

Nonviolent Peaceforce Sri Lanka Project Interim Update – January 6, 2006

The situation here is rapidly deteriorating, and the Nonviolent Peaceforce/Sri Lanka (NPSL) is working hard to adapt to the changing context and respond most effectively. The past month has been marked by the rapid increase in fatalities of civilians (including a MP member of the Tamil National Alliance), members of the Sri Lanka Navy, Army and police forces, and LTTE cadres. Several of the worst ceasefire violations took place in Mannar, one during a sea battle where sailors of the Sri Lanka Navy were killed and another in which a bus carrying Navy personnel was destroyed by a claymore mine, killing thirteen. A total of one hundred thirty-nine people lost their lives due to political violence during the month of December.

Just before Christmas, a few days prior to the NPSL team gathered for a planning and strategy retreat in the central city of Kandy, a crisis in Mutur (Trincomalee district) broke out with the killings of both Muslim and Tamil people in the area. The facilitating efforts by the NPSL Mutur team, in cooperation with members of the Foundation for Co-existence (FCE) and international monitors, led to an emergency meeting between the LTTE political leadership and the leaders from the Muslim Federation in the area, consequently putting a temporarily halt to the spreading violence.

The immediate need for re-negotiating the CFA agreement and the start of a new peace process is being hindered by the huge gap that still exists between the position of the LTTE and the position of the government to only consider a solution within the framework of a unitary state.

On 4 January, NPSL in the central part of the island, the Team Coordinators gathered with the NPSL Management Team to review the crises, discuss various scenarios and consider possible responses, and also to discuss security for the staff of NPSL and our partners in the area. We explored how to use the two years of experience that NPSL has established to best support the efforts for peace and justice during these extremely fragile and volatile times.

Executive Director Mel Duncan and Program Director Christine Schweitzer will arrive in Sri Lanka on Jan 17th for a strategic consultation and visits to all of the field sites.