

Sri Lanka rejects U.N. concerns

by UPI

GENEVA, Switzerland - Sri Lanka's U.N. mission in Switzerland Tuesday rejected as gratuitous a U.N. warning against its proposed withdrawal from the 2002 cease-fire. Sri Lanka announced its decision two weeks ago to become effective Wednesday. The cease-fire between Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tiger rebels was brokered by Norway but both sides have been accused of disregarding it in the past two years as violence has continued to escalate. Louise Arbour, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, Tuesday warned both sides that any intensification of hostilities will likely have a devastating effect on the human rights of Sri Lankans from all communities. Calling Arbour's statement "gratuitous," the Sri Lankan mission in a statement said, "The cease-fire ended quite some time ago, when the LTTE (the Tamil Tiger group) unilaterally returned to full-scale hostilities in December 2005 after having already committed thousands of violations." Last week, the Tamil rebels on their Web site announced they are ready to implement fully the 2002 cease-fire. The Sri Lankan security forces have been waging a relentless campaign against the Tigers in recent weeks, claiming major victories. But B. Nadesan, head of the rebels' political wing, told the BBC, "Definitely, if they try to launch a major offensive against our forces the Sri Lankan forces will face severe casualties."

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