

## **Senator Richard Lugar's Introduction to Senate Resolution 300 "Encouraging the Peace Process in Sri Lanka"**

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I rise today to submit a resolution encouraging the ongoing peace process in Sri Lanka. It was recently announced that Norway has agreed to mediate a new round of peace talks. The peace process brings hope that a continued commitment to democracy and human rights might be realized through lasting peace.

The roots of the current crisis began in the early 1800's when Sri Lanka fell subject to British colonial rule. Indian Tamil laborers were brought to Sri Lanka to develop and maintain numerous plantations. This practice doubled the number of Tamils in Sri Lanka and further diversified the population. In 1948, Sri Lanka gained its independence from Britain and rose above bitter communal and religious issues and established a democratize government.

Regrettably, issues of language and alleged government bias propelled this once peaceful nation into brutal civil war. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam became the leading rebel group in the struggle against the government. Over the last two decades, an estimated sixty-five thousand people have been killed and one million have been displaced by the fighting. The nation once referred to as the "pearl upon the brow of India" has become known as the "fallen tear."

The situation is not without hope. The people of Sri Lanka demand peace and with the assistance of Norway, the sides have once again returned to the negotiating table. Past failures shed some light on the difficult path that lies ahead and the tremendous work that lies before Norwegian mediators. Norway's offer to mediate talks was accepted in 1999. By keeping the negotiations secret, Norway has gained the cautious trust and respect of both sides. The fighting has ceased, and negotiations are planned to begin in Thailand in the near future.

One of my constituents, the Reverend Paul Jahn, and the Indiana-Kentucky Conference have played a critical role in bringing peace to Sri Lanka. Reverend Jahn and the conference have dedicated a significant amount of time and effort to this important effort. They have raised significant amounts of funding for various relief efforts in Sri Lanka and continue to make valuable contributions to the peace process. I want to thank Reverend Jahn, a minister at St. Peter and Trinity United Church of Christ in Lamar, IN, and the Conference for suggesting the important role this resolution could play in expressing American support for the peace process.

I urge the Congress, through this resolution, to express its support for these efforts and to encourage both sides to resolve their differences as expeditiously as possible. The United States finds itself at a time when our international responsibilities are great, and yet it remains essential that we continue to support the realization of peace and democracy wherever it exists. To do this, I urge my colleagues to adopt this resolution, and show our support for Norwegian mediators as they endeavor to make it possible for Sri Lanka to enjoy the virtues that have made our nation, and so many nations around the world, just and free.