

**Debate Pack**

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# Sri Lankan Tamils and human rights

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# 1

## Summary

A Westminster Hall debate on Sri Lankan Tamils and human rights is scheduled for Tuesday 5 December 2023, from 2.30-4.00pm. The debate will be led by Martyn Day MP.

# 2

## Background

### Population

Tamils are a minority ethnic group in Sri Lanka, and Tamil is also a language. Tamils [are made up of two groups](#), 'Sri Lankan Tamils', who are descended from Tamil-speaking groups who migrated from south India starting as long ago as the fifth century Before Common Era (BCE), and 'Up Country' or 'Indian Tamils' descendants of labourers brought to the island by the British to work on tea plantations.

Sri Lanka's last census in 2012 [estimated that Sri Lankan Tamils made up 11.2% of the population, and Indian Tamils 4.2%](#).

[The 2012 Sri Lankan census estimated](#) that 70.2% of Sri Lankas are Buddhist, 12.6% Hindu, 9.7 % Muslim, and 7.4 % Christian. Most of the majority Sinhalese ethnic group are Buddhist. Tamils are mainly Hindu with a significant Christian minority. [According to a 2022 US State Department report](#), "Muslims are legally recognized as a separate ethnoreligious group, rather than as Tamil or Sinhalese".

Sinhalese and Tamil are the official languages of Sri Lanka (with English [designated as a 'link language' in the constitution](#)). In the 2012 census, [28.5% of the population responded they spoke Tamil, and 87% Sinhala](#) (respondents could chose multiple options). [According to a 2020 US State Department report](#), most Muslims in Sri Lanka are Tamil-speaking.

### Civil war

In 2009, [Sri Lanka's civil war came to an end](#) after more than two decades of conflict, with the decisive military defeat of the Tamil Tigers (also known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or LTTE) by Sri Lanka's armed forces.

The Tamil Tigers were an armed separatist group fighting for an independent homeland for Tamils in North-eastern Sri Lanka, where most of the Tamil population live. They were [proscribed as a terrorist group by the UK Government in 2001](#).

Sri Lanka's relationship with the rest of the world has been strongly shaped since then by allegations that the army committed war crimes and crimes

against humanity during the final phase of the civil war. A UN Panel of Experts reported in April 2011 that [there were “credible allegations” of those crimes](#) by both government and Tamil Tiger forces.

The Sri Lankan Government in power in the final phase of the war [denied many of the accusations of crimes made against the military and civilian Government at the time](#), and argued Tamil forces had used civilians as “human shields”.

## Reconciliation after the Civil War

In February 2020 the Sri Lankan government, then led by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, [withdrew its support for a UN-led reconciliation process](#), which had committed the Sri Lankan government to investigate and prosecute war-related crimes as part of a package of wide-ranging legal reforms and transitional justice measures.

Ranil Wickremesinghe [took over as permanently President in July 2022 after Rajapaksa fled the country following mass protests against his government](#). In May 2023, the new government announced that it [was establishing a National Unity and Reconciliation Commission](#), that would take [“Tak\[e\] into account the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa”](#).

The Commission is set to comprise of 21 members that will [“represent the pluralistic nature of Sri Lanka, including gender”](#).

Human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch [criticised the plans in a joint letter](#), writing they had “grave reservations” about the Commission that “echo many of those already raised by victims of conflict-related abuses and their families”. The letter states further that:

The latest initiative risks repeating the mistakes of the past, exposing victims to renewed security threats and re-traumatization without any realistic chance of a different outcome. There have not been any genuine confidence-building measures, or steps to ensure a safe and conducive environment for such a commission to function effectively. There has been no meaningful consultation, including with affected communities.

A [2023 analysis by the International Crisis Group echoes these concerns, arguing that the Commission](#) “in present circumstances, would have little to no chance of success”.

In October 2023, in an interview with German broadcaster DW, [President Wickremesinghe defended plans for the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission](#), saying discussions were ongoing and more details would be available soon:

At the moment discussions are on with the parties plus the government, and we are talking with the western governments [...] and the Truth and Reconciliation Bill will come to Parliament before the end of the year.

A [report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, published in September 2023 for the 54<sup>th</sup> UN Human Rights Council](#), criticised the Sri Lankan government's reconciliation plans and called for "deeper institutional reforms and tangible progress on accountability, reconciliation and human rights".

Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Himalee Arunatilaka, [delivered a statement in response to the report in which she said her government rejected the report and "its conclusions and recommendations"](#). She stated further that: "Sri Lanka remains firmly committed to pursuing tangible progress on human rights through our domestic institutions". The statement added that "The proposed truth-seeking mechanism has been identified as a meaningful way to secure the peace achieved after three decades of brutal conflict. Consultations are ongoing with stakeholders including the civil society on the proposed mechanism".

## Human Rights

Sri Lanka is one of the UK's 32 'human rights priority countries' as identified by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The [FCDO's annual human rights and democracy report published in July 2023](#), looking back at 2022, highlights the treatment of Tamils and minority religious groups in Sri Lanka as a human rights concern:

Minority communities faced continued marginalisation by state authorities. State-supported land appropriation, so called 'land grabs', sparked concerns over their impact on demographics in the north and east and their impact on the freedom of belief of non-Buddhist denominations.

Security forces continued to disrupt Tamil commemorative events for victims of Sri Lanka's armed conflict, and arbitrarily accused Tamils of links to terrorist organisations. Activists and families of the disappeared in the north-east faced surveillance, harassment and intimidation by security forces. President Wickremesinghe committed to pursue a political solution with Tamil parties in December. Eight proscribed Tamil Diaspora organisations were also delisted, although some Muslim welfare organisations and individuals, including poet, Ahnaf Jazeem remained listed.

Amnesty International in its [2023 assessment of human rights in Sri Lanka](#), states that despite amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), "Muslim and Tamil minorities remained disproportionately affected by the use of the PTA".

The [US State Department's report on human rights in Sri Lanka published in 2023](#), and looking at the events of 2022, describes how Tamils in the country report systemic discrimination:

Both local and Indian-origin Tamils maintained that they suffered long-standing, systematic discrimination in university education, government employment, housing, health services, language laws, and procedures for naturalization of noncitizens. Throughout the country, but especially in the

north and east, Tamils reported security forces regularly monitored and harassed members of their community, especially activists, journalists, and NGO staff and former or suspected former LTTE [Tamil Tigers] members.

The [report also describes](#) how the military monitors Tamil journalists, requesting “copies of photographs, lists of attendees at events, and names of sources for articles”, and also that they “refrain from reporting on sensitive events, such as Tamil war commemorations or land occupation protests, as well as on posting anything related to former LTTE leaders”, stating that they “feared repercussions if they did not cooperate”.

In addition, the US State Department [report details the ongoing legacy of the Civil War](#), and how it caused “widespread, prolonged displacement, including forced displacement by the government and the LTTE, particularly of Tamil and Muslim civilians”. And while internally displaced people have full freedom of movement, the report states significant barriers remain to them returning to their homes, including:

land mines; restrictions designating their home areas as part of HSZs [high security zones]; lack of economic opportunities; inability to access basic public services, including acquiring documents verifying land ownership; lack of government resolution of competing land ownership claims; and other war-related reasons.

## 3

# Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

### [Still rebuilding, still resisting](#) (Editorial)

Tamil Guardian

27 November 2023

### [Ranil questions 'double standards' of U.S. in Gaza and Sri Lanka](#)

The Hindu

Meera Srinivasan

4 November 2023

### [Tamil refugees on Diego Garcia win fight against forcible return to Sri Lanka](#)

The Guardian

Diane Taylor

25 September 2023

### [Congress Wants to Hold Sri Lanka's Feet to the Fire on Human Rights](#)

Foreign Policy

Anusha Rathi and Jack Detsch

21 September 2023

### [Sri Lanka's Reconciliation Efforts Get Stuck in the 13th Amendment, Again](#)

The Diplomat

Rathindra Kuruwita

27 July 2023

### [British Parliamentarians urge for formal recognition of Tamil Genocide](#)

Tamil Guardian

15 June 2023

### [US sanctions Sri Lankan governor over civil war killings](#)

Al Jazeera

27 April 2023

### [Spotlight sought on urgent human rights challenges in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette

2 April 2023

**Human rights abuses are plaguing Sri Lanka – the UK must step up and introduce sanctions**

Politics Home (The House)

Elliot Coburn MP

11 November 2022

## 4

## Press releases

### [UN HRC54: UK Statement on Sri Lanka](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

11 September 2023

Statement on report of OHCHR on promoting reconciliation, accountability & human rights in Sri Lanka. Delivered by UK Ambassador to the WTO & UN Simon Manley.

### [UN HRC54: Joint Statement on Sri Lanka](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

11 September 2023

Statement by Sri Lanka Core Group comprising Canada, N Macedonia, Malawi, Montenegro, United Kingdom and United States. Delivered by UK Ambassador, Rita French.

### [UK enhances security and climate cooperation with Sri Lanka](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

10 October 2023

Minister for the Indo-Pacific, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, is visiting Sri Lanka to strengthen cooperation on climate change, regional security and human rights.

### [Human Rights and Democracy Report 2022](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

13 July 2023

A summary of activity in 2022 by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and its diplomatic network to defend human rights and promote democracy worldwide.

### [UN HRC53: Universal Periodic Review Adoption - Sri Lanka](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

11 July 2023

The UK statement for the Universal Periodic Review adoption of Sri Lanka at the 53rd Human Rights Council. Due to time constraints, this was not delivered.

### [UN HRC53: Core Group Statement on Sri Lanka](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

11 July 2023

Sri Lanka Core Group Statement as delivered by Rita French, UK Human Rights Ambassador.



**UN HRC52: UK statement on behalf of the Sri Lanka Core Group**

**Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office**

**7 March 2023**

Statement delivered by the UK's Ambassador to the WTO and UN in Geneva, Simon Manley, on behalf of the Sri Lanka Core Group.

**42nd Universal Periodic Review of human rights: UK statement on Sri Lanka**

**Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office**

**28 February 2023**

The UK's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva gave a statement during Sri Lanka's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the Human Rights Council.

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## PQs

### British Indian Ocean Territory: Sri Lanka

25 Oct 2023 | 203235

**Asked by: Andrew Rosindell**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Sri Lankan counterpart on the treatment of Sri Lankan nationals in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

**Answering member: David Rutley | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The welfare and safety of Sri Lankan Nationals in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) has been a top priority for the BIOT Administration. The migrants have received dedicated 24-hours-a-day medical support, access to telecoms, food, education and facilities for welfare, recreation and religious worship. In April, the Permanent Under Secretary met with the Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary where, on the Foreign Secretary's behalf, he discussed BIOT and illegal migration. He also thanked the Sri Lankan Government for facilitating the voluntary return of migrants; 133 have so far returned home in this manner.

### Sri Lanka: Tamils

25 Oct 2023 | 201553

**Asked by: Andrew Rosindell**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the purported persecution of the Tamil population in northern Sri Lanka.

**Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

Sri Lanka is a UK human rights priority country. The UK has led, with the Core Group on Sri Lanka, international efforts to promote human rights for all communities, including through UNHRC resolution 51/1. We recommended addressing issues around the expropriation of land in the North and East during Sri Lanka's Universal Periodic Review. The UK encourages establishment of a meaningful Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Whilst visiting Sri Lanka from 10-13 October I raised issues over progress on human rights and accountability mechanisms with the government of Sri Lanka (GoSL). We welcome the GoSL commitment to address longstanding grievances of minority communities through the implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.

### **British Indian Ocean Territory: Sri Lanka**

18 Jul 2023 | 193556

**Asked by: Andrew Rosindell**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the veracity of allegations of the false imprisonment of Sri Lankan nationals in Diego Garcia in the British Indian Ocean Territory; and if he will make a statement.

**Answering member: David Rutley | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

Sri Lankan migrants are not routinely detained on the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) and we strongly dispute any allegations of false imprisonment. These allegations are subject to ongoing legal proceedings, and it would be inappropriate to comment any further on this matter until such proceedings have concluded.

Around 130 migrants of Sri Lankan nationality have so far voluntarily returned to their home country on six separate flights chartered by the BIOT Administration. We are grateful to the Sri Lankan Government for their assistance in facilitating these returns. The welfare and safety of the remaining migrants on Diego Garcia is also a top priority for the BIOT Administration. They are provided with accommodation, food, communications and dedicated 24/7 medical support, as well as educational and welfare facilities.

### **Sri Lanka: Alleged War Crimes**

18 Jul 2023 | 736 cc749-750

**Asked by: Theresa Villiers**

If he will take steps with his Sri Lankan counterpart to ensure accountability for alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka.

**Answered by: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The Foreign Secretary met Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ali Sabry on 14 July, when they discussed Sri Lanka's human rights initiatives. We will continue to urge the Sri Lankan Government to make meaningful progress on human rights, justice and accountability. That includes at the UN Human Rights Council, where the UK and our partners made resolution 51/1 on Sri Lanka in October last year.

**Asked by: Theresa Villiers**

Will the Minister appeal to the Sri Lankan Government to ensure that the possible establishment of a South Africa-style truth and reconciliation

commission does not mean that those responsible for war crimes in Sri Lanka will not be brought to justice?

**Answered by: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We recognise the concerns from some members of the Sri Lankan public and victims groups about the creation of a credible domestic accountability process, given the history of impunity and unfulfilled commitments. We encourage the Sri Lankan Government to create an environment for meaningful reconciliation by addressing those long-standing and emerging concerns. That includes ensuring proper consultation, sufficient consensus of key communities and a commitment to accountability.

**Asked by: Margaret Ferrier**

Human Rights Watch has reported that Tamil families looking to memorialise those who died in Sri Lanka's civil war remain subject to intimidation and banning orders. Alongside the Minister's Sri Lankan counterparts, what steps is she taking to promote free expression in Sri Lanka?

**Answered by: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

As I said, we all understand and see that long history of impunity and broken commitments. We will continue to encourage the Sri Lankan Government to create that climate of recognition for all parties and communities, making sure that no one is left out of that process.

**Asked by: Mr David Lammy**

Nearly 15 years after the end of Sri Lanka's bloody civil war, the Sri Lankan Government continue to evade accountability and delay any scrutiny. As the Minister said, instead of justice there is impunity. Last week's FCDO human rights and democracy report recognises Sri Lanka as a priority so, in simple terms, will the Minister say when the UK will sanction those individuals responsible for the worst human rights abuses in that conflict?

**Answered by: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We will continue to urge the Sri Lankan Government to uphold their constitutional and democratic processes. Those concerns were made clear in statements to the UN Human Rights Council, most recently on 20 June. Imposing sanctions is one response among other diplomatic tools to tackle serious human rights violations and abuses, but the shadow Foreign Secretary knows well that it would not be appropriate for me to speculate about future designations because that could reduce the impact.

### **Sri Lanka: Poverty**

**22 Jun 2023 | 189664**

**Asked by: Fleur Anderson**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to work with the international community to help reduce poverty in Sri Lanka.

**Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK has provided £3 million of targeted support for those most severely affected by Sri Lankan economic crisis, including providing multipurpose cash transfers for vulnerable families and food for school children, delivered through our UN partners and the Red Cross. The UK also provided economic support through multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. We welcome the IMF Executive Board approval, on 20 March, for a four-year \$3 billion Extended Fund Facility to support Sri Lanka's economic policies and reforms. As a member of the Paris Club, we will continue to work closely with creditors and the Sri Lankan Government to help restore debt sustainability and macroeconomic stability in line with IMF programme parameters.

### **Sri Lanka: Tamils**

**04 Apr 2023 | HL6687**

**Asked by: Lord Mann**

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the UN Human Rights Council about the situation of Tamil communities in Sri Lanka.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK, alongside our partners in the Core Group, have led international efforts to promote human rights for all communities in Sri Lanka, including through resolution 51/1 at the UN Human Rights Council. The resolution renewed the mandate of the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on Sri Lanka and to protect and preserve evidence of past human rights abuses to use in future accountability processes. We have made our stance clear in statements to the Council, most recently on 7 March. The UK also made recommendations including on the need to address issues around the expropriation of land in the North and East during Sri Lanka's Universal Periodic Review in February.

### Sri Lanka: Politics and Government

13 Mar 2023 160367

**Asked by: Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the political and security situation in Sri Lanka.

**Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We believe that a stable and inclusive political settlement is an essential foundation for the economic recovery and growth that Sri Lanka needs and we closely monitor political, economic and security developments in this regard.

The Minister for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, and the British High Commissioner, have called for a peaceful, democratic and inclusive approach to resolving the current political and economic issues. They also emphasised that violence against peaceful protestors is unacceptable.

We call on the Sri Lankan authorities to safeguard citizens' rights and ensure security responses are proportionate and in line with international human rights standards.

### Sri Lanka: Human Rights

13 Mar 2023 | 160366

**Asked by: Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Sri Lankan counterparts on human rights in Sri Lanka.

**Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We regularly raise human rights with the Government of Sri Lanka. The British High Commission in Colombo was able to do so most recently with senior representatives of the Sri Lankan government in February. The FCDO Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Philip Barton, spoke to Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Ali Sabry, during a visit to Sri Lanka on 17 January. He emphasised the UK would support human rights reform and encouraged efforts to take forward reconciliation.

## 6 Other Parliamentary material

### 6.1 Statement and Urgent question

#### [Sri Lanka](#)

13 Jul 2022 | House of Lords | 823 cc1485-8

Lords statement on the state of emergency declared in Sri Lanka.

#### [Sri Lanka](#)

13 Jul 2022 | House of Commons | 718 cc345-352

Urgent question on the state of emergency declared in Sri Lanka.

### 6.2 Debates

#### [Economic Aid to Sri Lanka](#)

11 May 2023 | 732 cc549-556

UK's economic aid to Sri Lanka. Agreed to on question.

#### [Sri Lanka](#)

09 Nov 2022 | 722 cc299-326

Motion that this House is concerned by reports of increased militarisation and human rights violations in Sri Lanka, particularly during the country's current economic crisis; calls upon the Government, as a key stakeholder of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to propose conditionalities on any IMF financial assistance for Sri Lanka during the current economic crisis, including that Sri Lanka carries out a Strategic Defence and Security Review to reduce its military spending and remove the military from engaging in commercial activities, that Sri Lanka meets the criteria required for Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus, and that Sri Lanka re-engages with the United Nations Human Rights Council process and fully implements resolution 30/1; and calls upon the Government to implement targeted sanctions against individuals who are credibly accused of committing war crimes during the Sri Lankan Civil War. Agreed to on question.

#### [Sri Lanka](#)

18 Mar 2021 | 691 cc542-572

Motion that this House notes with concern the reports of a systematic attack in Sri Lanka on democratic governance, the rule of law and human rights including renewed discrimination against the Tamil and Muslim communities; is profoundly concerned that the Sri Lankan Government has refused to investigate accusations of war crimes including by key members of the current government and has withdrawn from the UN Human Rights Council

Resolution 30/1; welcomes the significant leadership role played by successive UK Governments at the Human Rights Council and urges the Government to provide clear policy direction and leadership to ensure a new substantive resolution is passed at the upcoming Council session in March 2021 that will enable continued monitoring by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and mandate a mechanism to gather, preserve and analyse evidence of violations for future investigations and prosecutions; and calls upon the Government to develop a consistent and coherent policy to assist the Sri Lankan people through its trade, investment and aid programmes, and in its diplomatic and military relations. Agreed to on question. Sitting suspended.

## 6.3

### Early Day Motions

#### Water quality in northern Sri Lanka

**EDM: 858 (session 2022-23)**

**Munira Wilson**

**20 February 2023**

That this House expresses concern regarding water quality in northern Sri Lanka; is concerned by reports stating that the Sri Lankan Government refused to allow independent assessments of water quality in the region; notes that the consumption or use of water contaminated by waste oil has been linked to many diseases and birth defects; calls for steps to be taken to allow all citizens in northern Sri Lanka, the majority of whom are Tamils, to have access to clean drinking water; calls on the area around the Chunnakam power plant complex to be subjected to a full independent investigation; believes that organisations responsible for pollution of ground water in Chunnakam should have a duty to carry out remedial works; and further believes that all citizens affected by water contamination should be provided with competent medical follow-up and be compensated adequately by the Sri Lankan Government.

#### Political and economic situation in Sri Lanka

**EDM: 297 (session 2022-23)**

**Ed Davy**

**15 July 2022**

That this House notes the developing political and economic crisis in Sri Lanka; acknowledges the widespread corruption and economic mismanagement at the hands of the Rajapaksa government that led to protests in the first place; recognises that the economic solution needed to address this situation must be coupled with political reform that involves all minority groups and includes accountability for human rights abuses and atrocities which have been carried out against Tamils; notes the allegations of human rights abuses levelled against Gotabaya Rajapaksa; urges the International Criminal Court to fully investigate those claims; and calls on the



Government to work with its international partners to press for peaceful political reform in Sri Lanka.

### Detention of Tamil refugees in the British Indian Ocean Territory

**EDM: 88 (session 2022-23)**

**Ed Davy**

**23 May 2022**

That this House acknowledges that at least 89 Eelam Tamils, including 20 children, are being detained indefinitely on the British Indian Ocean Territory Diego Garcia after their boat was intercepted by British military; recognises that these refugees cannot return to Sri Lanka, where they have faced persecution as Tamils and in some cases even torture; is aware that 42 of the refugees have gone on a hunger strike to protest their situation, which is having a catastrophic impact on their mental health; notes with concern that British authorities are not offering legal counsel or assessing asylum claims on Diego Garcia, despite reports the group has made clear they are seeking international protection; emphasises the UK's international legal commitments to allow anyone to apply for asylum; and calls on the Government to provide enabling support to allow the Tamil refugees on Diego Garcia to claim asylum in a safe country of their choosing.

### Water pollution in northern Sri Lanka

**EDM: 367 (session 2021-22)**

**Munira Wilson**

**22 July 2021**

That this House expresses concern regarding water quality in northern Sri Lanka; is concerned by reports stating that the Sri Lankan Government refused to allow independent assessments of water quality in the region; notes that the consumption or use of water contaminated by waste oil has been linked to many diseases and birth defects; calls for steps to be taken to allow all citizens in northern Sri Lanka, the majority of whom are Tamils, to have access to clean drinking water; calls on the area around the Chunnakam power plant complex to be subjected to a full independent investigation; and believes that all citizens affected by water contamination should be provided with competent medical follow-up and be compensated adequately by the Sri Lankan Government.

### 12th anniversary of the end of the Sri Lankan civil war

**EDM: 64 (session 2021-22)**

**Anne McLaughlin**

**18 May 2021**

That this house recognises that 12 years on from the end of the Sri Lankan civil war, most alleged human rights abuses primarily against Tamil people are yet to be investigated; acknowledges that those allegations include indiscriminate bombing in no-fire zones, summary executions of surrenderers, torture, sexual violence and abductions; appreciates the UK Government has played a vital role as leaders of the core group on Sri Lanka within the Human

Rights Council; remains deeply concerned that despite various international resolutions and the establishment in 2015 of institutions in Sri Lanka to investigate the impact of the war, very little investigation has taken place and some of those facing investigation hold powerful positions in Sri Lanka today; is further concerned that in recent months the independence of the judiciary has been undermined by amendments to the Sri Lankan constitution and has little confidence any further investigations will take place; calls on the UK government to take action as laid out by various hon. Members in recent debates; and urges the Government to mark the 12th anniversary by following the equivalent actions of the US in adding General Shavendra Silva, Acting Chief of Defence Staff and the Commander of the Sri Lankan Army to the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, thus demonstrating the UK's commitment to international human rights obligations and that international action is the only way that accountability, reconciliation and peace will come to the beautiful island of Sri Lanka and all of its people across the world.

## 7

## Further reading

[Reprisals against peaceful protesters protesting against ongoing pastureland encroachment in Madhavanai and Mayilathamadu, Batticaloa](#)

Front Line Defenders

13 October 2023

[“If We Raise Our Voice They Arrest Us” Sri Lanka’s Proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)

Human Rights Watch

September 2023

[UK response to the human Rights and economic situation in Sri Lanka,](#)

Commons Library Debate Pack, CDP-0194, 8 November 2022

[The Overlooked Human Rights Problem: Sri Lankan Tamils](#)

International Relations Review

12 October 2021

[The UK’s commitment to reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka,](#) Commons Library Debate Pack, CDP-0015, 16 March 2021

[Amnesty International: Sri Lanka](#) (webpage)

[Human Rights Watch, Country Profile: Sri Lanka](#) (webpage)

[Center for Human Rights and Development \(CHRD\)](#) (webpage)

[All Ceylon Human Rights Federation](#) (webpage)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sri Lanka](#) (webpage)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils](#) (webpage)

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