

*High Commission for the Democratic  
Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka*



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HCL/POL/1B

18 December 2009

Mr. Paul Burstow, MP  
House of Commons  
London  
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Dear Mr. Burstow,

**Christmas Adjournment of House of Commons- 16 December 2009.**

Reference comments made by you on 16 December 2009 on the situation of the Internally Displaced People of Sri Lanka (IDPs) and that the EU should discontinue the facility of GSP+ to Sri Lanka considering the human rights violations.

I must state very emphatically that the problem of IDPs was not a creation of the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL). The GOSL had to fight the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for over 25 years. During the final stages of the conflict the LTTE drove the civilian population of the Northern district of Sri Lanka from the North Western coast to the North Eastern coast of the Island and held them as human shields. It was no secret that the LTTE militarised the no fire zone established by the GOSL for the safety of the civilians who were seeking to escape from the LTTE.

With the military defeat of the LTTE on 19 May 2009 the GOSL inherited a problem of over 280,000 IDPs. The GOSL with the assistance of the international community promptly established welfare villages for IDPs until their original habitats are ready for re-occupation. You may note that the GOSL with the support of the international agencies has commenced de-mining the areas which were under the control of the LTTE. The gigantic task of clearing an area of 402 sq. km is being progressed and it is estimated that over 1.5 millions mines and unexploded ordnances are buried and abandoned by the LTTE with no maps.

The GOSL has been able to resettle over 70% of the IDPs so far and it is expected that remaining IDPs will be able to return to their original habitats by the end of January 2010 once the de-mining is complete. Currently little over 90,000 IDPs are living in the welfare villages and they could move freely. Unfortunately, you have been unable to note that the UK government has welcomed recent progress made by the Sri Lankan government in the House of Commons by Rt.Hon. David Miliband, Foreign Secretary and Hon. Mike Foster, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for DFID. The claim by your Tamil constituents that the IDPs are being detained by the Sri Lankan government is baseless. The IDPs were never kept against their will!

Kindly note that over 60 International Humanitarian Agencies (ICRC, OXFAM, Save the Children etc) including UN specialised institutions (UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IMO etc) have been working in the welfare villages and other parts of Sri Lanka including Northern and Eastern provinces. The IDPs are being provided with basic food, medicine and other needs by the GOSL at a cost of over 50 million Sri Lankan Rupees per day. The children are continuing with their school education in the welfare villages and they have been able to sit for their national examinations. In addition over 500 conscripted children who have been rehabilitated admitted to two leading Tamil language schools in Colombo.

All the IDPs have been registered and issued with identity cards. The identified ex-combatants are being rehabilitated at 13 centres with the assistance of the IOM in a two year programme at a cost of US\$ 23 million funded by the USAID. These ex-combatants are being trained vocationally on 08 thrust areas which include agriculture, tourism, hospitality industry, information technology etc so that they could re-integrate into the society as resourceful persons. If your constituents so wish to obtain information of their relatives, you may inform them that they could contact my office through you or direct.

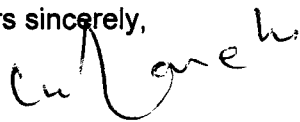
Unfortunately, you have connected an economic issue with politics by requesting UK government to use their leverage at the EU to suspend GSP+ facilities to Sri Lanka. Our considered view is that these are two distinct issues and should not be interconnected to punish a sovereign government which had to fight against one of the most ruthless terrorist organizations in the world. In addition, you may note that over one million people will suffer due to the disconnection of the GSP+ facility.

We have noted over the years that pro-LTTE elements and a section of the Tamil diaspora have been misleading the UK politicians, media and civil society organisations etc with their propaganda. The concerns made by your Tamil constituents are not different to this.

I therefore, kindly request you to verify the facts of such representations made by Tamil diaspora and pro-LTTE elements before tabling same to an august assembly like House of Commons.

I look forward to meeting with you on a mutually convenient date and time.

Yours sincerely,



Justice Nihal Jaysinghe  
High Commissioner

**Christmas Adjournment - 16 Dec 2009**

**Column 987**

**Mr. Paul Burstow (Sutton and Cheam) (LD):**

.....I have spoken in the House on a number of occasions about Sri Lanka. The Tamil community in my constituency is concerned about relatives and others given what is happening in the country. I shall address only one issue today-the camps-and I hope that Foreign Office Ministers will continue to pursue it vigorously. **The camps are seen by many Tamils as detention camps. People are not allowed free movement and certainly not to go home. There is a lack of information about who is being detained and why, and a lack of access for independent human rights and humanitarian agencies.** Twelve thousand alleged Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam members are held in them **without access to those agencies or even the Red Cross.** They have now been **incarcerated for seven months without any form of charge and certainly without any promise of being released.**

The Government are doing much to put pressure on the Sri Lankan Government to honour their commitments on international law and human rights, but can more be done to ensure that, **through the European Union, where we have leverage and which has recently reported on human rights violations, the renewal of the generalised system of preferences plus does not happen? That would be a way of signalling to the Sri Lankan Government that they must strive more to ensure that Tamils are treated fairly and equally in that country, and that there is a genuine process of restoring trust and building peace, rather than continued intimidation of, and misery for, many Tamils.....**