



RESPONSE TO PETITION RÉPONSE À LA PÉTITION

PREPARE IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH MARKING "ORIGINAL TEXT" OR "TRANSLATION"
PRÉPARER EN ANGLAIS ET EN FRANÇAIS EN INDIQUANT "TEXTE ORIGINAL" OU "TRADUCTION"

PETITION NO./N° DE LA PÉTITION
402-0754

BY / DE
Mr. McKay (Scarborough-Guildwood)

DATE
June 19, 2009

RESPONSE BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
RÉPONSE DU MINISTRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

SIGNATURE
MINISTER OR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
MINISTRE OU SECRÉTAIRE PARLEMENTAIRE

SUBJECT / OBJET

The situation in Sri Lanka

RESPONSE / RÉPONSE

ORIGINAL TEXT
TEXTE ORIGINAL



TRANSLATION
TRADUCTION



The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canadian foreign policy. Canada stands up for human rights and takes principled positions on important issues to ensure that freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, values that define this country, are enjoyed around the world.

The Government of Canada welcomes the end of hostilities in Sri Lanka, which have caused untold suffering over the past twenty-seven years. The Government of Canada wishes to convey its condolences to the people of Sri Lanka and those around the world who have lost friends and family members in this horrific conflict.

The Government of Canada is deeply concerned by the ongoing humanitarian situation in the aftermath of military action in Sri Lanka, and the consequences it has for the safety of civilians, humanitarian workers, human rights defenders, and journalists. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has released a number of statements expressing Canada's concern for the well-being of civilians caught up in the conflict. The Minister of Foreign Affairs previously released a number of statements expressing Canada's concern about the safety of civilians trapped in the conflict zone, while calling on both parties to the conflict to work toward a rapid resolution and allow full, safe, and unhindered access for humanitarian workers to provide urgently needed assistance to affected populations.

On July 4-7, 2009, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Sri Lanka. The Parliamentary Secretary engaged with senior Government of Sri Lanka officials on the humanitarian and transition needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs), visited the IDP camps, secured consular access to a Canadian currently in the IDP camps, dispelled misconceptions about the Government of Canada's position on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and discussed how the Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada can be engaged in the reconstruction and reconciliation process. The Parliamentary Secretary met with Sri

Lankan Cabinet Ministers including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Heads of Mission of like-minded countries and local civil society and humanitarian NGO leaders. In discussions at the IDP camps and in Colombo, the Parliamentary Secretary conveyed Canada's need for consular access and interest in seeing continuous improvement in the living conditions in the camps and the return home and resettlement of IDPs as early as possible.

On May 21, the Minister of Foreign Affairs released a joint statement with the Minister of International Cooperation calling for the Government of Sri Lanka to allow unhindered humanitarian access; ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided to affected populations in accordance with international humanitarian principles; facilitate the freedom of movement for internally displaced persons and voluntary return of these persons to their homes in safety and with dignity as soon as possible; and move forward with immediate steps toward an inclusive political solution.

On May 18, the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke with the U.S. Secretary of State and agreed that there is a need for the international community to coordinate assistance and support to the people of Sri Lanka, and that it will be important to work with the international community in urging the Government of Sri Lanka to cooperate with these efforts. They agreed to work together to support the United Nations in providing humanitarian assistance.

On May 4, the Minister of International Cooperation visited Sri Lanka to express Canada's deep concern about the situation in northern Sri Lanka, especially the safety of civilians caught in the conflict zone, as well as conditions of internally displaced persons in government camps. The Minister of International Cooperation announced an additional \$3 million in critical humanitarian aid to assist civilians displaced by the ongoing civil conflict, bringing Canada's humanitarian assistance to Sri Lankan civilians to \$7.5 million this year.

Canada works with like-minded countries to deliver strong messages to the Government of Sri Lanka about the imperatives of humanitarian access, the protection of civilians, and freedom of movement for internally displaced peoples. The High Commissioner of Canada in Colombo has engaged the Sri Lankan leadership at the highest levels to register Canada's grave concern over these issues. In addition, Canada has supported engagement on Sri Lanka at the highest levels of the United Nations.

At the same time, Canada takes a strong stand against terrorism. In April 2006, Canada listed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the Criminal Code as a terrorist organization, thereby freezing LTTE assets in Canada and prohibiting any fundraising on its behalf.

Recent developments underline the urgent need for progress toward a meaningful and durable political solution. Canada calls on the president of Sri Lanka to move forward immediately on his vow to launch a political process that is inclusive of all communities in Sri Lanka. Canada looks to the Government of Sri Lanka to show leadership by moving forward with the tabling of further details for meaningful power-sharing agreements that will be acceptable to all communities and will ensure that all the people of Sri Lanka can live in safety and receive the full protection of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, in order to begin a process of reconciliation, actions will need to be taken in respect to allegations of violations of international humanitarian law during the conflict. Canada supports the calls for the establishment of an independent investigation and we encourage the Government of Sri Lanka to request international assistance to create an independent entity to investigate and recommend measures for accountability.

Canada will extend its assistance to all parties willing to work peacefully toward the elaboration of a political settlement. The Government of Canada will continue to promote Canadian values of freedom, democracy,

human rights and rule of law. The Government of Canada supported and participated in a successful regional conference on pluralism, held in Sri Lanka in March 2008. In addition, Canada organized a series of workshops exploring pluralism in Sri Lanka, which culminated in a successful conference held in Colombo in March 2009. These initiatives helped to promote a dialogue among a broad range of civil society representatives as well as officials of the Government of Sri Lanka.