



THE HON STEPHEN SMITH MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

23 SEP 2008

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Julia

Dear Madam Chair

Thank you for your letter dated 4 September 2008 on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning a petition on human rights in Sri Lanka.

Australia remains concerned about the escalation of violence in Sri Lanka, as well as the human rights abuses perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. These concerns have been made clear to senior Sri Lankan officials. Australia does not believe a military solution is possible and supports a negotiated political settlement to bring lasting peace to Sri Lanka.

I have released two public statements this year (attached), calling for all parties to the conflict in Sri Lanka to work towards a political solution that meets the aspirations of all Sri Lankans. The Australian Government also strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms, including terrorist acts perpetrated by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. We will also continue to encourage the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that all Sri Lankan citizens are afforded their fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, and are able to participate fully in Sri Lankan society.

The humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka remains of deep concern to the Australian Government. Australia supplies humanitarian aid to Sri Lanka through the provision of food and other essential services to conflict-affected areas in the north and east where there are significant Tamil communities. Australia's estimated Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to Sri Lanka for 2008-2009 is \$27.02 million. Since the beginning of March 2008, Australia has contributed over \$5.8 million to United Nations (UN) agencies and international NGOs to provide emergency shelter, protection, water and sanitation and non-food relief items. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has confirmed that existing Australian funding for emergency shelter assistance and emergency procurement of non-food related items is being used to assist internally displaced persons and conflict affected communities in the north and east.

The Government will continue to monitor closely the situation in Sri Lanka.

Thank you for referring this petition to me.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Smith

The Hon Stephen Smith MP

AUSTRALIAN MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Media release

7 April 2008

Australia Condemns Killing of Sri Lankan Cabinet Minister

Australia condemns the suicide bombing near Colombo on 6 April which killed senior Sri Lankan Cabinet Minister, Mr Jeyaraj Fernandopulle, the Minister for Highways and Road Development and Chief Government Whip in the Parliament.

This senseless attack also killed at least fifteen others and injured more than 90 Sri Lankans who had gathered for the start of a marathon race to celebrate the coming Sinhala and Tamil New Year.

The Australian Government sends its most sincere condolences to Mr Fernandopulle's family and to the families of all those killed and injured in this terrible attack.

Australia remains concerned about the escalation of violence in Sri Lanka and condemns terrorism in all its forms. The use of terrorist methods by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is completely unacceptable.

Sri Lanka's conflict cannot be resolved militarily. It is Australia's firm view that a political settlement, developed in dialogue with all affected communities, is urgently needed to bring lasting peace to the country. Australia encourages the Sri Lankan Government and all parties involved to redouble their efforts to develop realistic proposals to support a political solution to the conflict.

Media inquiries: Mr Smith's office 02 6277 7500 - Departmental Media Liaison 02 6261 1555

The Hon Stephen Smith MP

AUSTRALIAN MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Media release

6 January 2008

Australia concerned at recent developments in Sri Lanka

Australia is concerned about the Sri Lankan Government's announcement that it intends to withdraw from the 2002 ceasefire agreement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

This is a step backwards which Australia fears could lead to further escalation of violence, including against civilians.

I appeal to all parties to the conflict to protect the human rights of all Sri Lankans.

Sri Lanka's conflict cannot be resolved militarily. Only a negotiated settlement can bring lasting peace. I urge all involved parties to submit to democratic processes and the rule of law and to work towards a political solution that meets the aspirations of all Sri Lankans.

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