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## **Sri Lanka: Amnesty International calls for urgent protection of civilians amidst return to hostilities**

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that the end to the Ceasefire Agreement between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) today will lead to an increase in hostilities that will result in a dramatic rise in indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population.

“The end of the ceasefire is likely to unleash fresh violence that will lead to serious human rights abuses, including an increase in enforced disappearances and abductions as a counter-insurgency strategy, as well as unlawful killings. We call on both parties to the conflict to return to a genuine implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement and to uphold the protection of civilians at all times”, said Catherine Baber, Programme Director for Asia-Pacific.

“The withdrawal of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, in addition to the downgrading of the National Human Rights Commission by the International Co-ordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions which has brought its credibility into question, leaves a vacuum in independent investigation and monitoring of human rights abuses. The establishment of a United Nations field operation with a strong monitoring mandate is now more urgent than ever” she said.

“The ongoing climate of impunity for grave human rights abuses and the ongoing violence exemplified by the recent assassination of government minister, DM Dassanayake and Tamil MP, T Maheswaran, is a serious concern”, Baber said.

Amnesty International calls on all parties in the conflict to comply with their obligations under international law to protect civilians and urges the international community to support the call to establish an independent, international monitoring presence on the ground without delay.