

## SRI LANKA

### ISSUE:

The human rights situation in Sri Lanka.

### BACKGROUND:

The Commission on Human Rights, at its 43rd session, passed a resolution on Sri Lanka which was co-sponsored by Argentina, Canada and Norway. The resolution called upon the parties to the conflict in Sri Lanka to pursue a negotiated settlement and invited the Government of Sri Lanka to intensify its cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Government of Sri Lanka and the ICRC discussed the modalities of ICRC involvement in Sri Lanka after the passage of the resolution.

The conflict in Sri Lanka continued to escalate with a bombing in Colombo and with an assault in Jaffna Peninsula on Tamil militant bases by the Sri Lankan military. The situation suddenly changed on July 29, 1987, when President Jayewardene of Sri Lanka and Prime Minister Gandhi of India signed an accord to bring peace to Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan troops were withdrawn from the Northern and Eastern Provinces and were replaced by the Indian Peacekeeping Forces (IPKF) who were given the task of receiving the arms being handed over by the Tamil militant groups. The accord provided for the appointment of an interim council to govern the joint Northern and Eastern Provinces prior to the election of a provincial assembly. One month after the election of the assembly, the voters in the Eastern Province were to decide if they wished to have a separate assembly or retain the single joint assembly. Although there was rioting in southern Sri Lanka after the signing of the accord, the Tamil citizens in the Northern and Eastern Provinces welcomed the agreement.

Unfortunately, fighting continued in the Northern and Eastern Provinces with disputes between Tamil militant groups and attacks on Sinhalese settlers. On October 9, the IPKF was ordered to carry out its mandate under the peace accord and disarm the Tamil militant groups, especially the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Fierce fighting ensued between the LTTE and the IPKF which caused the death of over 300 Indian soldiers and 500 LTTE as well as the deaths of a large number of civilians who were caught in the crossfire. The fighting continued for approximately three weeks before the IPKF took over control of Jaffna city. On November 21, a ceasefire was