



UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF URGES RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW WITH END OF CEASEFIRE IN SRI LANKA

Geneva, 15 January 2008-- As the Ceasefire Agreement in Sri Lanka is due to effectively end on 16 January 2008, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, reminded the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of their obligations under international law to respect human rights.

"An intensification of hostilities will likely have a devastating effect on the human rights of many Sri Lankans from all communities," the High Commissioner said.

The High Commissioner noted that international law obliges all parties to protect civilians without discrimination and includes prohibitions against the arbitrary deprivation of life, arbitrary detention, forced displacement, enforced disappearances, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It also forbids the recruitment and deployment of children as soldiers.

The High Commissioner warned that violations of these rules by any party could entail individual criminal responsibility under international criminal law, including by those in positions of command.

The High Commissioner visited Sri Lanka in October 2007. In her dialogue with the Government she has stressed the critical need for independent, public reporting on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka and the readiness of her Office to assist in this regard