



Issued for Immediate Release

PRESS STATEMENT – PRESS STATEMENT – PRESS STATEMENT

Emergency Meeting with International Development Minister Rt. Hon Shahid Malik MP

Following a joint press release issued last Friday (26 September 2008), by Minister responsible for the Department for International Development (DFID) Rt. Hon Shahid Malik and Foreign Minister responsible for Africa, Asia and the UN Rt. Hon Lord Malloch Brown and the press statement issued by the British Tamils Forum (BTF) as response on Saturday (27 September 2008), an emergency meeting was held with members of the Forum this afternoon (30 September 2008) at the DFID Minister's Office.

Minister Shahid Malik said that the British Government is very concerned that they believe for over two weeks no food supplies have reached the Vanni. He has requested for reasons from the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) why the 60 Lorries that were supposed to have been sent to the Vanni yesterday, have not left as yet. He said that he was expecting answers within 48 hours.

Minister also said that an assessment team that was dispatched by his department to assess the ground situation on the requirements for humanitarian aid and access for food supplies has returned back to the UK recently and is expected to brief him of their findings later today.

He said that his department will fund this growing humanitarian crisis through their humanitarian aid budget. British Tamils Forum submitted an estimated requirement of c£20.0m for immediate relief efforts. This estimation was submitted in conjunction with local Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) currently working within the Vanni area. Minister agreed to look at this estimation along with the DFID assessment team's own estimation before deciding on any figures.

Minister agreed that one of the fundamental reasons for such large scale internal displacement is due to the indiscriminate aerial bombardment of the Tamil areas. It was also noted that it is unfortunate this 'man made' human disaster has to be funded through British tax payer's monies.

Minister said that the British Government feels and is committed in helping and aiding this developing humanitarian catastrophe within the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. This aid, he categorically said will not be channelled through the GoSL but will be channelled through local and international NGOs like the ICRC. He further said that the British Government does not agree with the GoSL's general assessment that all local Tamil NGOs which are currently working within the Vanni area are all controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

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Notes to Editors:

British Tamils Forum exists to harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and significant others including mainstream decision makers in the UK with the aim of alleviating the sufferings of the Tamils community in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self determination within a democratic frame work under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. The forum was set-up in 2006 when, with the support 88 British Tamil community organisations, it also published an open letter in the Times newspaper. For more information admin@tamilsforum.com and/or visit: www.tamilsforum.com