

Sri Lanka: A Bitter Peace

Colombo/Brussels, 11 January 2010: No matter which of the two main Sinhalese candidates wins Sri Lanka's 26 January presidential election, the international community must take steps to ensure he addresses the marginalisation of Tamils and other minorities in the interest of peace and stability.

[*Sri Lanka: A Bitter Peace*](#) ,* the latest briefing from the International Crisis Group, examines how eight months after the military victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the post-war policies of President Mahinda Rajapaksa have deepened rather than resolved the grievances that generated and sustained militancy. Though the election campaign between Rajapaksa and retired General Sarath Fonseka has now opened up some new political space, Sri Lanka has yet to make significant progress in reconstructing its battered democratic institutions or establishing conditions for a stable peace.

“The victory over the LTTE will remain fragile unless Sinhalese-dominated political parties make strong moves towards a more inclusive and democratic state”, says Donald Steinberg, Crisis Group's Deputy President for Policy. “Donor governments and international financial institutions should strengthen voices for reform by collectively pressing for democratisation and demilitarisation throughout Sri Lanka, but especially in the north and east”.

The return to their home districts of most of the quarter million Tamils displaced from the Northern Province, and the increased freedom of movement for the nearly 100,000 still in military-run camps, are important steps forward. The resettlement process has failed to meet international standards for safe and dignified returns, however, and the damage from the government's humiliating internment will require much work to repair.

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