

*From the Public Affairs Office of the Archbishop of Westminster,  
Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor*

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

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**CARDINAL URGES NEW PUSH FOR SRI LANKA PEACE**

The Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, has added his voice to those of Christian leaders in Sri Lanka urging a new impetus for peace with justice on the island, amidst fears of a resumption of full-scale hostilities there.

Over Christmas and New Year the Cardinal visited Sri Lanka for a tour of tsunami-affected areas in the company of the director of the development agency Cafod, Chris Bain. One of the areas was the mainly Tamil Batticaloa and Ampara districts on the east coast.

In the course of his visit the Cardinal met both the Sri Lankan president and representatives of the Tamil community. He urged political and religious leaders to unite for the sake of peace.

Aid agencies operating in Sri Lanka say the upsurge in violence in the north and the east in recent weeks is hampering relief work and putting aid workers in peril, according to the BBC.

Nearly 80 Sri Lankan security personnel and about 50 civilians have been killed in the last two months, prompting fears that another full-scale war is not far off.

But there are hopes for peace ahead of talks in Geneva next month between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil LTTE.

**CARDINAL CORMAC MURPHY-O'CONNOR SAID:**

“I want to add my voice to that of the bishops’ conference of Sri Lanka and other Christian leaders there in calling on all parties to the conflict to desist from violence and earnestly to seek a political solution. From my recent visit to Sri Lanka, I am aware of the fragility of the ceasefire agreed in 2002, a fragility which

stems from the failure to implement its terms. I welcome the Geneva talks as a step to achieving this.

I want to reiterate, with the bishops of Sri Lanka, the need for a united state with maximum devolution, and equality, justice and democracy for all the communities of the island. Only a just and peaceful settlement will bring to an end the tensions in Sri Lanka and the sufferings inflicted at the hands of military and militarised forces. I therefore call on all parties to recall the awareness after the tsunami of the common humanity of all Sri Lankans, whether Sinhalese or Tamil, and to make a new effort for peace. In the wake of that disaster Sri Lankans put aside their differences for the sake of their common humanity. I hope and pray they can do so again.”

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