



British Tamils Forum  
மீரித்தானிய தமிழர் பேரவை



Canadian Tamil Congress  
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை  
Congrès Tamoul Canadien  
"Voice of Tamil Canadians"



Tamils  
For  
Labour  
தமிழர்களுக்காக ஆதரவான தமிழர்கள்



8th April 2018

His Excellency Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix  
Under Secretary General for UN Peacekeeping Operations  
Office of Peacekeeping Operations  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017, USA

Dear Mr. Lacroix,

**Re: Sri Lankan Army's Flouting of Vetting Agreement for UN**

We write to draw your attention to allegations that the Sri Lankan Army has deployed UN peacekeepers in violation of the vetting agreement reached with the national Human Rights Commission. If the failure to abide by these commitments is true, it constitutes a mockery of the whole process.

The complaint regarding the failure to vet comes from the country's national Human Rights Commission (HRCSL), a body appointed by the Government of Sri Lanka. The complaint has been sent in a letter in Sinhala from the HRCSL to the President of Sri Lanka in his capacity as commander in chief<sup>1</sup>. The gist of the letter has been reported in English on 6 April by exiled Sri Lankan journalists<sup>2</sup>. In essence, the letter says that the HRCSL and the Sri Lankan Army signed an agreement in 2016 for the HRCSL to vet Sri Lanka's peacekeepers before deployment overseas, but that the Army has deployed 49 of those peacekeepers to Lebanon on 18 February 2018 before the vetting process was complete and before the Army had handed over all the information on the soldiers requested by the HRCSL. Indeed, some of the information requested by the HRCSL is said to be still pending.

Final responsibility lies with your department for the vetting process in terms of the Secretary General's 'Zero Tolerance' Policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), as well as his 2017 policy statement - "Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A New Approach". According to the Secretary General, the UN seeks to ensure that only "individuals with the highest standards of integrity, competence and efficiency" are hired, although so far this has not been the record with regard to Sri Lanka. You will note that to date there has been no criminal accountability for the 134 Sri Lankan peacekeepers

<sup>1</sup> <http://hrctl.lk/english/2018/04/05/letter-sent-by-hrcsl-to-the-president-on-the-vetting-by-hrcsl-of-un-peace-keeping-troops-from-sri-lanka-correction-of-news-reports/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.jdslanka.org/index.php/news-features/human-rights/768-sl-human-rights-commission-slams-army-for-violating-agreement-on-peacekeeping>

sent home from Haiti in connection with systematic child sexual exploitation from 2004-7, which was confirmed by an OIOS investigation<sup>3</sup>.

We regretfully note that if your department allows peacekeepers from any country to deploy before the national vetting process is complete, then you are directly involved in undermining the vetting process.

We, therefore, call on DPKO:

1. To confirm whether
  - a. the 49 peacekeepers from Sri Lanka were indeed deployed on 18 February 2018 without being vetted,
  - b. explain how this was possible, and
  - c. what your office will do to prevent this lack of vetting from reoccurring.
2. To confirm that the deployment constitutes a violation of the Memorandum of Understanding between Troop Contributing Countries and DPKO in respect of vetting.
3. To inform us whether the HRCSL raised objections about contingent commander Lt. Col Hewage's deployment before we raised this issue with you in our letter of 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2018. We understand (from the HRCSL letter online) that the HRCSL had the PHP forms for the 204 Lebanon-bound soldiers from 21 December 2017 so should have been able to identify the problems regarding the contingent commander that we brought to your attention on 14<sup>th</sup> February from a quick online search once his name was made public. Specifically, were concerns raised by the HRCSL before the 18 February 2018 deployment of the 49 men? Their letter suggests the HRCSL did not know the men were about to be deployed, despite the issue being raised by us and the contingent commander's name being published officially on the Army's website<sup>4</sup>.
4. To make public the vetting/due diligence criteria used by the HRCSL/OHCHR to screen soldiers. These criteria should not be a secret.
5. To conduct a retrospective vetting of all other Sri Lankan peacekeepers currently deployed – other than the 200 that went to Mali who were vetted by OHCHR in Geneva. We know Sri Lankan peacekeepers are currently deployed in many other countries and it is probable they have not been properly vetted for their human rights record.

Thank you for your kind attention to these requests.

Yours Sincerely,

R. Jeganathan, President, Australian Tamil Congress (ATC)  
Arujuna Sivanathan, President, British Tamil Conservatives (BTC)  
V Ravi Kumar, General Secretary, British Tamils Forum (BTF), [news@britishtamilsforum.org](mailto:news@britishtamilsforum.org)  
Sen Kandiah, Chairman, Tamils for Labour (TfL)  
S. Sivam, President, US Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC), [info@ustpac.org](mailto:info@ustpac.org)  
Dr. Dev, President, World Tamil Organization, Inc. (WTO)  
on behalf of our organizations, and

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.itjpsl.com/assets/press/haiti-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=Army\\_Contingent\\_for\\_UN\\_Mission\\_in\\_Lebanon\\_ready\\_to\\_leave\\_20180208\\_02](http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=Army_Contingent_for_UN_Mission_in_Lebanon_ready_to_leave_20180208_02)

Canadian Tamil Congress  
Ilankai Tamil Sangam USA  
People for Equality and Relief in Lanka

Cc: OHCHR, Geneva: [registry@ohchr.org](mailto:registry@ohchr.org)  
Debbie Berman , [berman@un.org](mailto:berman@un.org)