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Lord Ahmad
Minister of State
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

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Dear Tariq,

I have received an overwhelming number of messages with regards to the human rights situation in Sri Lanka and the ongoing hunger strike of a British Tamil.

I firmly believe that the Sri Lankan Government must abide by UN Human Rights Council Resolutions 30/1, 34/1 and 40/1, which set out a process for obtaining accountability for war crimes committed during the Sri Lankan civil war and instruct Sri Lanka to undertake a process of transitional justice, peace and reconciliation. It is deeply regrettable that the Sri Lankan Government decided to withdraw from these resolutions in February 2020.

As the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has warned ahead of the UN Human Rights Council in February-March, deeply concerning trends have emerged over the past year, which may represent early warning signs of a deteriorating human rights situation. The recent passage of the 20th amendment to Sri Lanka's constitution represents a major assault on democratic governance. The amendment removes almost all checks on the power of the executive president, which campaign groups say further undermines independence of the judiciary.

I would like the UK Government to ensure that future trade agreements between the UK and Sri Lanka do not undermine the UK's stated commitment to pursuing accountability and justice for human rights abuses in Sri Lanka. I believe Ministers should also consider which senior figures in Sri Lanka might warrant inclusion under the UK's Global Sanctions Regime, which is designed to target individual human rights abusers with asset freezes and visa bans.

Given the British Government's strong commitment to promoting human rights, my constituents would be grateful if you could raise these concerns with Sri Lankan representatives and urge you to work with our international partners in applying pressure on the Sri Lankan Government and ensure it abides by its responsibilities.

Thank you in advance and I look forward to your response.

Best wishes,

Virendra Sharma MP