

# Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Justice & Peace / Integrity of Creation Office, United States Province



The Honorable Meg Lundsager  
US Executive Director  
International Monetary Fund  
700 19th Street, N.W.,  
Washington, D.C. 20431

Fax: 202.623.4661

July 24, 2009

Dear Ms. Lundsager:

We are writing to urge you to insist that the government of Sri Lanka address significant post-conflict human rights abuses as part of the approval for a US\$2.5 billion stand-by loan.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate is a Roman Catholic congregation of men with a significant presence in Sri Lanka that dates to the mid-19th century. We continue to be the largest Roman Catholic congregation in the country with a significant number of members from both the Sinhala and Tamil communities.

Two months after the end of the 25-year-long conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Sri Lankan government continues to hold more than 280,000 people, most of them Tamils displaced by the fighting, in detention camps in violation of international law. Two Oblate priests who stayed until the end in the "No-Fire Zone" to minister to their people, are currently detained in the camps, along with four diocesan priests. The military has refused to release them. The government has severely restricted access by humanitarian organizations, the media, and independent monitors, leaving the displaced vulnerable to government abuse. Our office has received numerous reports of disappearances from the camps, torture and inhumane conditions for the thousands forcibly confined there.

Both the US and UK governments have expressed serious concerns about the government's actions during and since the military action that led to the defeat of the LTTE. Our sources estimate some 20,000 died in the recent conflict. We also received eyewitness reports of significant numbers of people 'disappeared' from military checkpoints established to screen people leaving the "No-Fire Zone" in the final stages of the conflict. While we consistently decried the LTTE's forcible recruitment of civilians, particularly children, and their forced retention of civilians in the "No-Fire Zone", we are now primarily concerned that the rights of minorities in Sri Lanka be adequately respected.

We are particularly concerned about the fact that the loan will be used to support post-war reconstruction efforts in the war-affected north. We join others who are deeply concerned by the government's clear articulation of Sinhalese nationalism as state policy and its determination to control the north by diluting the Tamil population and imposing a dominant Sinhalese presence there. Large military barracks are being constructed and a permanent military presence is being planned for the Vanni. What is equally disturbing is that we have seen no attempt to address the serious and legitimate underlying grievances of the Tamil population that led to the insurgency in the first place. This would seem to undermine the purpose of the loan.

The government has blocked all attempts to establish accountability for violations of international humanitarian law during the conflict. Government officials have failed to investigate numerous serious attacks on journalists and civil society activists and have instead accused them of being in league with the LTTE, equating dissent with treason.

**We urge you to make the release of each new tranche of funds contingent on tangible human rights progress. Allowing people full freedom to leave the camps should they so choose, and insuring unimpeded access for independent monitors should be minimum benchmarks.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Seamus P. Finn" followed by "o.m.i." in smaller letters.

The Rev. Seamus P. Finn, OMI  
Director, JPIC