



SRI LANKA

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY, UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA **Resolution 97.67**

The Assembly resolved to adopt the following statement of concern about the people of Sri Lanka:

Preamble

We, as concerned members of the Eighth Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, wish to draw attention to the situation in the neighbouring country of Sri Lanka. In making this statement of concern we acknowledge:

- that Australia itself has unresolved conflicts based upon the colonialization of indigenous people in this land;
- that Australia has been complicit with, as well as the economic beneficiary of, colonialism in the island nation of Ceylon, now called Sri Lanka;
- that Sri Lanka is engaged in a civil war, based on ethnic differences between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamil communities;
- that atrocities and human rights abuses are being perpetrated on both sides in the conflict;
- that not all Tamils are members of groups supporting armed resistance;
- that negotiations for the recognition of Tamil rights proceeded for 30 years following independence;
- that Tamil and Sinhalese people now living in countries throughout the world are also suffering much personal pain and loss of loved ones;
- that any proposal for a peace package must be negotiated not imposed;
- that intervention by the international community and agencies has made a difference in other world conflicts, and continues to do so.

As an expression of our concern, this Assembly calls upon the United Nations General Assembly to:

1. call upon the Sri Lankan Government and all those exercising leadership of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, to find a political solution to the conflict which recognises the right of the Tamil people to determine their political status and the need to assure full human rights of all people in Sri Lanka;
2. call on these nations and agencies supplying arms, ammunition, landmines and other forms of military support to both sides of the conflict, especially those wanting to sell off stockpiles of weapons, to cease such activities immediately;
3. to offer a service of mediation to Sri Lanka for the resolution of conflict.

We call upon the Australian Government to:

1. seek support from the international community, especially through the United Nations and the Commonwealth (including the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh in October this year) to be active in pressuring all parties to seek a resolution which provides safety, security, health, shelter and human dignity for all Sri Lankans;
2. initiate a multipartisan motion in the Parliament in support of achieving peace in Sri Lanka through international mediation.

We call upon

1. the Sri Lankan Government to undertake the following:
 - a. the immediate lifting of the economic embargo imposed upon traditional Tamil areas;
 - b. the ongoing provision of humanitarian aid to all victims of war regardless of race and creed;
 - c. the securing of free access to the war zone by international aid agencies;
 - d. the immediate cessation of extrajudicial executions, “disappearances”, torture and arbitrary arrests;
 - e. the amendment of legislation, including the “Emergency Regulations and Prevention of Terrorism Act”, to conform with international human rights standards;
 - f. the full and impartial investigation of all reported human rights violations, in which the findings are made public and those responsible are brought to justice.
2. the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to undertake the following:
 - a. the immediate cessation of human rights abuses, including summary executions and other deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture, arbitrary arrests and abductions for ransom;
 - b. the declaration of a clear commitment to uphold human rights;
 - c. the securing of free access to the war zone by international aid agencies.

We affirm the proposed visit to Sri Lanka later this year by a delegation from the National Council of Churches in Australia and commit ourselves to working in solidarity with Sri Lankan people living in Australia, especially those disadvantaged and distressed by the situation in their country of origin.