



**EMBARGOED**

UNTIL 11:00AM NEW YORK TIME (EST) APRIL 14, 2008

**ARMED CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA ESCALATES**  
**CHILDREN FACE URGENT CRISIS**

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**April 14, 2008, New York-** There is virtually no safety for children in Sri Lanka as the brutal armed conflict there escalates. Every day the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), the Government armed forces, and paramilitary groups, such as the armed wing of the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), commit heinous crimes against children. The LTTE and the TMVP recruit and use children as soldiers while the Government obstructs humanitarian access to thousands of children in war torn areas, denying them urgently needed assistance and concealing the grave crisis they face, according to the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict's new report, *No Safety No Escape: Children and the Escalating Armed Conflict in Sri Lanka*.

*No Safety No Escape* is being released today at the United Nations headquarters against the backdrop of an escalating military build up and fear of deepening warfare in Sri Lanka. Simultaneously, thousands of children are missing out on school, being denied basic health care and facing daily threats to their lives, such as suicide bombings, landmine explosions, abductions, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, torture, recruitment as soldiers and forced displacement.

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“This has turned into a war against civilians and it is the children who suffer most,” said Julia Freedson, Director of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a global network of non-governmental organizations based in New York. “We are at the UN today because the entire UN system, especially the Security Council, has an obligation to ensure that these children are protected. There is no time to waste,” she continued. *No Safety No Escape* calls on the UN Security Council to exert pressure on the LTTE, the Government and the TMVP to uphold international child protection standards.

“Sri Lankan children have no escape. They are living in a state of constant fear and all too often those fears become a reality as children are recruited as soldiers, forced from their homes and schools and separated from their families. I ask, how much longer will the international community stand idly by while these children’s lives are destroyed?” said Bhavani Fonseka, Senior Researcher at the Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA), a Sri Lankan policy think tank. “I have witnessed this brutal conflict first hand, and as a Sri Lankan I implore the UN to use its resources and influence to help resolve this crisis.”

*No Safety No Escape* details a spectrum of violations committed against Sri Lankan children in the context of armed conflict and provides practical recommendations to the Government of Sri Lanka, the LTTE, the TMVP, the UN Security Council, the humanitarian community in Sri Lanka, donors and other governments.

For the full report please visit [www.watchlist.org](http://www.watchlist.org).

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