

අමෙරිකානු එක්සත් ජනපදයන්හි

ශ්‍රී ලංකා තානාපති කාර්යාලය

ஐக்கிய அமெரிக்க நாடுகளில்

இலங்கைத் தூதராலயம்

EMBASSY OF SRI LANKA IN  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



2148 Wyoming Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20008

Tel (202) 483-4025

Fax (202) 232-7181

E-mail: [slembassy@slembassyusa.org](mailto:slembassy@slembassyusa.org)

Website: <http://www.slembassyusa.org>

US/CONG/19  
July 9, 2007

The Honorable Rush Holt  
1019 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative *Holt*,

We are most appreciative of your concern for the people of Sri Lanka and of your determination to ensure that peace returns to our currently conflict-ridden country, as seen from the letter to His Excellency President George Bush that you recently initiated, along with the Honourable Congressman David Price.

You would recall that I met with you on February 1, 2007, following your initial letter to President Bush, and updated you on the situation in Sri Lanka. My present letter to you specifically intends to shed light on the backdrop of the events you speak of in your letter. For instance, what led to the increase of displaced persons in the east since June 2006 was the resumption of armed hostilities by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as Tamil Tigers, since December 2005, to fulfil its leader's goal of achieving a mono-ethnic separate state for Sri Lankan Tamils in the north and the east, during 2006. To this end, the LTTE, having previously provoked the government by attacking the armed forces, by attempting to assassinate the army commander employing a female suicide bomber, and subsequently assassinated the third senior most officer of the Sri Lanka Army and carried out several terrorist attacks against civilians during the first half of the year. Thereafter, they attacked the strategic port of Trincomalee, and attempted to capture the Jaffna peninsula, home to over 600,000 Sri Lankan Tamils. The Tamil Tigers then proceeded to disrupt the movement of relief supplies by sea to the civilians in the peninsula, even refusing to allow safe passage to relief vessels under the protection of the ICRC, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) or the UN. This was done to bring international pressure on the government by creating a humanitarian situation. Having tolerated these provocations and acts of terrorism in the east and the north of the island for many months, in June 2006, the government was initially compelled to respond militarily to individual provocations, and later to free the civilian population from the grip of the LTTE and restore normalcy in the east.

The armed conflict, which ensued following the cutting off of water supply to Mavil Aru in the east by the Tamil Tigers in June 2006, also led to civilians being displaced in the east. However, the estimated number of displaced people in the east was around 200,000, and not 290,000, as some agencies claim. The security forces cleared most of the Eastern Province of LTTE control by January 2007. The government's next move was to resettle the displaced civilians in their

homes, which was partially completed with the assistance of relevant government agencies, the foreign diplomatic missions in Sri Lanka, international humanitarian agencies and foreign and local NGOs. It was when such a delegation comprising ambassadors from the US, Germany, France, the EU and Japan, as well as the Canadian High Commissioner and UN and Sri Lanka government officials visited Batticaloa on February 27, 2007, to assess the rehabilitation needs of the area, that the LTTE attacked them with mortar and artillery fire, injuring the Italian Ambassador. At this point, you may be pleased to learn that the government has since succeeded in resettling over 95,000 persons in the East by June 22, 2007 and is taking steps to resettle the remaining displaced population.

As you would appreciate, resettlement of displaced civilians in their homes and helping them to resume their disrupted livelihoods is a gigantic task that requires considerable resources, and the government is determined to bring relief to them, whose lives were violently disrupted by the LTTE for nearly three decades.

The government recognizes that economic development is vital to restore normalcy to the lives of resettled civilians and to bring back hope to the lives of marginalized youth, so they would be weaned away from violence. To this end, the government plans to develop the infrastructure in the conflict-affected areas – to upgrade the road network and the railway, to extend the supply of electricity, to enhance health services and to improve the public school system.

Your letter also refers to the need for international monitoring of the human rights situation in the island. Here I would like to point out that Sri Lanka is party to 16 international human rights conventions under some of which international scrutiny is required. As in similar situations elsewhere in the world, armed conflicts of this nature regrettably lead to violations of human rights. With a view to addressing this issue, the government established a Commission of Inquiry (COI) to function under international observation. Furthermore, when credible evidence is available, as in the case of Thandikulam killings in November 2006, the government has taken steps to serve indictments on army and police personnel.

This is not an isolated action. For example, 10 and 07 indictments were served against security forces and police personnel in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Meanwhile, departmental disciplinary action was taken against 06 armed forces personnel in 2006 and 20 and 06 personnel by the Police Special Interrogation Unit (SIU) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) during the same period.

Against this backdrop, what is more appropriate than monitoring is international cooperation in providing technical assistance to democracies such as Sri Lanka, that are grappling with terrorism to train their armed forces to observe human rights and humanitarian laws, upgrade law enforcement capacity to conduct investigations and carry out prosecutions effectively. In the case of Sri Lanka, Colombo has requested such assistance from friendly countries, including the US, and I hope our request will be favourably considered.

In recent days, suicide truck bombs have caused carnage and bloodbaths in Iraq. Similar gruesome attacks would have taken place in Sri Lanka too, if not for stringent security checks, which led to the discovery of two trucks filled with 2 tonnes each of C-4 explosives during the past weeks. In an environment such as this, where terrorism constantly stalks innocent civilians, the government has the formidable responsibility to ensure the most vital human right of the people: the right to life. In guaranteeing this critical human right, you will appreciate that the law enforcement authorities sometimes have to implement drastic measures, which under conditions of normalcy, would be seen as a violation of civil liberties.

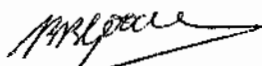
I am heartened by your focus on the need for disrupting financing of the LTTE. It is widely acknowledged that fundraising by the Tamil Tigers and its front organizations internationally continues to fuel the armed conflict and supports acts of terrorism in Sri Lanka. It is also widely accepted that unless all channels of funds are choked and their ability to procure weapons internationally is cut off, there will be no incentive for the LTTE to return to the negotiating table from which they unilaterally withdraw in April 2003. Against this backdrop, we commend the measures taken by the U.S. administration to block efforts made by the LTTE to raise funds and procure weapons nationally and internationally.

We are encouraged by the support of friendly countries in our effort to rebuild our nation that has suffered so much through the ravages of almost thirty years of terrorism. As we continue with our task of reconstruction and rehabilitation of the conflict-ridden areas, and promote and protect human rights, we look forward to even greater support from our friends around the world.

I would be pleased to provide further information and clarification on Sri Lanka's situation should you require any.

With Best Regards,

Sincerely,



Bernard Goonetilleke  
Ambassador