

# CARITAS COMPANIONS

*An update for those who share the journey*

May 2009

*Caritas depends on your prayers and moral support, as well as financial support, for our work in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas.*

*This e-mail newsletter is for those who wish to join through prayer and small actions as Companions in our work for peace and justice. If you would like to join the mailing list, please e-mail [lisa@caritas.org.nz](mailto:lisa@caritas.org.nz)*



## Sri Lankan Conflict Deepens

Caritas asks your prayers for civilians trapped by fighting in northeast Sri Lanka, and those who have escaped to overcrowded government camps. Our partner Caritas Sri Lanka is supporting civilians both in the conflict area and in the camps. Caritas Sri Lanka Director Fr Damien Fernando has described the human suffering as "unbearable".

Caritas Internationalis has called for an immediate ceasefire by both sides to protect civilians, and access by aid agencies to all people affected by the fighting. The United Nations this week demanded urgent action by all parties to ensure the safety of civilians.

Thousands more civilians this week fled a tiny coastal area where government forces are closing in on the Tamil Tiger rebels, after 25 years of civil war. An estimated 50,000 people remain trapped in the war zone, while 200,000 have fled to government-run camps in surrounding districts. Caritas Sri Lanka, supported by the international Caritas network, is providing food, medical and other assistance. It is feeding 20,000 newly displaced in Jaffna and Mannar, and has fitted 200 artificial limbs and other aids for those maimed in the fighting.

A Caritas volunteer driver Anthonipillai Uthayaraj Raj was killed on 8 May, and in April, the head of Caritas Vanni, Fr T.R. Vasanthaseelan, had a leg amputated after an artillery attack while working in the conflict area.

"There must be an end to this war .... Aid workers and civilians alike must receive genuine protection," says Fr Damien. Caritas will continue to help people and work for a lasting peace in the country.

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand is accepting donations in support of Caritas Internationalis' appeal for NZ\$4.35 million to help 100,000 displaced people with food, water, medicine, shelter and counselling.

More information at [www.caritas.org.nz/?sid=1139](http://www.caritas.org.nz/?sid=1139), or ph 0800 22 10 22.



*People fleeing the area held by the Tamil Tiger rebels. Photo: Reuters.*

### Prayer for Peace in Sri Lanka

God of Peace, We pray for the people of Sri Lanka

Whose lives are torn apart by the oppression of death and violence.

Comfort them as they endure their suffering and loss

And fill them with hope for an end to their terrible ordeal.

May world leaders act with courage and compassion to stop the fighting and bring the warring parties to the table of peace.

Let it be soon that the blasting of bombs and the wailing of grieving mothers is replaced by the singing and laughter of children.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Brisbane

*Caritas would appreciate your prayers for:*

*\* Protection of civilians and aid workers in Sri Lanka*

*\* An end to fighting*

*\* Access for aid agencies to all people affected*

*\* Adequate support from the international community for those displaced – now and in the future.*