

OTTAWA TREATY Universalisation in South Asia

Sri Lanka fact sheet

Sri Lanka's landmine policy and the Ottawa Treaty

Sri Lanka has not acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty. In February 2004, Sri Lanka stated that it supports the humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa treaty and will work towards its possible accession as confidence in peace strengthens. On several occasions, the government reaffirmed that its stand on the anti-personnel mine ban is dependent on reaching an agreement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebel group on non-use of landmines.

In January 2002, for the first time, a leader of the LTTE rebels expressed support for a ban on antipersonnel mines. However, like the Sri Lankan government the LTTE indicated that they would like to see some significant progress toward peace before making any ban commitment.

Production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines

- There is no evidence that the Sri Lankan government has produced or exported anti-personnel mines.
- The government will not disclose the number or types of anti-personnel mines it has stockpiled. However, it is believed that the Sri Lankan government purchased 900,000 Pakistani P4 mines in the early 1990s. Demining operations in the region confirm that government troops used Pakistani P4, Chinese Type 72, and Italian VS/50 anti-personnel mines.
- The LTTE rebel group is considered expert in making improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and has produced several types of anti-personnel mines, including the "Jony" mine (a small wooden box mine), a plastic mine (which resembles the Pakistani P4 mine) and a Claymore-type directional fragmentation mine.
- The current status of the LTTE's landmine production facilities is not known.

Use of anti-personnel mines

- In nearly two decades of conflicts both the Sri Lanka Army and LTTE used anti-personnel mines extensively.
- Increased fighting in 2000 and 2001 resulted in increased use of anti-personnel mines by both sides.

- Fighting halted in December 2001 and a formal cease-fire agreement came into force in February 2002. Although the LTTE suspended peace talks with the government in April 2003, the cease-fire continued to hold.
- Since December 2001, there have been no confirmed reports of new mine use by either the government or the LTTE.

The extent of the landmine problem and casualties

- After two decades of armed conflict, landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) constitute a serious impediment to reconstruction and resettlement.
- This conflict displaced around 800,000 people from the north and the east of the country. Landmines continue to be a threat to the refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who return to former conflict areas.
- In 2003, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recorded 99 landmine/UXO casualties (24 people killed and 75 injured). Of the total casualties only three were military personnel.
- In February 2004, Sri Lanka declared that it has embarked on a comprehensive humanitarian mine action programme with a broad objective of making Sri Lanka a mine free country by the end of 2006.
- Landmine Action commends the government of Sri Lanka for setting this target, BUT we want to urge them to join the Ottawa treaty as part of their objective of making Sri Lanka mine free.

CALL FOR ACTION

Why not write to the Sri Lankan Ambassador to the UK and urge them to join the Ottawa treaty as part of their objective of making Sri Lanka mine free by 2006?