



HOUSE OF COMMONS
London SW1A 0AA

Statement to the British Tamil community on the destruction of the Mullivaikkaal Memorial at the University of Jaffna

I would like to wish the Tamil community a happy Thai Pongal. I know many Tamils in my constituency will be celebrating this ancient Tamil festival in the coming days at home instead of collectively due to the Covid restrictions.

I am very concerned about the recent destruction of the Mullivaikkaal Memorial at the University of Jaffna, earlier this week, and am distinctly aware of the outrage it has caused amongst the Tamil community across the world and in Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, elected Tamil politicians, the relatives of the dead and the wider Tamil community, have faced state repression in their attempts to remember their war dead. The latest attack on memorialisation in the Tamil student community this year has been no different. I stand in solidarity with Tamils in the North-East of Sri Lanka and in the UK as they protest for their rights and defy state intimidation.

The UN has been clear that Tamils have a fundamental right to remember their war dead, and I will continue to pressure the British Foreign Secretary to make sure such representations and condemn the Sri Lankan government's most recent actions.

I am concerned about how events are unfolding in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's new Government has rejected UN resolutions calling for an international accountability mechanism for war crimes. I am also aware that the human rights situation for Tamils and Muslims on the island is deteriorating.

The ongoing issues of militarisation of Tamil homelands in the North-East, attacks and intimidation of civil society and journalists are of serious concern. The UN, Human rights chief, has called on the international community to take a much firmer stance with Sri Lanka and our Government must respond to this by leading on efforts for a new resolution at the next Human Rights Council session.

I am clear that any future trade deals with Sri Lanka must be linked to tangible progress on the UN resolutions.

Sri Lankan officials that have been accused by the UN of war crimes must also face targeted sanctions. We have already seen our Government do so with officials in Myanmar responsible for the genocide of Rohingya Muslims, and it's time they acted on Sri Lanka.

Office of Sam Tarry MP
Member of Parliament for Ilford South



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Finally, I am also aware that the root cause of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is directly linked to Britain's colonial past on the island and its failure to maintain governance structures that allowed different nations to coexist on the island.

Too many lives have been lost in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. Britain must play a leading role in ensuring that a peaceful political solution is found in Sri Lanka that is beneficial to all peoples on the island and respects the right to self-determination of Tamil people.

The Labour party made a manifesto commitment at the last general election to the Tamil rights struggle in Sri Lanka and will always stand by the Tamil people in their struggle for justice, an end to oppression and self-determination both in Sri Lanka and across the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Tarry', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sam Tarry MP
Member of Parliament for Ilford South