and to populations of internally dis\nplaced persons who remain confined in\ncamps, which should be administered\nby civilian authorities. These people\nshould be allowed to leave the camps as\nsoon as possible so they can start to re\nbuild their lives.

As soon as possible, the government\nneds to begin implementing policies\nfor the devolution of power to provin\ncial councils in the north and east as\nprovided for in Sri Lanka’s Constitu\ntion. This and other steps are needed to\ndemonstrate that all Sri Lankans can\nlive without fear and participate freely\nin the political process. It must address\nthe longstanding, legitimate grievan\nces of the Tamil population so they\ncan finally enjoy the equal rights and\nopportunities to which they, like other\nSri Lankan citizens, are entitled.

There is also the issue of account\nability for violations of the laws of war.\nThe LTTE had a long history of flagrant\nviolations of human rights, including\nkidnappings, extrajudicial killings, dis\nappearances, and deliberately target\ning civilians. The Sri Lankan military\nengaged in similar crimes. Although the\nSri Lankan Gov\nernment prevented access for jour\nnalists to the war zone in order to avoid\nscrutiny of the military’s conduct,\nvideo footage was smuggled out. And as\nthe smoke has lifted from the battle\nfield there are reports that thousands of\nTamil civilians who were trapped in the\nso-called safe zone perished in the\nlast months of the war. There is abun\ndant evidence that they were deliber\nately targeted with relentless shell\ning and aerial bombardments, despite\nrepeated appeals by the international\ncommunity that they be spared. There\nare also growing fears of retaliatory at\ntacks against those who criticized such\ntactics.

The recent decision of the United Na\ntions Human Rights Council rejecting\ncalls by Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for an international in\nvestigation of these violations is unfor\ntunate but not surprising. Several of\nthe Council’s members routinely arbit\narily imprison and torture political\nopponents in their own countries. The\nSri Lankan Government, which seeks\ninternational aid to rebuild, insists that\nwhat occurred there is an “inter\nnal” matter and that for outsiders to call for a criminal investigation would\njeopardize the peace process. The Sri Lankan military engaged in similar crimes to the war zone in order to avoid scrutiny of the military’s conduct, video footage was smuggled out. And as the smoke has lifted from the battlefield there are reports that thousands of Tamil civilians who were trapped in the so-called safe zone perished in the last months of the war. There is abundant evidence that they were deliberately targeted with relentless shelling and aerial bombardments, despite repeated appeals by the international community that they be spared. There are also growing fears of retaliatory attacks against those who criticized such tactics.

The recent decision of the United Nations Human Rights Council rejecting calls by Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for an international investigation of these violations is unfortunate but not surprising. Several of the Council’s members routinely arbitrarily imprison and torture political opponents in their own countries. The Sri Lankan Government, which seeks international aid to rebuild, insists that what occurred there is an “internal” matter and that for outsiders to call for a criminal investigation would jeopardize the peace process. The Sri Lankan military engaged in similar crimes to the war zone in order to avoid scrutiny of the military’s conduct, video footage was smuggled out. And as the smoke has lifted from the battlefield there are reports that thousands of Tamil civilians who were trapped in the so-called safe zone perished in the last months of the war. There is abundant evidence that they were deliberately targeted with relentless shelling and aerial bombardments, despite repeated appeals by the international community that they be spared. There are also growing fears of retaliatory attacks against those who criticized such tactics.

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