



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR TAMILS

Chair: Paul Scully MP

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

30 October 2018

We are writing to you about the political situation in Sri Lanka.

As you know, after ruling in coalition for two years, on October 26th President Maithripala Sirisena fired Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe in order to establish Mahinda Rajapaksa, the former President who was deposed by Maithripala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremasinghe, as Prime Minister.

This decision is incredibly controversial and appears to be in contravention of the Sri Lankan Constitution. Furthermore, protests between the supporters of the respective politicians have already broken out, resulting in the death of one protestor so far.

We are concerned that matters are escalating, as President Sirisena has suspended the Sri Lankan Parliament following attempts by Ranil Wickremasinghe to call a vote on his removal. Given the UK Government's long history with Sri Lanka, We would be grateful if you could outline the UK Government's assessment of events in Sri Lanka. Please outline steps the Government is taking to call for political stability in Sri Lanka.

Since its formation in 2007, the 'APPG for Tamils' has been continuously working to highlight the plight of the Tamil people of the Island of Sri Lanka. The members of the 'APPG for Tamils' have been instrumental in initiating many debates and bring awareness to British Parliament on matters affecting the Tamil speaking people in Sri Lanka. The 'APPG for Tamils' works closely with the 'British Tamils Forum' which is the largest grassroots and cross party organisation representing the Tamil Community in the UK.

APPG for Tamils, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA

Chair: Paul Scully MP,

Vice Chairs: Siobhain McDonagh MP; Bob Blackman MP, Sir Edward Davey MP, Zac Goldsmith MP,

Joan Ryan MP, Wes Streeting MP, Theresa Villiers MP; Tom Brake MP

Executive: Mike Gapes MP, Virendra Sharma MP, Stephen Timms MP

Please can you also outline what discussions have been held with international counterparts regarding these events, and we would in particular like to know if this issue has been discussed with the Chinese and Indian Governments?

As President for ten years, Mahinda Rajapaksa oversaw the end of the 27-year Sri Lankan civil war in 2009 through a series of brutal military offensives in which the UN estimates up to 40,000 Tamil civilians died. This also led to many accusations that his security forces were behind the forcible disappearance, torture and murders of activists and dissidents.

Following a landmark UNHRC investigation in 2015, Sri Lanka agreed to a number of recommendations addressing previous rights abuses, made in UN resolution 30/1, which so far have not been fully met. We are deeply concerned that the likelihood of justice being achieved for victims of the Sri Lankan civil war will be drastically reduced by Mahinda Rajapaksa's return to power. We would also be grateful for the UK Government's assessment of this matter.

A large proportion of the Tamil diaspora lives in the UK, including many in our constituencies; the thought of Mahinda Rajapaksa becoming Prime Minister causes great distress for Tamils in the UK and back in Sri Lanka. The threat of Mahinda Rajapaksa stoking nationalist divisions in Sri Lanka which previously fuelled the decades long civil war is very real and must not be dismissed by the international community. We therefore believe that it is vitally important that the UK Government outlines what steps it will take in order to prevent this political crisis from turning into a widespread outbreak of violence and we would therefore like to know if you have any plans for either yourself or the Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific to address the House at the earliest opportunity. Failing this we would be grateful if you could meet with Parliamentarians on the APPG for Tamils to discuss this matter.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Paul Scully Member for Sutton and Cheam
Chair of the APPG for Tamils

Since its formation in 2007, the 'APPG for Tamils' has been continuously working to highlight the plight of the Tamil people of the Island of Sri Lanka. The members of the 'APPG for Tamils' have been instrumental in initiating many debates and bring awareness to British Parliament on matters affecting the Tamil speaking people in Sri Lanka. The 'APPG for Tamils' works closely with the 'British Tamils Forum' which is the largest grassroots and cross party organisation representing the Tamil Community in the UK.

APPG for Tamils, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA

Chair: Paul Scully MP,

Vice Chairs: Siobhain McDonagh MP; Bob Blackman MP, Sir Edward Davey MP, Zac Goldsmith MP,

Joan Ryan MP, Wes Streeting MP, Theresa Villiers MP; Tom Brake MP

Executive: Mike Gapes MP, Virendra Sharma MP, Stephen Timms MP

Vice Chairs of the APPG for Tamils

Rt Hon Sir Edward Davey Member for Kingston and Surbiton

Rt Hon Tom Brake Member for Carshalton and Wallington

Rt Hon Theresa Villiers Member for Chipping Barnet

Siobhain McDonagh Member for Mitcham and Morden

Zac Goldsmith Member for Richmond Park

Wes Streeting Member for Ilford North

Bob Blackman Member for Harrow East

Joan Ryan Member for Enfield North

Rt Hon Stephen Timms Member for East Ham

Mike Gapes Member for Ilford South

Virendra Sharma Member for Ealing Southall

Since its formation in 2007, the 'APPG for Tamils' has been continuously working to highlight the plight of the Tamil people of the Island of Sri Lanka. The members of the 'APPG for Tamils' have been instrumental in initiating many debates and bring awareness to British Parliament on matters affecting the Tamil speaking people in Sri Lanka. The 'APPG for Tamils' works closely with the 'British Tamils Forum' which is the largest grassroots and cross party organisation representing the Tamil Community in the UK.

APPG for Tamils, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA

Chair: Paul Scully MP,

Vice Chairs: Siobhain McDonagh MP; Bob Blackman MP, Sir Edward Davey MP, Zac Goldsmith MP,

Joan Ryan MP, Wes Streeting MP, Theresa Villiers MP; Tom Brake MP

Executive: Mike Gapes MP, Virendra Sharma MP, Stephen Timms MP