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PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Killing of 34 civilians by Tamil bombing unacceptable

In a message to representatives of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) abroad, Amnesty International today expressed concern about yesterday's bomb explosion in which at least 34 civilians were killed near Maradana junction, Colombo.

Amnesty International learned that an otherwise empty bus believed to be driven by a member of the LTTE exploded around midday while being chased by police. Among those killed are drivers and passengers of vehicles in the traffic surrounding the bus, shop keepers, stall owners on the pavement nearby, and pedestrians and commuters on their way to an adjacent railway station.

While the intended target of the bomb was not known, Amnesty International said it was concerned that the killings, as others attributed to the LTTE over the last few years, appears to be in contravention of basic standards of international humanitarian law. It also sought assurances from the leadership of the LTTE that deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on civilians by forces under LTTE control will not be authorized or tolerated.

ENDS.../