Tamil civilians fleeing to their safety, point to the necessity for continued vigilance and strategic action to provide a humanitarian escape to the rest of the Tamils the LTTE may still try to keep hostage in its final hours of desperation. The freedom of those civilians threatened by an ever weakening, but increasingly desperate LTTE, is no doubt the priority of the security forces, the government, and the wish of all freedom loving Sri Lankans whether here or abroad.

We commend the security forces for their continued caution in seeking to prevent civilian casualties. The thousands seeking their safety under the Sri Lankan flag is a clear vote of confidence in the Security Forces. They have given the lie to those who kept warning of an impending bloodbath and humanitarian catastrophe.

The people have shown the way to their own freedom in Sri Lanka.

Policy Research & Information Unit  
Presidential Secretariat  
Colombo.

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