

Bishops demand LTTE quit Madhu shrine

The Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka has demanded that the LTTE leave the sacred precincts of the Madhu Church immediately.

A statement issued by the CBCSL on April 23, 2008, said:

"We, the Catholic Bishops of Sri Lanka, are greatly concerned about the grave situation prevailing in the Madhu Sanctuary and its sacred area, where the LTTE and the Sri Lanka Security Forces are engaged presently in military operations and armed conflict, and demand that both parties adhere strictly and observe the International Law regarding sacred places of worship and the Sri Lankan Pilgrimages Ordinance as published in the government gazette notification No. 185 of 1982.03.19. Any violation in this regard is unacceptable.

"According, we strongly urge the LTTE, who are occupying the sacred precincts at the moment, to leave the Madhu premises forthwith and that the Armed Forces refrain from entering the sacred Madhu area. The immediate withdrawal of the LTTE is all the more urgent since the venerated Statue of Our Lady of Madhu, which had to be transferred to a different location due to reasons of security, needs to be brought back and be enshrined in the hallowed shrine, at the earliest.

"We sincerely trust that both the LTTE and the Security Forces will heed this clear and strong appeal made by the Catholic Bishops in the light of the demands of International Law and by virtue of which we have the right and duty to intervene in this particular instance concerning the safety and security of the hallowed Madhu Shrine.

"We also entreat our faithful and all those who revere the Sacred Shrine to pray earnestly for the safety and security of both the Madhu Shrine and the venerated Statue of Our Lady of Madhu."