

Red cross to resume ship escort to north. (1995, August 20). *The Island*.

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COLOMBO, Aug. 18 — The International Committee of the Red Cross said on Friday it would resume escorts of government supply ships to rebel-held north Sri Lanka because of the desperate shortage of food.

The decision was made after an appeal by the government agent for the northern Jaffna peninsula, who on Wednesday said bread shops in Jaffna had only enough flour to last the week.

Regular supplies of essential food and medicines have been halted since the end of July while the ICRC clarified security guarantees for Red Cross-protected ships.

The Red Cross had been protecting six ships, transporting a monthly average of 10,000 tonnes of supplies provided by the government for Jaffna civilians.

"We received a request from the government agent to restart the escort of government

food supplies due to the worsening food situation and imminent monsoon season," said ICRC spokeswoman Shaun Hoyt.

She said the ships would be escorted only to Point Pedro, the northernmost tip of the peninsula where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelem (LTTE) are in control but where security guarantees are effective.

The LTTE are fighting for a homeland in the north and east in a war

which started in 1983.

Jaffna government agent K. Ponnampalam last month wrote an urgent appeal to the president complaining of a "total completion" of food and medicines.

Ponnampalam said two ships were loaded in Colombo port and were ready to go to the north.

Hoyt said the ships would leave as soon as they had clearance but it was not known how long that would take. — (Reuter)