



Emily Thornberry

Labour MP for Islington South & Finsbury

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Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Secretary of State
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Our Ref: DH/HATH02001/02170922

Your Ref:
01 March 2017

Dear Boris

Re: UNHRC and Sri Lanka

I write following a meeting I had with representatives of the British Tamil community yesterday. A number of concerns were raised about the lack of progress made by the Sri Lankan government in implementing its commitments under UNHRC Resolution 30/1, and I undertook to write to you about these issues.

As you know, Resolution 30/1 set out a number of specific steps that the Sri Lankan government was expected to take to in order to address the remaining issues yet to be resolved following the end of the civil war.

Perhaps the most important of these was the requirement for the Sri Lankan authorities to establish a mechanism for investigating, prosecuting and punishing allegations of war crimes. It is troubling that, almost 18 months after Resolution 30/1 was adopted, such a mechanism has still not been set up and the government of Sri Lanka has given no indication of when this will happen.

I also note that in Sri Lanka itself there is growing frustration among many people who are still waiting for answers about what happened to family members who disappeared during the conflict. In some cases, the frustration has reached the point where grieving mothers have resorted to hunger strikes in demanding that the government fulfil its promise of investigations.

At the same time, it appears that the lessons learned from Sri Lanka's bitter experiences are still not being applied by the authorities today, with continued failures to uphold some of the most basic standards of human rights. Of particular concern are the findings of the UN investigative panel, which reported last month that torture in Sri Lanka is still routine, with the police Criminal Investigation Department practicing torture 'in a large majority of cases' regardless of the suspected offence.

ON YOUR SIDE

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I am committed to keeping my constituents informed on issues which may be of interest to them and my local Labour Party may write to you from time to time. If you do not wish to receive any correspondence from me, please drop me a line at the above address.

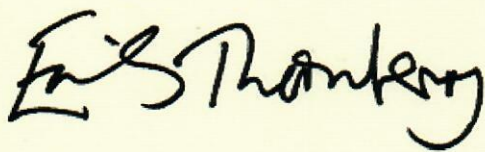
Clearly the Sri Lankan government still has a long way to go in order to fulfil the commitments it has made. I therefore urge you to make the most of the opportunity, in the current session of the UNHRC, to take further steps to hold Sri Lanka to account by pushing for a follow-up to Resolution 30/1.

In particular, I believe such a resolution should include clear timescales for implementing all outstanding measures set out in Resolution 30/1, including the crucial commitments on establishing a judicial mechanism for dealing with past abuses, repealing the draconian 1978 law on the prevention of terrorism. It should also set benchmarks for measurable further progress from the Sri Lankan government on resolving issues such as land ownership, political participation, and military involvement in civilian life.

I am sure there will cross-party support for the UK to take a strong stance at the UNHRC, by pressing for meaningful further progress from the Sri Lankan government in honouring its commitments on human rights in a timely manner.

In addition, I strongly urge you to raise these outstanding concerns with your fellow EU foreign ministers in relation to the current proposal to reinstate EU trade preferences for Sri Lanka. As you will no doubt be aware, these were initially withdrawn due to concerns about the Sri Lankan government's record on human rights, and given the scale of the problems that have yet to be addressed, I am not convinced that now would be an appropriate time to reinstate these concessions.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.



Rt Hon Emily Thornberry MP
Islington South and Finsbury
Shadow Secretary of State
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