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27 January 2005

LKA43351.E

Sri Lanka: Update to LKA43328.E of 20 January 2005, LKA43303.E of 13 January 2005 and LKA43290.E of 7 January 2005 on the impact of the 26 December 2004 tsunami on human rights conditions in Sri Lanka (21-26 January 2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

No reports of developments in the human rights situation during the period covered by this Response could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, there were developments on the peace process.

During the period covered by this Response, there continued to be mixed reports on the state of relations between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government. Some positive developments took place upon the arrival of Norway's foreign minister, who met with both LTTE leaders and the government to discuss aid and the peace process (AP 22 Jan. 2005; AFP 22 Jan. 2005). Following these meetings, the LTTE and government began discussions on creating a body that would include representatives of both sides to ensure that aid was being distributed fairly (AP 22 Jan. 2005). On 22 January 2005, the LTTE announced that they were "putting on hold their struggle for greater autonomy for the Tamil minority in order to deal with the aftermath of the tsunami disaster" (AFP 22 Jan. 2005). Two days later, on 24 January 2005, the LTTE expressed that they were willing to "join a common program with the government for providing relief to the stricken victims of the tsunami disaster in the North-East" (Xinhua 24 Jan. 2005). All of these positive developments took place against the backdrop of continued tension between both sides over the distribution of aid (ibid.; AFP 22 Jan. 2005; ibid. 23 Jan. 2005; AP 22 Jan. 2005; ibid. 23 Jan. 2005). On 26 January 2005, the government officially "ruled out" the delivery of aid directly from foreign donors to the LTTE and indicated that the LTTE would continue to receive foreign aid through the government (AFP 26 Jan. 2005). The tension was most evident in the LTTE's allegation that the Sri Lankan military was using the relief money to purchase weapons (ibid. 23 Jan. 2005; AP 23 Jan. 2005).

However, on 26 January 2005, a month following the tsunami, the Sri Lankan government participated "for the first time" at an event organized by the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), which has been identified as the LTTE's aid organization (ibid. 26 Jan. 2005).

As regards the government's US \$3.5 billion rehabilitation and reconstruction plan, Reuters reported that allocations have been made for reconstruction in LTTE-controlled areas, although the plan does not indicate whether the government will be working in collaboration with the LTTE (Reuters

21 Jan. 2005).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. .

References

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