

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	563
Land:	Sri Lanka
Kilde:	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Titel:	Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 - Human Rights Priority Country update report: July to December 2016 - Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Udgivet:	8. februar 2017
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	2. maj 2017

[EN](#) | [DE](#)

- **Source:**
FCO - UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- **Title:**
Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 - Human Rights Priority Country update report: July to December 2016 - Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
- **Publication date:**
08 February 2017
- **ecoi.net summary:** Half-year update on human rights situation (covering second half of 2016) [ID 337440]
- **Countries:**
Sri Lanka
- **Original link** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/democratic-socialist-republic-of-sri-lanka-human-rights-priority-country/human-rights-priority-country-update-report-july-to-december-2016>

Recommended citation:

FCO - UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 - Human Rights Priority Country update report: July to December 2016 - Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 08 February 2017 (available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net))
http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/337440/467244_en.html (accessed 25 April 2017)



Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 - Human Rights Priority Country update report: July to December 2016 - Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The government of Sri Lanka continued to take steps to improve the human rights situation in the second half of 2016. However, as noted in the UK statement to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in June 2016, much remains to be done for Sri Lanka to fulfil the commitments made in Resolution 30/1 at the UNHRC in October 2015. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights will report on Sri Lanka's progress before the UNHRC in March 2017.

In August, the Sri Lankan parliament passed legislation to establish an Office of Missing Persons (OMP), but the office itself has not been established yet. President Sirisena will need to publish the new law before the OMP can be set up. Sri Lanka has an estimated 65,000 missing persons. Once established, the aim is for the OMP to be an independent humanitarian agency with full legal powers to investigate disappeared or missing persons, with no restrictions relating to when or where the person disappeared. The UK welcomed this important step towards reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Legislation was passed by the Sri Lankan Parliament earlier in the year to give effect to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and to allow 'certificates of absence' to be issued to families of missing persons. However neither has been implemented.

There were a number of land releases in the past 6 months. In October, the President ordered the release of 454 acres of land from the Palaly High Security Zone in Jaffna and handed over 47 acres of state land with 100 new houses built by the military in Keerimalai for displaced persons. In December, a further 1,825 acres of land belonging to 69 families were returned in Killinochchi (north), following the completion of de-mining operations. The UK has consistently called for the release of private land currently occupied by the military in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

A new Counter Terrorism Act (CTA) to replace the existing Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) is in the process of being drafted. The UK has continued to urge the Government of Sri Lanka to replace the PTA with legislation that meets international human rights standards. While a small number of those detained under the PTA were released in the past 6 months, many still remain in detention without charge.

The constitutional reform process, which aims to address issues of devolution and introduce a bill of rights, continued in the second half of 2016. In September the report of wide-ranging public consultations was published, and subcommittee reports were released in November and December. However, the government has missed its original target of passing a new constitution by the end of 2016.

There were concerns about communal tensions in Sri Lanka over the past 6 months. Attempts to erect Buddhist temples and statues in predominantly Muslim and Tamil areas in Ampara and Batticaloa led to protests. In central Sri Lanka, an anti-Muslim rally organised by Buddhist nationalists in November called for the boycott of Muslim-owned businesses and a ban on halal products. Prominent members of extremist nationalist groups, including the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), have further fuelled tensions with several incidents of hate speech. Civil society organisations have raised concerns about police inaction against Buddhist monks inciting violence. In September, a "Tamils rise up" march in the north also aroused concern in the south. In December, President Sirisena announced plans to establish an executive committee to address religious tensions.

5 military personnel tried for the murder of Nadarajah Raviraj, former TNA MP, were acquitted in December. Concerns were raised as the accused were acquitted by an all-Sinhalese jury. In a separate case in the second half of 2016, 4 soldiers accused of the 1996 massacre of 26 Tamil civilians were also acquitted by another all-Sinhalese jury.

[Sri Lanka was reviewed by the UN Committee Against Torture](#) on 15 November. The committee concluded that "torture is a common practice carried out in relation to regular criminal investigations in a large majority of cases by the Criminal Investigations Department of the police". The committee also expressed disappointment at the Sri Lankan delegation's response to questions about interrogation techniques, conditions at detention centres and the conduct of officials, and raised serious concerns about impunity. The UK continued to support Sri Lankan government efforts to develop a more capable, professional and accountable police force, with the aim of reducing the risk of human rights violations, including torture, and improving public confidence in the rule of law.

Foreign Office Minister Baroness Anelay visited Sri Lanka in November. During her 4-day visit, she held meetings with the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, a representative of the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission, and a range of civil society groups. In those meetings, Baroness Anelay stressed the importance of Sri Lanka protecting the rights of all its citizens.

The minister also heard from conflict-affected women about the challenges they face, including sexual violence, and visited a UK-funded women and children's desk at Jaffna police station. She was also able to see how the UK's funding of demining work by the HALO Trust is enabling resettlement and providing livelihoods for conflict-affected women in the north. In Colombo, the Minister joined a one-day workshop on stigma, hosted by the High Commission, and spoke at a reception to promote the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative. The minister emphasised the importance of tackling social stigma in Sri Lanka, not only for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, but also for achieving reconciliation goals.