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Sri Lanka: Tamil separatism

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Executive summary

Sri Lanka has undergone significant political changes since 2024, with the election of the National People's Power (NPP) government, which initially gained strong Tamil support due to its promises of reconciliation and justice. It has since disappointed many Tamils due to unmet promises.

Tamils continue to face discrimination in employment, education, and access to justice. Surveillance and monitoring of Tamils, especially those politically active or involved in commemorative events, remain prevalent. Heavy military presence in Tamil-majority areas contributes to a climate of distrust and self-censorship.

The Sri Lankan government continues to proscribe several Tamil diaspora groups, including the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE). People affiliated with or perceived to support this, or other proscribed groups may be subject to surveillance, particularly if they engage in public demonstrations or online activism.

Returnees to Sri Lanka generally experience a smooth re-entry process if they hold valid passports. However, those returning on temporary travel documents, may face questioning before leaving the airport. Monitoring of returnees varies and while most Tamils reintegrate without issue, some experience home visits or phone checks, particularly if they are politically active or have LTTE links. Most returnees are not stigmatised by their communities and rely on family support.

Tamils are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state if:

- their claim is based on ethnicity alone
- they are questioned on arrival because they appear on a 'watch' list, including those subsequently monitored in their home or resettlement area.

Tamils who are likely to be detained face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state. This includes those who:

- express avowedly separatist or perceived separatist beliefs (Tamil Eelam)
- appear on a 'watch' list and have or are perceived to have a 'significant role' in Tamil separatism which is likely to lead to their detention once they return to their home area or place of resettlement
- are on a 'stop' list and who will therefore be detained at the airport.

The term 'significant role' does not require a person to show that they have held a formal position in an organisation, are a member of such, or that their activities have been 'high profile' or 'prominent'. Decision makers must consider the factors outlined in the country guidance case of [KK and RS \(sur place activities: risk\) Sri Lanka \[2021\] UKUT 130 \(IAC\)](#).

If a person is found to hold a genuine belief in Tamil separatism and if the belief would be concealed on return, decision makers must consider why this is the case.

Protection is not likely to be available to Tamils fearing the state and internal relocation is not likely to be reasonable.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

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Assessment

Section updated: 20 August 2025

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because of the persons actual or perceived links to Tamil separatism
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka refers to the movement and actions by Sri Lankan Tamils to establish an independent Tamil state, known as Tamil Eelam, in the North-East of the country, a Tamil-majority region.

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 During the civil war, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) was responsible for serious human rights abuses and carried out significant acts of terrorism. It has been proscribed in the UK since March 2001 under the Terrorism Act 2000.
- 1.2.2 The Upper Tribunal held in the country guidance (CG) case [KK and RS \(sur place activities: risk\) Sri Lanka \[2021\] UKUT 130 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 September 2020 and promulgated on 27 May 2021, that 'In appropriate cases, consideration must be given to whether the exclusion clauses under Article 1F of the Refugee Convention are applicable' (paragraph 536 (29)).
- 1.2.3 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.4 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.5 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Race and / or actual or imputed political opinion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason
- 2.1.3 In the absence of a link to one of the 5 Refugee Convention reasons necessary for the grant of asylum, the question is whether the person will face a real risk of serious harm to qualify for Humanitarian Protection (HP).
- 2.1.4 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

3. Risk

3.1 Summary of risk

- 3.1.1 Tamils are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the

state if:

- their claim is based on ethnicity alone
- they are questioned on arrival because they appear on a 'watch' list, including those subsequently monitored in their home or resettlement area.

3.1.2 Tamils who are likely to be detained face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state. This includes those who:

- express avowedly separatist or perceived separatist beliefs (Tamil Eelam)
- appear on a 'watch' list and have or are perceived to have a 'significant role' in Tamil separatism which is likely to lead to their detention once they return to their home area or place of resettlement
- are on a 'stop' list and will therefore be detained at the airport.

3.1.3 For further information on and interpretation of the term 'significant role', see [Risk to actual and perceived supporters of Tamil separatism](#).

3.1.4 If a person is found to hold a genuine belief in Tamil separatism and if the belief would be concealed on return, decision makers must consider why.

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3.2 Country guidance

3.2.1 In the country guidance case of [KK and RS \(sur place activities: risk\) Sri Lanka \[2021\] UKUT 130 \(IAC\)](#), the Upper Tribunal (UT) held that the existing country guidance, [GJ and Others \(post –civil war: returnees Sri Lanka CG \[2013\] UKUT 00319 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 5 to 8 and 11 to 12 February 2013, 15 March 2013 and 19 April 2013, promulgated on 13 July 2013, was still **broadly accurate** in reflecting the situation facing returnees to Sri Lanka (paragraph 535). The case of [GJ & Others](#) was restated in its entirety in the judgment. The UT held, however, that it was necessary to 'clarify and supplement the existing guidance, with particular reference to sur place activities' (paragraph 535).

3.2.2 The UT in [KK and RS](#) held that 'There is a reasonable likelihood that those detained by the Sri Lankan authorities will be subjected to persecutory treatment within the meaning of the Refugee Convention and ill-treatment contrary to Article 3 ECHR' (paragraph 536(27)).

3.2.3 While there have been significant political changes in Sri Lanka since the country guidance of [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) was heard, the country information in this note does not indicate that there are 'very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence' to depart from these findings.

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3.3 Political situation

3.3.1 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that the:

'GoSL [then Government of Sri Lanka] is an authoritarian regime whose core focus is to prevent any potential resurgence of a separatist movement within Sri Lanka which has as its ultimate goal the establishment of Tamil Eelam.

'GoSL draws no material distinction between, on the one hand, the avowedly violent means of the LTTE in furtherance of Tamil Eelam, and non-violent political advocacy for that result on the other. It is the underlying aim which is crucial to GoSL's perception. To this extent, GoSL's interpretation of separatism is not limited to the pursuance thereof by violent means alone; it encompasses the political sphere as well (paragraphs 536(1) and 536(2)).

- 3.3.2 At the time [GJ and Others](#) was heard between February and April 2013, and [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) in September 2020, Sri Lanka was governed by the Rajapaksa family, who pursued a Sinhalese-nationalist policy. In 2022, Gotabaya and Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned their positions, as president and prime minister respectively, following the Aragalaya mass protests, prompted by economic mismanagement and corruption.
- 3.3.3 In September 2024 the country underwent major political change when Anura Kumara Dissanayake of the left-leaning National People's Power (NPP) won the presidency, defeating incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe. The NPP secured a parliamentary majority in November 2024, forming a government under Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya. The elections were peaceful and widely seen as free and fair. The NPP campaigned on anti-corruption, inclusivity, and reconciliation, gaining strong Tamil support. Several Tamil parties are represented in Parliament.
- 3.3.4 By May 2025, Tamil disillusionment of the NPP grew due to unmet promises on justice and devolution, reflected in local election losses. Despite outreach efforts, including pledges to release Tamil political prisoners and return seized lands, critics argue the government has not pursued accountability for past war crimes. Tamil nationalist parties, especially Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), regained ground in the North-East, highlighting persistent ethnic grievances and the limits of the NPP's reconciliation efforts (see [Political situation](#) and [Reconciliation](#)).

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3.4 Risk for Tamils in general

- 3.4.1 Reports on the treatment of Tamils are mixed. According to Freedom House (2024), Tamils report they face systemic discrimination in employment, education, and justice. The May 2024 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) report acknowledges ongoing 'human rights challenges' but notes a significant reduction in state harassment since 2015. It attributes some employment disparities to language barriers rather than official policy. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA, 2024) reports no ethnic targeting of Tamils by authorities during 2014 to 2024 and highlights a general improvement due to a political shift under former President Sirisena, and a change in security focus after the 2019 Easter attacks, and the 2022 Aragalaya protests (see [General treatment of Tamils](#)).
- 3.4.2 Sri Lankan authorities monitored people perceived as critical or a threat to national security, including some Tamils. After 2019 surveillance extended more broadly to Muslim activists, journalists, NGOs, and student groups. Tamils in the north and east continued to feel watched, particularly due to the heavy military presence. This environment contributed to a sense of distrust and self-censorship among Tamils, especially regarding sensitive topics like disappearances, victim commemoration, and demands for accountability (see [Monitoring of Tamils](#)).

3.4.3 Tamils in Sri Lanka face no formal travel restrictions. Military and police checkpoints, especially in the north and east, have decreased over time. Some individuals report harassment or discriminatory treatment while others pass unheeded. Former LTTE members may face additional reporting obligations if leaving the area. As far as is known, Tamils do not experience any problems leaving the country based on their ethnicity alone (see [Freedom of movement](#)).

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3.5 Risk to actual and perceived supporters of Tamil separatism

3.5.1 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that ‘Whilst there is limited space for pro-Tamil political organisations to operate within Sri Lanka, there is no tolerance of the expression of avowedly separatist or perceived separatist beliefs’ (paragraph 536(3)).

3.5.2 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that:

‘... the question of whether an individual has, or is perceived to have, undertaken a “significant role” in Tamil separatism remains the appropriate touchstone. In making this evaluative judgment, GoSL will seek to identify those whom it perceives as constituting a threat to the integrity of the Sri Lankan state by reason of their committed activism in furtherance of the establishment of Tamil Eelam.

‘The term “significant role” does not require an individual to show that they have held a formal position in an organisation, are a member of such, or that their activities have been “high profile” or “prominent”. The assessment of their profile will always be fact-specific, but will be informed by an indicator-based approach, taking into account the following non-exhaustive factors, none of which will in general be determinative:

- i. the nature of any diaspora organisation on behalf of which an individual has been active. That an organisation has been proscribed under the 2012 UN Regulations will be relatively significant in terms of the level of adverse interest reasonably likely to be attributed to an individual associated with it;
- ii. the type of activities undertaken;
- iii. the extent of any activities;
- iv. the duration of any activities;
- v. any relevant history in Sri Lanka;
- vi. any relevant familial connections’ (paragraphs 536(20) to 536(21vi)).

3.5.3 The UT held that ‘... we are satisfied that GoSL’s objective is to identify those who are an actual or perceived threat to the integrity of the Sri Lankan state by reason of their committed activism in pursuit of the establishment of a separate Tamil state on the island of Sri Lanka. That is the contextual prism through which the term “significant role” should be interpreted (paragraph 475).

3.5.4 See paragraphs 374, 391, 393, 439 to 502 of [KK and RS](#) for further consideration into what constitutes a ‘significant role’.

3.5.5 See also [Risk due to sur place activities](#).

- 3.5.6 Between 2021 and 2024, former LTTE members in Sri Lanka faced varying levels of monitoring by authorities. While many lived normal lives and participated in public life, others – especially those politically or socially active – were subject to surveillance. Reports differ on the extent of monitoring, ranging from ‘routine’ reporting to the army to ‘intensive surveillance’ or ‘regular visits’ by police or military. Monitoring methods include home visits, phone calls, and summons for questioning, though there is no evidence of violence. Surveillance also extends to journalists, activists, and relatives of disappeared persons, particularly in the north and east. Some family members of diaspora activists have been monitored on a small scale. The intensity of monitoring fluctuates based on government leadership and local commanders. Although the overall level of harassment has declined over time, arbitrary targeting and intimidation – especially of women and those engaging with international bodies – persists (see [Monitoring of former LTTE members and their relatives](#)).
- 3.5.7 Arrests in Sri Lanka for allegedly reviving the LTTE have occurred in recent years but on a small scale. Most sources consulted by the Netherlands MoFA in 2023 and 2024 suggest these arrests reflect not a real fear of LTTE resurgence, but rather government overreaction to pro-Tamil expressions or efforts to justify continued military presence in the north and east by portraying the LTTE as an ongoing threat (see [Arbitrary arrests, and treatment in detention](#)).
- 3.5.8 However, between 2023 and 2024, the UN and civil society organisations highlighted allegations of abduction, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and forced confessions of Tamils, mostly men involved in protests in the Tamil-majority districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaittivu and Vavuniya. Despite official denials, the UN found the accounts of the 8 people they interviewed to be credible and consistent (see [Arbitrary arrests, and treatment in detention](#)).
- 3.5.9 According to some sources, incidents of assault and torture of detainees in Sri Lanka, particularly for extracting confessions, has declined in recent years. While some sources indicate that Tamils and other minorities might face higher risks, most emphasise that mistreatment is a nationwide issue affecting all ethnic groups. Arrests of family members of former LTTE members are reported to be rare or non-existent (see [Arbitrary arrests, and treatment in detention](#)).
- 3.5.10 Between 2021 and May 2025, relatives of former LTTE members who actively participated in commemorations or protests – especially around symbolic dates – faced monitoring, harassment, and questioning by Sri Lankan authorities. This group was among the most closely watched, regardless of their relatives’ LTTE affiliation. Surveillance intensified around events like Maaveerar Naal (Heroes Day), with arrests and disruption reported in 2023, including the detention of 9 Tamils under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). However, by late 2024 and 2025, large-scale commemorations and protests, including so-called Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day and Black Day, occurred with minimal interference (see [Commemoration events](#)).

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3.6 Risk due to sur place activities

3.6.1 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that:

‘Sur place activities on behalf of an organisation proscribed under the 2012 UN Regulations is a relatively significant risk factor in the assessment of an individual’s profile, although its existence or absence is not determinative of risk. Proscription will entail a higher degree of adverse interest in an organisation and, by extension, in individuals known or perceived to be associated with it. In respect of organisations which have never been proscribed and the organisation that remains de-proscribed, it is reasonably likely that there will, depending on whether the organisation in question has, or is perceived to have, a separatist agenda, be an adverse interest on the part of GoSL, albeit not at the level applicable to proscribed groups.

‘TGTE is an avowedly separatist organisation which is currently proscribed. It is viewed by GoSL with a significant degree of hostility and is perceived as a “front” for the LTTE. GTF and BTF are also currently proscribed and whilst only the former is perceived as a “front” for the LTTE, GoSL now views both with a significant degree of hostility.

‘Other non-proscribed diaspora organisations which pursue a separatist agenda, such as TS [Tamil Solidarity], are viewed with hostility, although they are not regarded as “fronts” for the LTTE.

‘GoSL continues to operate an extensive intelligence-gathering regime in the United Kingdom which utilises information acquired through the infiltration of diaspora organisations, the photographing and videoing of demonstrations, and the monitoring of the Internet and unencrypted social media. At the initial stage of monitoring and information gathering, it is reasonably likely that the Sri Lankan authorities will wish to gather more rather than less information on organisations in which there is an adverse interest and individuals connected thereto. Information gathering has, so far as possible, kept pace with developments in communication technology’ (paras 536(5) to 536(8)).

3.6.2 The UT further held: ‘Interviews at the SLHC [Sri Lanka High Commission] continue to take place for those requiring a TTD [temporary travel document].’ (paragraph 536(9)).

3.6.3 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) further held that:

‘Prior to the return of an individual traveling on a TTD, GoSL is reasonably likely to have obtained information on the following matters:

- i. whether the individual is associated in any way with a particular diaspora organisation;
- ii. whether they have attended meetings and/or demonstrations and if so, at least approximately how frequently this has occurred;
- iii. the nature of involvement in these events, such as, for example, whether they played a prominent part or have been holding flags or banners displaying the LTTE emblem;
- iv. any organisational and/or promotional roles (formal or otherwise) undertaken on behalf of a diaspora organisation;
- v. attendance at commemorative events such as Heroes Day;
- vi. meaningful fundraising on behalf of or the provision of such funding

to an organisation;

vii. authorship of, or appearance in, articles, whether published in print or online;

viii. any presence on social media;

ix. any political lobbying on behalf of an organisation;

x. the signing of petitions perceived as being anti-government' (paragraph 536(10)).

3.6.4 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that:

'Those in possession of a valid passport are not interviewed at the SLHC. The absence of an interview at SLHC does not, however, discount the ability of GoSL to obtain information on the matters set out in [paragraph 536(10)], above, in respect of an individual with a valid passport using other methods employed as part of its intelligence-gathering regime, as described in [paragraph 536(8)]. When considering the case of an individual in possession of a valid passport, a judge [or decision maker] must assess the range of matters listed in [paragraph 536(10)], above, and the extent of the authorities' knowledge reasonably likely to exist in the context of a more restricted information-gathering apparatus. This may have a bearing on, for example, the question of whether it is reasonably likely that attendance at one or two demonstrations or minimal fundraising activities will have come to the attention of the authorities at all.

'Whichever form of documentation is in place, it will be for the judge [or decision maker] in any given case to determine what activities the individual has actually undertaken and make clear findings on what the authorities are reasonably likely to have become aware of prior to return' (paragraphs 536(11) and 536(12)).

3.6.5 In 2022, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) lifted the ban on 6 diaspora Tamil groups including the Global Tamil Forum (GTF) and British Tamils Forum (BTF). The GoSL continues to proscribe other Tamil groups operating abroad because it claims they 'repeatedly provided financial support for terrorism.' As of 30 May 2025, 8 diaspora groups remain proscribed, including the LTTE (also proscribed by the UK Government) and the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) (see [Tamil diaspora](#)).

3.6.6 Sri Lankan authorities reportedly monitor members of the Tamil diaspora, particularly those affiliated with or supportive of banned pro-independence groups. While the extent of surveillance is unclear, particularly regarding social media content, sources indicate that people participating in public demonstrations or posting anti-government content online may attract attention. Monitoring has been noted in countries with large Tamil populations, such as the UK. Surveillance appears to focus on prominent figures linked to proscribed groups (see [Monitoring of the diaspora](#)).

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3.7 Risk to returnees

3.7.1 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that 'GoSL views the Tamil diaspora with a generally adverse mindset, but does not regard the

entire cohort as either holding separatist views or being politically active in any meaningful way (paragraph 536(4)).

3.7.2 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that:

‘(13) GoSL operates a general electronic database which stores all relevant information held on an individual, whether this has been obtained from the United Kingdom or from within Sri Lanka itself. This database is accessible at the SLHC, BIA [Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo] and anywhere else within Sri Lanka. Its contents will in general determine the immediate or short-term consequences for a returnee.

‘(14) A stop list and watch list are still in use. These are derived from the general electronic database.

‘(15) Those being returned on a TTD will be questioned on arrival at BIA. Additional questioning over and above the confirmation of identity is only reasonably likely to occur where the individual is already on either the stop list or the watch list.

‘(16) Those in possession of a valid passport will only be questioned on arrival if they appear on either the stop list or the watch list.

‘(17) Returnees who have no entry on the general database, or whose entry is not such as to have placed them on either the stop list or the watch list, will in general be able to pass through the airport unhindered and return to the home area without being subject to any further action by the authorities (subject to an application of the [HJ \(Iran\) principle](#)).

‘(18) Only those against whom there is an extant arrest warrant and/or a court order will appear on the stop list. Returnees falling within this category will be detained at the airport.

‘(19) Returnees who appear on the watch list will fall into one of two sub-categories: (i) those who, because of their existing profile, are deemed to be of sufficiently strong adverse interest to warrant detention once the individual has travelled back to their home area or some other place of resettlement; and (ii) those who are of interest, not at a level sufficient to justify detention at that point in time, but will be monitored by the authorities in their home area or wherever else they may be able to resettle.

‘(20) In respect of those falling within sub-category (i), the question of whether an individual has, or is perceived to have, undertaken a “significant role” in Tamil separatism remains the appropriate touchstone. In making this evaluative judgment, GoSL will seek to identify those whom it perceives as constituting a threat to the integrity of the Sri Lankan state by reason of their committed activism in furtherance of the establishment of Tamil Eelam’ (paragraphs 536(13) to 536(20)).

3.7.3 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) further held that:

‘The monitoring undertaken by the authorities in respect of returnees in sub-category (ii) in (19), above, will not, in general, amount to persecution or ill-treatment contrary to Article 3 ECHR.

‘It is not reasonably likely that a returnee subject to monitoring will be sent for “rehabilitation”.

‘In general, it is not reasonably likely that a returnee subject to monitoring will

be recruited as an informant or prosecuted for a refusal to undertake such a role. (paragraphs 536(22) to 536(24)).

- 3.7.4 Sri Lankans returning from abroad, including failed asylum seekers, generally experience a straightforward re-entry process, especially if travelling on valid passports. Those returning on temporary travel documents (TTDs), or who have unresolved criminal matters, or who left the country illegally (not via official channels), may face questioning by immigration or intelligence agencies. Outcomes range from release without charge to court appearances (on bail), generally resulting in a fine. Reports differ on whether Tamils face more scrutiny than others. There is no recent evidence of mistreatment or arrest of returnees due to their ethnicity. Nor are there reports of Tamils being checked for LTTE-related scars or tattoos, nor of systematic monitoring of their online activity (see [Treatment on return, including of failed asylum seekers](#), [Arrest and detention of returnees](#) and [Court procedure following illegal exit](#)).
- 3.7.5 Sri Lankan authorities conduct mandatory security checks at international airports to identify high-risk travellers. The 'stop list' includes people subject to legal action, while the 'watch list' covers those under surveillance for security concerns, including suspected LTTE links. People on either list will be referred to law enforcement agencies. These lists are maintained through a central criminal records system, which may also include those not formally charged but under suspicion. While the exact criterion for inclusion is unclear, being on either list can result in questioning and for those on the 'stop' list is likely to lead to detention upon arrival (see [Stop and watch lists](#)).
- 3.7.6 Monitoring and reintegration experiences of Sri Lankan returnees, particularly Tamils, vary. A 2023 UNHCR study of 326 returnee households found most were registered with local authorities and rarely visited by police or military. The majority of home visits were by NGOs. However, the Netherlands MoFA reported that some returnees, especially Tamils, were monitored through home visits or calls, though the scale and frequency is unclear. DFAT sources note no recent evidence of harassment or surveillance of failed asylum seekers, including those with LTTE links, and note monitoring is rare and not based on ethnicity. Some sources indicate that only people with criminal histories or prominent political activity abroad might face scrutiny. Reintegration into communities is generally smooth, according to the UNHCR study, which found only 2% of returnees reported feeling they were treated differently by their community. Most returnees are not stigmatised and often rely on family support. The rehabilitation programme, designed to support former LTTE members reintegrate into society, no longer operates (see [Monitoring of returnees](#), [Reintegration of returnees](#) and [Treatment of Tamils ... Reintegration](#)).

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3.8 HJ (Iran) principle

- 3.8.1 The [HJ \(Iran\)](#) principle applies to cases concerning political opinion and is confirmed in [RT \(Zimbabwe\)](#).
- 3.8.2 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that 'The genuineness of the belief in the establishment of Tamil Eelam is the very first question that must be answered when applying the step-by step approach set out in

paragraph 82 of HJ (Iran). It is essential that careful findings of fact are made on the evidence’ (paragraph 542).

3.8.3 The UT further held that facts must:

‘... be found as to what the individual would wish to do on return in relation to the expression of his/her genuinely held separatist beliefs. If it is accepted that they would intend to manifest these beliefs in an open fashion (whether by physical protest, campaigning and/or statements in the media and/or on social media), a finding would have to be made as to whether these activities would be reasonably likely to be detected by the authorities, bearing in mind the climate of hostility towards Tamil separatism, the use of informants, and the ability to monitor individuals and most, if not all, forms of media.

‘If the individual would engage in the expression of separatist views and these were to become known, it is reasonably likely that they would be detained, with the consequential risk of persecution within the meaning of the Refugee Convention and ill-treatment contrary to Article 3 ECHR’ (paragraphs 551 to 552).

3.8.4 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that ‘... even an individual who does not appear on the watch list or indeed on the general electronic database at all is nonetheless entitled to have their protection claim examined in light of the HJ (Iran) principle if the findings of fact support a conclusion that they would or would wish to openly express genuinely held separatist beliefs on return but would conceal such beliefs in order to avoid the risk of detention and persecutory treatment’ (paragraph 555).

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3.9 Risk to Tamil women

3.9.1 Many women in the north and east became heads of households after losing male relatives during the conflict. Reports indicate ongoing issues such as invasive security checks, questioning by male officers without witnesses, and community stigma – particularly for female former LTTE combatants. Although sexual harassment by military personnel has reportedly declined, concerns about domestic abuse and sexual violence persist. Language barriers, a lack of female police officers, and social stigma deter many Tamil-speaking women from reporting gender-based violence. Support services exist, including shelters, counselling units, and police bureau. In March 2024, Tamil women publicly protested, without interference, against both state oppression and patriarchal norms, demanding greater protection and rights (see [Tamil women and female-headed households](#)).

3.9.2 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) found that, ‘Nothing in the expert or country evidence before us indicates that women are deemed to be less of a threat than men, whether in respect of violent or non-violent separatist activism’ (paragraph 651).

3.9.3 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and on [Gender Issues in the Asylum Claim](#).

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 The UT in [KK and RS \(Sur place activities, risk\)](#) held that ‘Internal relocation is not an option within Sri Lanka for a person at risk from the authorities’ (paragraph 536(28)).
- 5.1.3 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **30 May 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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7. Demography

7.1 Population

7.1.1 According to the 2012 census, Sri Lankan Tamils constituted 11.2% (around 2.2 million), and Indian Tamils 4.2% (around 850,000)¹, of the then 20,359,439 population², the majority of whom were Sinhalese (about 75%)³. Tamils are predominantly Hindu, with a small Christian minority, while most Sinhalese are Buddhist^{4 5}.

7.1.2 A COI report on the situation of Tamils in Sri Lanka by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), covering the period from October 2014 to April 2024, based on a range of sources, including information obtained from a fact-finding mission to Colombo and Jaffna in February 2024⁶, noted that:

‘Tamils are the largest population group in Northern Province (capital: Jaffna), with 93.8% of the population according to the 2012 census. A high proportion of the population of Eastern Province (capital: Trincomalee) is also Tamil (39.5%), but that province is more demographically diverse than Northern Province, being home to many Muslims (36.9%) and a smaller group of Sinhalese (23.2%). Sinhalese make up the majority of the population in the other provinces.’⁷

7.1.3 Preliminary results of the 2024 census in Sri Lanka indicated the total population was 21,763,170⁸. These provisional results did not provide a breakdown of the population by ethnic group. However, according to the London-based online news site, Tamil Guardian, the latest census figures

¹ MRG, [Sri Lanka](#), March 2018

² Dept of Census and Statistics, [Census of Population and Housing 2024](#) (page 53), 24 March 2025

³ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 7), June 2024

⁴ MRG, [Sri Lanka](#), March 2018

⁵ USSD, [2023 IRF Report](#) (section I), 26 June 2024

⁶ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 6), June 2024

⁷ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 7), June 2024

⁸ Dept of Census and Statistics, [Census of Population and Housing 2024](#) (page 47), 24 March 2025

indicated that Tamil homelands in the North-East and East regions had experienced low population growth and some of the lowest population densities on the island, which it blamed on the 'lack of a proper resettlement, continued military occupation, and lack of investment in infrastructure and livelihoods ...'⁹

- 7.1.4 Minority Rights Group (MRG) explained the difference between Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils: 'There are two groups of Tamils: "Sri Lankan Tamils" (also known as "Ceylon" or "Jaffna" Tamils) are the descendants of Tamil-speaking groups who migrated from southern India many centuries ago; and "Up Country Tamils" (also known as "Indian" or "estate" Tamils), who are descendants of comparatively recent immigrants.'¹⁰
- 7.1.5 Jaffna was described as the cultural capital for Eelam Tamils^{11 12}. Eelam was described by the US-based Tamil advocacy group, People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (PEARL), as 'A Tamil name for the entire island, used commonly in Tamil, including in historic artifacts, in the names of several current Tamil political parties and in the Tamil version of Sri Lanka's national anthem. Tamil Eelam is the name for the North-East, the Tamil-majority region of Eelam and what is traditionally referred to and claimed as the Tamil Homeland. Tamils from the North-East are often referred to as "Eelam Tamils".'¹³
- 7.1.6 The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) May 2024 report on Sri Lanka, based on a range of sources, noted that Indian Tamils were 'concentrated in the Central, Sabaragamuwa and Uva provinces.'¹⁴
- 7.1.7 Tamil is an official language of Sri Lanka¹⁵.

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7.2 Maps

NOTE: The maps in this section are not intended to reflect the UK Government's views of any boundaries.

- 7.2.1 UN map of Sri Lanka, which shows the country's provinces and their capitals¹⁶.

⁹ Tamil Guardian, [The Tamil homeland's falling population – Sri Lanka's 2024 census](#), 8 April 2025

¹⁰ MRG, [Sri Lanka](#), March 2018

¹¹ Tamil Guardian, [The Tamil homeland's falling population – Sri Lanka's 2024 census](#), 8 April 2025

¹² Britannica, [Jaffna | Sri Lanka](#), January 2024

¹³ PEARL, [State-sponsored Sinhalization of the North-East](#) (page 4), March 2022

¹⁴ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.4), 2 May 2024

¹⁵ Parliament of Sri Lanka, [Constitution](#) (Article 18), as amended up to 31 October 2022

¹⁶ UN Geospatial, [Sri Lanka](#), 20 May 2020



7.2.2 The Department of Census and Statistics published a [map of administrative districts](#).

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8. Political situation

8.1 Political events

8.1.1 Freedom House gave an overview of Sri Lanka’s political rights and civil liberties during 2023, in their Freedom in the World 2024 report, noting that:

‘Sri Lanka experienced improvements in political rights and civil liberties after the 2015 election of President Maithripala Sirisena. However, the Sirisena administration was slow to address the aftermath of a 26-year civil war between government forces and ethnic Tamil rebels, who were defeated in 2009. Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s election as president in 2019 and the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna’s (SLPP) [led by Mahinda Rajapaksa, Gotabaya’s brother] victory in the 2020 parliamentary polls emboldened the Rajapaksa family.’¹⁷

8.1.2 The Netherlands MoFA June 2024 report, which recounted Sri Lanka’s main political and administrative developments since October 2014 up to April 2024¹⁸, noted when referring to Gotabaya Rajapaksa's presidency (2019-2022), that ‘Like his brother Mahinda, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa pursued a Sinhalese-nationalist policy in which there was little room for the grievances of Tamils and Muslims, reconciliation, or holding government perpetrators accountable.’¹⁹

8.1.3 Freedom House noted that, in 2022, ‘Gotabaya and Mahinda Rajapaksa

¹⁷ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024](#) (Overview and A1), 2024

¹⁸ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 13 to 27), June 2024

¹⁹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 19 to 20), June 2024

resigned from their posts in the face of the Aragalaya (“Struggle”) protests—prompted by economic troubles, government mismanagement, and corruption ... [Ranil] Wickremesinghe succeeded Mahinda as prime minister before becoming president. Dinesh Gunawardena of the SLPP then succeeded Wickremesinghe as prime minister.²⁰

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8.2 2024 election – a new president and a new government

8.2.1 On 21 September 2024, Anura Kumara Dissayanake of the National People’s Power (NPP) won the Presidential election, ahead of Sajith Premadasa of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) and incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe who ran as an independent^{21 22}. The election was peaceful and widely considered to be free and fair^{23 24 25}.

8.2.2 On 25 September 2024 President Dissanayake dissolved parliament and announced parliamentary elections would be held on 14 November 2024^{26 27}.

8.2.3 The NPP won 159 seats out of the 225 in parliament, over 61% of the vote^{28 29}. The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) was officially named the opposition with 40 seats^{30 31}. The NPP won the most votes in the Tamil heartland of Jaffna, as well as other areas in Tamil areas in the North-East of the country^{32 33 34}.

8.2.4 Like the presidential election, the parliamentary election campaign was peaceful and widely considered to be free and fair³⁵. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya of the NPP was sworn in as Prime Minister on 18 November 2024³⁶.

See also [Tamil political parties](#).

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8.3 2025 local elections

8.3.1 Despite Tamil support at the national elections, the Tamil Guardian reported on 9 May 2025 that ‘... recent local government elections illustrated a sharp decline in support for the National People’s Power (NPP), a fall most pronounced in the Tamil North-East.’³⁷

8.3.2 Reporting on the results, the Tamil Guardian stated on 7 May 2025 that:

²⁰ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024](#) (Overview and A1), 2024

²¹ Election Commission of Sri Lanka, [Presidential Election – 2024](#), 22 September 2024

²² BBC News, [In a political paradigm shift, Sri Lanka leans to the left](#), 22 September 2024

²³ ANFREL, [IEOM to the 2024 Presidential Election in Sri ...](#) (pages 18 to 20), 24 September 2024

²⁴ EU, [Election Observation Mission Presidential Election Sri ...](#) (pages 6 to 9), 17 January 2025

²⁵ PAFFREL, [Presidential Election 2024 Report on the Election Day](#), 21 September 2024

²⁶ Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka), [General election on November 14](#), 24 September 2024

²⁷ Reuters, [Sri Lanka president dissolves parliament to clear way for Nov. 14 ...](#), 24 September 2024

²⁸ Election Commission of Sri Lanka, [Parliamentary Election – 2024/11/14 ...](#), 15 November 2024

²⁹ The Diplomat, [The NPP’s Rise and the Opposition’s Fall in Sri Lanka](#), 19 November 2024

³⁰ Ada Derana, [Sajith Premadasa named Opposition Leader of 10th Parliament](#), 21 November 2024

³¹ Election Commission of Sri Lanka, [Parliamentary Election – 2024/11/14 ...](#), 15 November 2024

³² The Federal, [NPP creates history, finishes on top in Tamil heartland Jaffna](#), 15 November 2024

³³ BBC News, [Landslide win for new Sri Lankan president’s left-leaning coalition](#), 15 November 2024

³⁴ ESSF, [Sri Lanka: NPP in Power: Possibilities for Post-War Reconciliation ...](#), 14 December 2024

³⁵ ANFREL, [IEOM 2024 Sri Lanka Parliamentary Election ...](#) (pages 29 to 32), 17 November 2024

³⁶ Prime Minister’s Office, [Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, The 17th Prime Minister of the ...](#), no date

³⁷ Tamil Guardian, [Tamil resistance at the polls](#), 9 May 2025

'The results across the North-East reflect a broader disillusionment with the NPP, particularly among Tamil voters who feel the government has failed to deliver on promises of justice, accountability, and devolution.

'Instead, voters appear to have returned to Tamil nationalist parties that centre the Tamil people's political aspirations. ITAK's commanding performances in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, and Batticaloa, along with strong results in Vanni, are indicative of a wider shift.'³⁸

- 8.3.3 However, The Diplomat, an international current-affairs magazine for the Asia-Pacific region, noted that the NPP's losses '... do not indicate a wholesale rejection or widespread disillusionment with the party.' And 'Local government elections in Sri Lanka, while an indicator of national sentiment, are also decided by hyper-local factors such as the reputation of the candidate, caste ties, and even petty village rivalries. Ideology and party loyalty matter less in the local government elections than in national ones.'³⁹

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8.4 National People's Power (NPP)

- 8.4.1 The NPP (or Jathika Jana Balavegaya) is a left-leaning alliance (led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)^{40 41}) consisting of 21 groups including political parties, youth organizations, women's groups, trade unions, and civil society organizations^{42 43 44}.
- 8.4.2 The NPP's main objectives include '... cultivating an uncorrupted, service-oriented, accountable, and transparent political culture, promoting economic democracy for fairer wealth distribution, strengthening social protections, and championing an inclusive, democratic Sri Lankan identity.'⁴⁵ President Dissanayake said in his speech to parliament, on 22 November 2024, that the NPP government aimed to build a free, democratic state where all citizens can '... practice their religion, speak their language and live according to their cultural values without fear or discrimination.'⁴⁶
- 8.4.3 The International Crisis Group (ICG) noted in their global conflict tracker, CrisisWatch, that during the NPP's election campaign they '... made direct outreach to Tamil community, including 1 Nov [2024] reopening Palaly-Achchuvveli road in Jaffna after 34 years of closure by military.'⁴⁷
- 8.4.4 The Tamil Guardian reported on 15 November 2024 that, days before the parliamentary elections, President Dissanayake visited the Vavuniya and Jaffna in the North-East and announced his intention to release Tamil political prisoners and return all lands seized by previous governments⁴⁸. No information could be found amongst sources consulted to indicate these intentions had been actioned (see [Bibliography](#)).

³⁸ Tamil Guardian, [Tamil nationalist parties surge in local polls as NPP loses votes ...](#), 7 May 2025

³⁹ The Diplomat, [NPP Sweeps Sri Lanka's Local Elections, But Vote Share Plummetts](#), 9 May 2025

⁴⁰ The Sunday Times, [NPP hitches its wagon to North star](#), 8 December 2024

⁴¹ BBC News, [In a political paradigm shift, Sri Lanka leans to the left](#), 22 September 2024

⁴² HRW, [World Report 2025: Sri Lanka](#), 16 January 2025

⁴³ NPP, [Who we are](#), no date

⁴⁴ Peoples Dispatch, [Left-wing alliance wins two-thirds majority in the Sri ...](#), 15 November 2024

⁴⁵ NPP, [Who we are](#), no date

⁴⁶ Sri Lanka Brief, [Three New Economic Strategies needed: The Full Speech ...](#), 22 November 2024

⁴⁷ ICG, [CrisisWatch Database: Sri Lanka](#) (November 2024), November 2024

⁴⁸ Tamil Guardian, [What does Sri Lanka's NPP-majority government mean for ...](#), 15 November 2024

8.4.5 According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), in their World Report 2025, covering 2024 events, despite President Dissanayake's pledges to '... address some longstanding human rights concerns including by fighting corruption and abolishing the abusive Prevention of Terrorism Act', like previous presidents, he '... has not supported accountability for large-scale violations that occurred during Sri Lanka's 1983-2009 civil war between the government and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).'⁴⁹

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8.5 Tamil political parties

8.5.1 Several Tamil parties are represented in parliament^{50 51}. There are no Tamils in the Cabinet⁵². The Tamil National Alliance (TNA), formerly the main Tamil political grouping, split in 2023^{53 54}. A 5-party alliance, called the Democratic Tamil National Alliance (DTNA), was formed between the Tamil Elam Liberation Organisation (TELO), the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), the Democratic Crusaders Party (DCP) and the Tamil National Party (TNP)^{55 56}. The Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), which had been the main constituent party of the TNA, contested elections on its own and won 8 seats in the November 2024 election, becoming the third largest party in parliament^{57 58}. The DTNA won one seat⁵⁹. The All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) also won one seat⁶⁰.

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9. Treatment of Tamils

9.1 General treatment of Tamils

9.1.1 The Freedom House Freedom in the World 2024 report, covering events in 2023, noted that 'Tamils report systematic discrimination in areas including government employment, university education, and access to justice.'⁶¹

9.1.2 The May 2024 DFAT report stated that:

'In-country Tamil sources told DFAT that Tamils continued to face human rights challenges, although the level of state harassment and mistreatment had decreased significantly since 2015 ...

'Some Tamils report discrimination in government employment, although in-country sources attributed this to linguistic barriers (i.e. where Tamils did not speak Sinhala or English) rather than official policy. Despite government incentives, the number of Tamil-speaking police officers and military personnel, including in the north-east, remains small. While Tamils can

⁴⁹ HRW, [World Report 2025: Sri Lanka](#), 16 January 2025

⁵⁰ Election Commission of Sri Lanka, [Parliamentary Election – 2024/11/14 ...](#), 15 November 2024

⁵¹ Parliament of Sri Lanka, [Political Parties Tenth Parliament of the DSR of Sri Lanka](#), no date

⁵² Economy Next, [Sri Lanka leader appoints fresh faces into new cabinet sans ...](#), 18 November 2024

⁵³ Sunday Times (Sri Lanka), [TNA splits, new alliance emerges for local polls](#), 15 January 2023

⁵⁴ The Commonwealth, [Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group ...](#) (page 10), December 2024

⁵⁵ Sunday Times (Sri Lanka), [TNA splits, new alliance emerges for local polls](#), 15 January 2023

⁵⁶ The Commonwealth, [Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group ...](#) (page 10), December 2024

⁵⁷ Sunday Times (Sri Lanka), [TNA splits, new alliance emerges for local polls](#), 15 January 2023

⁵⁸ Election Commission of Sri Lanka, [Parliamentary Election – 2024/11/14 ...](#), 15 November 2024

⁵⁹ Election Commission of Sri Lanka, [Parliamentary Election – 2024/11/14 ...](#), 15 November 2024

⁶⁰ Election Commission of Sri Lanka, [Parliamentary Election – 2024/11/14 ...](#), 15 November 2024

⁶¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024](#) (F4), 2024

access the legal system and other forms of state protection without discrimination, language can be a barrier in practice.’⁶²

9.1.3 The Netherlands MoFA report, citing various sources, noted that ‘... during the reporting period [October 2014 to April 2024], Tamils in Sri Lanka were not the subject of negative attention from the Sri Lankan authorities because of their ethnicity.’⁶³ The Netherlands MoFA noted a general improvement in the situation of Tamils since their last report (October 2014) and cited the main reasons for this were, according to many (confidential) sources:

- ‘the presidency of Maithripala Sirisena (2015-2019), who introduced a more conciliatory stance towards the Tamil community
- ‘the 2019 Easter attacks, which shifted the attention of investigative and security forces towards the Muslim community ...
- ‘the 2022 Aragalaya protests, which further shifted the attention of the authorities to critical activists.’⁶⁴

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9.2 Monitoring of Tamils

9.2.1 The Netherlands MoFA report noted that, according to confidential sources consulted in December 2023 and February 2024:

‘During the reporting period [October 2014 to April 2024], the Sri Lankan authorities monitored citizens who expressed views critical to them or who were seen as a threat to national security for other reasons. This applied not only to certain groups of Tamils but, since 2019 (and even to a greater extent than Tamils), to Muslim activists, critical journalists, certain NGOs, human rights activists, student activists and others across Sri Lanka who were visibly critical of the authorities ...’⁶⁵

9.2.2 The same report noted that the:

‘... large military presence in northern and eastern Sri Lanka ... contributed greatly to the enduring sense among the Tamil population that the authorities distrusted them and were keeping an eye on them. As a result, they felt limited in their ability to express themselves publicly on issues that were sensitive for the authorities, such as the commemoration of Tamil victims of the civil war, the fate of Tamils who disappeared during the civil war, and calls for accountability for crimes committed during the civil war.’⁶⁶

9.2.3 See also [Monitoring of former LTTE members and their relatives](#) and [Commemoration events](#).

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9.3 Land rights

9.3.1 The 2023 USSD HR Report noted regarding property seizure and restitution:

‘The military seized significant amounts of land during the 1983-2009 civil war to create security buffer zones around military bases and other high-

⁶² DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraphs 3.7, 3.8), 2 May 2024

⁶³ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 40), June 2024

⁶⁴ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 40), June 2024

⁶⁵ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 48), June 2024

⁶⁶ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 42), June 2024

value targets, known as high security zones (HSZs). During and immediately following the war, government officials frequently posted acquisition notices for HSZ lands that were inaccessible to property owners, many of whom initiated court cases, including fundamental right cases before the Supreme Court, to challenge these acquisitions. Throughout the year, lawsuits, including a 2016 Supreme Court fundamental right case and numerous writ applications filed with courts, remained stalled. Although HSZs had no legal framework following the lapse of emergency regulations in 2011, they still existed and remained off limits to civilians.

‘With the amount of seized and inaccessible land remaining in dispute, many of those affected by the HSZs complained that the pace at which the government demilitarized land was too slow, that the military held lands it viewed as economically valuable for military benefit, and that military possession of land denied livelihood to the local population. According to the acquisition notices, while most of the land acquired was for use as army camps and bases, among the purposes listed on certain notices were the establishment of a hotel, a factory, and a farm. Some Hindu and Muslim groups reported they had difficulty officially claiming land they had long inhabited if Buddhist monks placed a statue of Buddha or a bodhi tree on their property, and they described these acts as part of a “colonialization” plan to dilute the concentration of minorities in the north.

‘According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government returned 90 to 92 percent of the land occupied by security forces and police in 2009; the government stated this comprised 817 acres of state and 22,101 acres of private land. Security forces and police continued to occupy 3,754 acres of land, including 862 state and 2,892 acres of private land, the ministry reported.’⁶⁷

9.3.2 The 2024 DFAT report stated that:

‘Land grabs are a source of tension between the Tamil community and the state. In-country sources told DFAT that military land acquisitions in the north-east continued, but were now increasingly led by non-military entities like the archaeological, forestry and wildlife conservation departments. In-country sources identified the Department of Archaeology as particularly active in this regard – they reported that it frequently seized Tamil lands, including sacred Hindu sites, often in conjunction with Buddhist clergy and/or the military, ostensibly for preservation purposes. In some instances, Buddhist statues and structures have been constructed on seized lands. Tamils consider this a deliberate effort to ‘Buddhicise’ traditionally Tamil and Hindu parts of the country.’⁶⁸

9.3.3 On 1 February 2025 the Sri Lankan national daily business paper, Daily FT, reported on President Dissanayake’s visit to Jaffna, noting that he ‘... emphasised that the issue of land disputes in the Northern Province is under review and that steps are being taken to expedite the process of returning land to its rightful owners. The President highlighted that while the Government has the authority to acquire land anywhere in the country for development projects or security purposes, it is imperative that alternative

⁶⁷ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 1G), 22 April 2024

⁶⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.9), 2 May 2024

land is provided to those affected.⁶⁹

- 9.3.4 On 3 May 2025, the Tamil Guardian cited a [Gazette notification](#) published on 28 March 2025, which gave notice under Section 4 of the Land Settlement Ordinance to acquire land in several villages in the districts of Mullativu, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, and Mannar in Northern Province^{70 71}. The land included paddy fields, coconut plantations, sand dunes, water bodies, and forested areas, and would become property of the State if no claims were made within 3 months of the Gazette publication date^{72 73}. General Secretary of ITAK criticised the short deadline, stating that many landowners lived abroad⁷⁴.

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9.4 Tamil women and female-headed households

- 9.4.1 Thousands of women lost their husbands and other male family members during the war due to death or disappearances, leaving a high number of female-headed households, especially in the north-east⁷⁵.
- 9.4.2 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that ‘Women from the north, mostly from minority communities, reported military officials at security checkpoints targeted women for unnecessary body searches. Women from the north and east, mostly from minority communities, also reported male security officers often questioned women in their homes without family members present.’⁷⁶
- 9.4.3 The May 2024 DFAT report noted that, according to ‘in-country sources ... sexual harassment of women by military personnel was known to occur in the north in the immediate post-war period, but was now rare.’⁷⁷ The same report added:
- ‘According to in-country Tamil sources, female former LTTE combatants had low status within the Tamil community. Many work on military-run farms as part of the Civil Security Department (also known as the Civil Defence Force, an auxiliary force administered by the Ministry of Defence). In-country Tamil sources told DFAT female former LTTE combatants who worked on military-run farms were relatively well paid, and there was an “unspoken agreement” that these women also worked as informants for the military, feeding community suspicion. Community perceptions that female former LTTE combatants were subjected to sexual violence during the war can hinder their ability to marry.’⁷⁸
- 9.4.4 On 12 March 2024, the Tamil Guardian reported on a rally organised by the North-East Women’s Collective, where ‘Hundreds of women from all eight districts across the Tamil homeland ... took to the streets in Kilinochchi ..., demanding an end [to] all forms of oppression, harassment, and militarisation across the North-East, including eliminating violence against

⁶⁹ Daily FT, [People’s land should rightfully belong to them: President](#), 1 February 2025

⁷⁰ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lankan government moves to seize Tamil lands in Mullivaikkal](#), 3 May 2025

⁷¹ Dept of Government Printing, [Gazette 2,430 Part III – Lands](#), 28 March 2025

⁷² Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lankan government moves to seize Tamil lands in Mullivaikkal](#), 3 May 2025

⁷³ Dept of Government Printing, [Gazette 2,430 Part III – Lands](#), 28 March 2025

⁷⁴ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lankan government moves to seize Tamil lands in Mullivaikkal](#), 3 May 2025

⁷⁵ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraphs 3.148, 3.153), 2 May 2024

⁷⁶ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

⁷⁷ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.148), 2 May 2024

⁷⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.151), 2 May 2024

women.⁷⁹ The North-East Women's Collective said 'We Tamil women suffer not only because of the government's racist oppression but also from the age-old patriarchal oppression and denial of rights in the North-East Tamil society,' and highlighted '... an increase in domestic abuse, sexual assault, cybercrimes, and sexual harassment of girls in schools and in workplaces ...'⁸⁰

9.4.5 The May 2024 DFAT report referred to support services for women, noting: 'Support services are available for women in the north-east. Like elsewhere in the country, Divisional Secretariats have Women's and Children's Units, which provide counselling and other support services to victims of GBV [gender-based violence] (at the time of publication, there were 35 units operating in the north-east). Similarly, the Children and Women Abuse Bureau of the Sri Lanka Police has a presence in Tamil-majority areas. Batticaloa Teaching Hospital (the main public hospital in Batticaloa) has a GBV care centre. NGOs are also active, including in operating shelters. In-country sources told DFAT there were currently three shelters in the Northern Province (Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi), with plans to establish a fourth (in Mannar). There is one women's shelter in Batticaloa (managed by Women In Need). In-country sources told DFAT that support services for women in the Eastern Province compared favourably to, and in some cases were superior to, services available in Colombo.'⁸¹

9.4.6 According to the same report: 'Language is a barrier to state protection for Tamil-speaking women in the north-east who experience GBV – most police officers are Sinhalese and do not speak Tamil. According to in-country sources, a dearth of female officers at police stations, fears regarding community perception and social stigma (should they report their husbands) can deter women from going to the police. In-country sources told DFAT that, where incidents were reported, women were sometimes encouraged by the police to return home and resolve the matter with their husband, running the risk of re-victimisation.'⁸²

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9.5 Tamil organisations

9.5.1 Citing numerous confidential sources, the Netherlands MoFA report noted: 'A multitude of local and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were active in Sri Lanka during the reporting period, working for the Tamil people of the north and east of the country. These organisations worked in a variety of areas, including human rights, legal aid, the search for persons who disappeared during the civil war, the reintegration of prisoners and ex-combatants of the LTTE, psychosocial support for ex-combatants, the reintegration of returned migrants and asylum seekers, women's rights, children's rights, livelihood aid, social cohesion, and training and awareness raising in various areas such as drug abuse and sexual and gender-based violence.'⁸³

⁷⁹ Tamil Guardian, [Women in North-East live in fear'- Women's Collective decry ...](#), 12 March 2024

⁸⁰ Tamil Guardian, [Women in North-East live in fear'- Women's Collective decry ...](#), 12 March 2024

⁸¹ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.149), 2 May 2024

⁸² DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.150), 2 May 2024

⁸³ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 50), June 2024

10. Treatment of Tamils with perceived links to separatist groups

10.1 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

10.1.1 The [LTTE](#) (Tamil Tigers) was founded in 1976 and, between 1983 and 2009, fought a 26 year war with the Sri Lanka government as it sought to establish an independent state (Tamil Eelam) in the north and east of the country. The war ended in May 2009^{84 85}. In January 2009, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) proscribed the LTTE⁸⁶, and it remained a designated group⁸⁷.

10.1.2 The May 2024 DFAT report noted that the LTTE:

‘... no longer exists as an organised entity and is not known to have carried out any attacks since the end of the war in 2009. While some sympathy for the LTTE remains, in-country Tamil sources told DFAT the Tamil community had abandoned militancy and was fully committed to the political process. It is illegal to glorify the LTTE or commemorate the birthday of LTTE leader Prabhakaran (26 November) in Sri Lanka. The public display of LTTE symbols, including the LTTE flag and images of Prabhakaran, is likewise prohibited. Those that defy these bans (including through online channels) run the risk of arrest and detention for suspected terrorism offences.’⁸⁸

10.1.3 There was no indication that the LTTE was active in Sri Lanka since at least 2020, as notified in Extraordinary Gazettes dated 2022, 2023, 2024, and most recently in February 2025, all of which noted: ‘Despite the military defeat of the LTTE in Sri Lanka its front organizations and structures continues to remain active overseas promoting LTTE ideology of creating a mono ethnic separate state of Tamil Eelam through terrorist means. Time to time observed several resurgence attempts [sic] within the country with assistance from pro LTTE groups operating overseas (Year 2012-2020).’^{89 90 91 92}

10.1.4 See also [Diaspora groups proscribed by Sri Lanka](#).

10.2 Monitoring of former LTTE members and their relatives

10.2.1 Citing sources dated between 2021 and 2024, the Netherlands MoFA report noted that ‘At the end of the reporting period, former members of the LTTE experienced no formal obstacles to participation in public life. Although some former members were still serving prison sentences, others were living normal lives in public and some were politically active.’⁹³

10.2.2 However, the same report noted that some former LTTE members could face problems in their daily lives, mainly because of monitoring by the

⁸⁴ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 2.2), 2 May 2024

⁸⁵ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 50), June 2024

⁸⁶ GoSL, [Sri Lanka: Govt bans LTTE](#), 8 January 2009

⁸⁷ Dept of Government Printing, [Extra-Gazette 2424/51, Ministry of Defence ...](#), 20 February 2025

⁸⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.75), 2 May 2024

⁸⁹ Dept of Government Printing, [Extra-Gazette 2291/02, Ministry of Defence ...](#), 1 August 2022

⁹⁰ Dept of Government Printing, [Extra-Gazette 2335/16, Ministry of Defence ...](#), 8 June 2023

⁹¹ Dept of Government Printing, [Extra-Gazette 2387/02, Ministry of Defence ...](#), 3 June 2024

⁹² Dept of Government Printing, [Extra-Gazette 2424/51, Ministry of Defence ...](#), 20 February 2025

⁹³ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 44), June 2024

authorities, though the extent to which this occurred was unclear⁹⁴. The Netherlands MoFA report cited examples of sources that provided differing reports on the scale of monitoring in recent years, including information from the [Home Office Fact-finding mission to Sri Lanka](#) undertaken in 2019:

‘... the UK Home Office wrote ... that [according to an NGO⁹⁵] rehabilitated LTTE members had to “routinely” report to the army. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights spoke of the “intensive surveillance” of former members in 2022. The US State Department wrote in 2023 that Tamils reported that authorities “regularly” monitored former members. In contrast, Australia’s DFAT reported in 2024 that former members of the LTTE were “sometimes” monitored and interrogated. Other sources consulted in 2024 spoke of “intensive surveillance” or “regular visits” by the police or army. A further interpretation of terms like “intensive” or “regular” in this context cannot be provided. At the end of the reporting period, there was no evidence that security forces had used violence against former LTTE members while they were monitoring them. It is not possible to specify which former members were most at risk of being monitored. According to sources consulted, not all former members were monitored, and the choice of who was and was not intensively monitored was sometimes arbitrary. The authorities appeared to mainly monitor former members who were politically active or active for social causes, for example in the struggle for greater autonomy for the north and east, or in the search for people who disappeared during the civil war. This did not depend on whether the former members had gone through the rehabilitation process. One source reported that monitored former members of the LTTE were able to avoid monitoring by bribing the authorities.’⁹⁶

10.2.3 The May 2024 DFAT report provided further detail about the extent of monitoring, noting that:

‘According to in-country sources, former LTTE members continued to be monitored, usually by military intelligence and/or undercover police officers. Monitoring can include visits, telephone calls and summons to attend a police station for questioning; it reportedly does not include threats or physical violence. In-country sources reported that monitoring was relatively more subtle and indirect than in the past ...

‘While in-country sources reported they contested the extent of monitoring of former LTTE members (some reported it was extensive, others that it was low-level and had decreased over time), they agreed that it continued to occur. In-country sources told DFAT the level of monitoring could ebb and flow, depending on the government of the day and the individual commander in charge. In-country sources said that only a small proportion of former LTTE members would continue to be monitored, including those recently released from prison (having been detained under the PTA [Prevention of Terrorism Act]). While the level and frequency of monitoring varies, reports by former LTTE members to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) about monitoring and harassment have decreased significantly

⁹⁴ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 44), June 2024

⁹⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a Home Office FFM to Sri Lanka](#) (page 50), 20 January 2020

⁹⁶ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 44, 45), June 2024

over time.⁹⁷

10.2.4 Referring to the monitoring of ‘specific groups of Tamils’, the Netherlands MoFA report cited numerous sources dated between 2021 and 2024, noting:

‘Not all Tamils in Sri Lanka were monitored during the reporting period, but the authorities did monitor certain groups of Tamils. Particularly in the north and east of the country, this most often concerned former members of the LTTE, persons who campaigned to draw attention to the fate of Tamils who disappeared during the civil war ..., journalists, human rights activists and NGO staff ... Monitoring by the authorities consisted mainly of home visits by security forces, calls to come to the police station or military camp for questioning, phone calls from officials and home visits to family members or acquaintances. Sources indicate that this monitoring was more intense in the past, particularly before 2015, than during most of the current reporting period. Nevertheless, based on the information from the sources consulted, it appears that monitoring was still taking place at the end of the reporting period.

‘There was also (anecdotal) evidence that in some cases the authorities monitored persons living in Sri Lanka who were family members of persons involved in Tamil organisations abroad. Most of these sources indicated that, as far as was known, this only happened on a small scale. Exact figures are not known.’⁹⁸ (see also [Tamil diaspora](#)).

10.2.5 A query response on Sri Lanka, by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), on the situation and treatment of returnees (2022 to August 2024), cited correspondence with a human rights lawyer in July 2024, who stated that ‘... the security agencies carry out “surveill[ance] and harass journalists, former combatants, persons released after being detained under the PTA, families of the disappeared and human rights activists”.’⁹⁹

10.2.6 A report presented to the Human Rights Council (HRC) by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, covering the period from October 2022 to July 2024, dated 27 August 2024, noted that:

‘During the reporting period, OHCHR received six reports of intimidation, surveillance and reprisals against family members of disappeared persons engaging with the United Nations or international actors, including members of the diplomatic community. Women victims in particular reported receiving late-night calls from individuals claiming to be Criminal Investigation Department or Terrorist Investigation Division personnel, who questioned them about their participation in protests and visits to Colombo or Geneva, including the funding they had received and the individuals they had met.’¹⁰⁰

See also [Freedom of speech and expression](#) for information on the treatment of journalists, human rights activists, and social media monitoring.

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10.3 Commemoration events

⁹⁷ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraphs 3.86, 3.87), 2 May 2024

⁹⁸ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 48, 49), June 2024

⁹⁹ IRB, [Sri Lanka: Situation and treatment by authorities of returnees ...](#), 14 August 2024

¹⁰⁰ HRC, [Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 22), 27 August 2024

10.3.1 Regarding relatives of former LTTE members involved in commemorations, the Netherlands MoFA report stated:

‘Based on the information from the sources, it appears that family members of former LTTE members were particularly targeted by the Sri Lankan authorities during the reporting period [October 2014 to April 2024] if they actively campaigned for the commemoration of Tamil victims of the civil war, or the fate of persons who disappeared during the war. The authorities remained concerned that national and international attention would be drawn to the view that insufficient investigations had been carried out into possible war crimes committed during the civil war or the fate of the missing.

‘During the reporting period, these family members could face monitoring, interrogation, harassment and unannounced visits from intelligence services and police officers, especially if they were actively involved in protests or commemorations. This was frequently reported. Most sources consulted in February 2024 also confirmed that persons who were visibly active in this area were at risk of monitoring and harassment by the authorities. Based on the information from the sources, it appears that these people formed one of the most monitored groups. The degree of affiliation of former members with the LTTE played a less important role here; it was the activities of family members that formed a risk. Based on the sources, it appears that, particularly in the second half of the reporting period, this was limited to monitoring, visits and questioning. Sources used terms such as “frequent” or “regular” visits, or “intensive surveillance”.¹⁰¹

10.3.2 The same report added that:

‘Particularly around symbolic commemorative days, such as Independence Day (4 February), Maaveerar Naal (‘Heroes’ Day’, 27 November) and Prabhakaran’s birth anniversary (26 November), the security forces stepped up harassment and monitoring of groups who campaigned for commemorations and the fate of Tamils who disappeared during the war. The security forces were often visibly present in large numbers at protests organised in northern and eastern Sri Lanka during the reporting period. Sometimes initiators of or participants in protests were arrested and detained, usually for short periods of time. However, it is not known whether family members of former LTTE members were among those arrested.¹⁰²

10.3.3 In November 2023, the authorities detained 9 ethnic Tamils under the PTA for commemorating those who died in the 1983-2009 civil war. According to HRW, they were arrested between 25 and 27 November 2023 in Batticaloa, Eastern Province, and decorations and loudspeakers used in the vigil were confiscated. HRW said that since the end of the civil war ‘successive administrations have prevented Tamils from publicly memorialising the war dead.’¹⁰³ (see also [Arbitrary arrests, and treatment in detention](#)).

10.3.4 The August 2024 OHCHR report to the HRC noted that:

‘The Government informed OHCHR that there were no restrictions on family members memorializing their loved ones, provided that they did not glorify terrorism. It noted that memorialization was recognized as a collective

¹⁰¹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 46), June 2024

¹⁰² Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 46, 47), June 2024

¹⁰³ HRW, [Sri Lanka: Tamils Detained for Commemorating War Dead](#), 6 December 2023

remedy in the Office for Reparations Act and that many commemorations had been held in 2024, throughout the country. However, according to information received by OHCHR, several commemoration events were disrupted, in particular in Eastern Province. For instance, in May 2024, four people, including three women, were arbitrarily arrested and detained in Trincomalee for serving kanji, a rice porridge, at a commemoration event, purportedly on public health grounds. The authorities secured court orders to prevent some relatives of forcibly disappeared individuals and others from holding commemorations.¹⁰⁴

- 10.3.5 The ICG noted that in November 2024, in what was likely to be the ‘largest commemorations for Tamil Tiger fighters since end of civil war in 2009, families and activists ... gathered across [the] island’s north and east with minimal police and military interference in contrast to previous years ...’¹⁰⁵
- 10.3.6 The Tamil Guardian reported on 4 December 2024 that, in a statement to parliament, Public Security Minister, Ananda Wijepala, said that during the previous week ‘... more than 244 Maaveerar Naal commemoration events took place across the North-East ...’, adding that ‘... [of those], 10 displayed the Tamil Eelam flag or displayed images related to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).’¹⁰⁶ The Tamil Guardian reported that the Minister ‘... acknowledged the right of people to hold ceremonies to honour their deceased relatives, [but] said that displaying LTTE symbols remains illegal.’ The same report said although there is no formal ban on the Tamil Eelam flag, ‘... it is seen as an LTTE symbol by the Sri Lankan state.’¹⁰⁷
- 10.3.7 Whilst not a commemoration event, the Tamil Guardian reported that Tamils in the North-East marked Sri Lanka’s 77th Independence Day on 4 February 2025 as ‘Black Day.’ Large protests were held across the region. Thousands of people in Batticaloa, Jaffna and Kilinochchi marched carrying black flags and banners calling for justice and the right to self-determination. The events appeared to pass without incident^{108 109}.
- 10.3.8 The Tamil Guardian published a selection of images from events that took place across the north and east on 18 May 2025 as thousands of Tamils gathered to commemorate 16 years since ‘tens of thousands’ of Tamils were killed at Mullivaikkal in the final stages of the conflict, known by the community as ‘Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day.’¹¹⁰ The events appeared to pass without incident^{111 112}.

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10.4 Arbitrary arrests, and treatment in detention

- 10.4.1 In its submission to the UN Human Rights Committee in January 2023, Amnesty International stated that the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)

¹⁰⁴ HRC, [Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 38), 27 August 2024

¹⁰⁵ ICG, [CrisisWatch Database: Sri Lanka](#) (December 2024), December 2024

¹⁰⁶ Tamil Guardian, [More than 244 Maaveerar Naal commemoration events ...](#), 4 December 2024

¹⁰⁷ Tamil Guardian, [More than 244 Maaveerar Naal commemoration events ...](#), 4 December 2024

¹⁰⁸ Tamil Guardian, [Tamils mark 'Black Day' across Eelam as Sri Lanka celebrate ...](#), 4 February 2025

¹⁰⁹ Tamil Guardian, [Jaffna University students replace Sri Lanka's flag with Black ...](#), 4 February 2025

¹¹⁰ Tamil Guardian, [Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day 2025 commemorated in Eelam](#), 18 May 2025

¹¹¹ Tamil Guardian, [Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day 2025 commemorated in Eelam](#), 18 May 2025

¹¹² Al Jazeera, ['Need answers': Will Sri Lanka's Tamils find war closure under ...](#), 24 May 2025

‘permitt[ed] arbitrary arrests and prolonged detention.’¹¹³

10.4.2 The May 2024 DFAT report noted that the PTA was introduced in 1979 as a temporary measure ‘in response to separatist insurgencies.’ The law was made permanent in 1982¹¹⁴. The same report noted that:

‘The PTA, which is not part of regular criminal law, contains a broad a definition of terrorism; permits arrest for unspecified “unlawful activities”; allows suspects to be held in initial detention for 72 hours (i.e. before they are produced before a magistrate) and, should there be sufficient evidence that an offence has been committed, detained without charge for up to 12 months (previously 18 months); and recognises confessions as legally admissible, including confessions obtained without the presence of a lawyer. The PTA has been routinely used to enable the prolonged detention, often without charge, of those assessed to pose a threat to Sri Lanka’s security.’¹¹⁵

10.4.3 The 2023 USSD HR Report noted that the PTA:

‘... allowed courts to admit as evidence any statements made by the accused at any time and provided no exception for confessions extracted by torture. In 2022, parliament amended the PTA to include judicial oversight to safeguard against torture but did not remove the clause allowing for the use of confessions made to police while in police custody. Human rights and civil society organizations alleged that torture and excessive use of force by police, particularly to extract confessions, remained endemic.’¹¹⁶ The USSD did not provide any further information on the human rights and civil society organisations which provided this information to enable assessment of how or when this information was obtained, nor the profile of people affected.

10.4.4 The 2023 USSD HR Report noted that ‘During the year, civil society organizations reported some Tamils from the north alleged police illegally detained and tortured them and questioned them regarding connections to the LTTE or participation in protests.’¹¹⁷ According to the same report, 9 Tamils were arrested under the PTA ‘... for alleged use of illegal symbols or images glorifying the LTTE during participation in LTTE Great Heroes Day, an annual event to commemorate fallen LTTE fighters.’¹¹⁸ (see also [Commemoration events](#))

10.4.5 The Netherlands MoFA report stated that:

‘Even in recent years, arrests in Sri Lanka of persons for “attempts to revive the LTTE” were sometimes reported. Based on information obtained from sources [in December 2023 and February 2024], it appears that this happened only on a small scale. Most sources consulted on the subject indicated that the arrests that did occur should not be construed as actual fear by the authorities of a resurgence of the LTTE in Sri Lanka. Rather, they saw the arrests as either an overreaction to actions characterised by the authorities as pro-LTTE – such as commemorating Tamil victims of the civil war or the anniversary of the birth or death of Prabakharan – or an attempt by the authorities to justify their extensive military presence in the north and

¹¹³ Amnesty International, [Submission to the UN Human Rights ...](#) (page 7), 31 January 2023

¹¹⁴ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 4.38), 2 May 2024

¹¹⁵ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 4.38), 2 May 2024

¹¹⁶ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 1C), 22 April 2024

¹¹⁷ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 1D), 22 April 2024

¹¹⁸ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 1D), 22 April 2024

east of the country, by emphasising that the “enemy” LTTE was still to be feared.’¹¹⁹

10.4.6 The Netherlands MoFA report noted that, according to sources, ‘The composition of the group of PTA detainees changed during the reporting period. During the previous reporting period (July 2013-September 2014), it was still mainly Tamils who were at risk of arrest under the PTA. In the current period, especially after the 2019 Easter attacks, the majority of persons arrested and detained under the PTA were Muslims.’¹²⁰ The same report added ‘On the ethnicity of the PTA prisoners still detained in February 2024, another source said that these included 13 Tamils in pre-trial detention and 8 Tamils with convictions. Official figures on numbers of Tamils arrested under the PTA are not known.’¹²¹

10.4.7 The August 2024 OHCHR report to the HRC noted that:

‘Despite promises of a de facto moratorium on the application of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the authorities have continued to use it to arrest and detain people, including Tamils commemorating their relatives who died in the civil war. The Government reported that, in 2023 and 2024, four persons had been arrested under the Act and five had received detention orders. The Government indicated that nine persons detained under the Act had been released between January 2023 and May 2024 and that bail had been granted to several suspects. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, however, reported that the authorities had notified it of 46 cases of arrest and detention under the Act between January 2023 and April 2024. OHCHR received reports that, in at least 12 cases, the Act had been used to detain people – primarily those participating or involved in the organization of memorialization activities – for a short period and without adequate acknowledgment of their deprivation of liberty and that they had then been released on bail or discharged weeks or months later.’¹²² See also [Commemoration events](#)

10.4.8 The same report stated that:

‘OHCHR examined recent allegations of abduction, arbitrary detention, torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence perpetrated against individuals of Tamil ethnicity by the Sri Lankan security forces, mainly in the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya. These date from as recently as January 2024. OHCHR interviewed eight alleged victims. A clear pattern emerged: Tamils, primarily men who had been involved in protests over disappearances, land/environmental rights or the commemoration of war victims and were believed to have previously been involved or linked with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), were monitored or photographed and were subsequently arrested by people who verbally identified themselves as Criminal Investigation Department or Terrorist Investigation Division personnel. In a few cases, the families of the victims filed complaints with the police and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, copies of which were seen by OHCHR, reporting that the victims had

¹¹⁹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 26), June 2024

¹²⁰ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 30), June 2024

¹²¹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 31), June 2024

¹²² HRC, [Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 15), 27 August 2024

gone missing.¹²³

- 10.4.9 The OHCHR report to the HRC noted how victims described being abducted at night by security forces, blindfolded, and detained at unknown locations, where they endured days of interrogation, torture, and sexual abuse to force confessions about LTTE links. Many signed statements they could not read or blank papers under duress. Most were released after bribes were paid and later fled Sri Lanka. OHCHR found their accounts credible, detailed, and consistent. The Sri Lankan Government denied the allegations' specifics but affirmed its commitment to investigating torture, citing existing legal safeguards and the roles of the judiciary and national institutions¹²⁴.
- 10.4.10 According to confidential sources consulted in early 2024, cited in the Netherlands MoFA report, instances of assault and torture of detainees, in particular to extract confessions, '... were less prevalent in the final years of the reporting period than in the previous years.'¹²⁵
- 10.4.11 The Netherlands MoFA report added that:
- 'Although some sources stated that Tamils and other minorities were more at risk than Sinhalese of being mistreated or tortured, most sources consulted stressed that the risk was not limited to a particular region or ethnic group; it was a nationwide phenomenon that could affect members of all communities.
- 'Nor does the data published by the HRCSL suggest that torture was more common among Tamils than other population groups. Of the torture complaints recorded by the commission in the five years between 2018 and 2022 [2,165¹²⁶], 12.3% were filed in the Northern and Eastern provinces, and 87.7% in the remaining provinces of Sri Lanka.'¹²⁷
- 10.4.12 Although the Northern and Eastern provinces were areas with large Tamil populations, CPIT noted that the HRCSL data did not record the ethnicity of complainants, only the areas from which the complaints were made.
- 10.4.13 The PTA remained in force despite the NPP government's promises to repeal it^{128 129 130}. For arrests under the PTA for online posts, see [Social media monitoring](#).
- 10.4.14 According to sources consulted in 2024, the Netherlands MoFA report noted that 'Arrests and detentions of family members of former LTTE members reportedly occurred infrequently if at all.'¹³¹

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10.5 Reconciliation

- 10.5.1 Since the war ended in 2009, successive Sri Lankan governments have enacted various reconciliation measures¹³², including the [Office on Missing](#)

¹²³ HRC, [Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 27), 27 August 2024

¹²⁴ HRC, [Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka](#) (paragraphs 28 to 32), 27 August 2024

¹²⁵ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 59), June 2024

¹²⁶ HRCSL, [Statistics of Complaints](#), 2018 to 2022

¹²⁷ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 60), June 2024

¹²⁸ Sri Lanka Brief, [Concerns raised over continued use of PTA by NPP government](#), 6 April 2025

¹²⁹ The Morning, [NPP and the PTA](#), 4 May 2025

¹³⁰ Tamil Guardian, [DTNA accuses NPP of using PTA to suppress Tamil dissent](#), 23 April 2025

¹³¹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 46), June 2024

¹³² CPA, [Does Sri Lanka Need a Truth and Reconciliation ...](#) (pages 5, 26 to 43), March 2024

[Persons \(OMP\)](#), the [Office for Reparations \(OR\)](#), and the [Office for National Unity and Reconciliation \(ONUR\)](#).

- 10.5.2 In 2023, President Ranil Wickremesinghe’s administration proposed a National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, inspired by South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to include 21 diverse members^{133 134}. However, human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch criticised the plan, citing a lack of trust, consultation, and safety for victims¹³⁵. The International Crisis Group (ICG) also doubted the Commission’s potential for success¹³⁶. Despite these concerns, Wickremesinghe defended the initiative in October 2023, stating that discussions were ongoing, and a bill would be introduced by year’s end¹³⁷. A UN report in September 2023 called for deeper reforms and accountability¹³⁸, which Sri Lanka’s UN representative rejected, affirming the government’s commitment to domestic mechanisms and ongoing consultations^{139 140}.
- 10.5.3 The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), an NGO of international judges and lawyers promoting human rights and the rule of law, reported on 12 January 2024 on the proposed bill to establish a Commission for Truth, Unity and Reconciliation, which was officially announced on 1 January 2024¹⁴¹. The ICJ expressed their concern that ‘the lack of consultation with victim communities and the continued neglect of their demands deprive the Bill of legitimacy.’¹⁴² HRW noted the bill ‘ignores the needs of victims, and falls far short of meeting Sri Lanka’s international legal obligations ...’¹⁴³
- 10.5.4 The August 2024 OHCHR report to the HRC noted that ‘To date, the Government [of Sri Lanka] has rarely even acknowledged the serious violations that occurred during the conflict or provided victims with adequate redress. Numerous commissions of inquiry appointed by successive Governments, often in response to international pressure, have failed credibly to establish truth and advance accountability and reconciliation.’¹⁴⁴
- 10.5.5 In a statement to the 58th Regular Session of the UNHRC on 25 February 2025, Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to national unity and reconciliation. Key initiatives included the proposed declaration of a “Sri Lanka Day,” strengthening domestic institutions like the OMP, OR, and ONUR, and developing a truth and reconciliation framework with broad stakeholder input. The government aimed to ensure these mechanisms were credible and constitutionally reliable. Recent confidence-building measures included reopening roads in the Northern Province, inviting Tamil-speaking youth to join the police, and allocating funds to upgrade libraries, including the historic Jaffna library. The

¹³³ The Sunday Times, [Government gives priority to national unity and reconciliation](#), 9 April 2023

¹³⁴ ICG, [Sri Lanka Needs Truth, but Not \(Yet\) a Truth Commission](#), 7 September 2023

¹³⁵ HRW, [Joint Statement: Sri Lanka’s Flawed Plans for a ‘Truth Commission’](#), 4 September 2023

¹³⁶ ICG, [Sri Lanka Needs Truth, but Not \(Yet\) a Truth Commission](#), 7 September 2023

¹³⁷ Ministry of Mass Media, [President Ranil Wickremesinghe Discusses Key ...](#), 3 October 2023

¹³⁸ HRC, [Accountability central to Sri Lanka’s future - UN Human Rights report](#), 6 September 2023

¹³⁹ MFA, [GoSL Statement made by H.E. Himalee Arunatilaka, the Permanent ...](#), 11 September 2023

¹⁴⁰ MFA, [58th Session of the Human Rights Council: Statement by PR/Geneva ...](#), 3 March 2025

¹⁴¹ ICJ, [New Bill to establish “Commission for Truth, Unity and Reconciliation” ...](#), 12 January 2024

¹⁴² ICJ, [New Bill to establish “Commission for Truth, Unity and Reconciliation” ...](#), 12 January 2024

¹⁴³ HRW, [Sri Lanka: New Transitional Justice Process Lacks Credibility](#), 29 January 2024

¹⁴⁴ HRC, [Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 36), 27 August 2024

government emphasized its responsibility to meet the aspirations of all citizens, particularly in the Northern and Eastern provinces, and called for continued international support¹⁴⁵.

- 10.5.6 However, the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) expressed their concern at President Dissanayake's speech on 10 November 2024, in which he reiterated a call for a 'Sri Lankan identity.' The TGTE considered this as evidence of 'specific intent' to undermine Tamil identity¹⁴⁶. (see [Diaspora groups proscribed by Sri Lanka](#) for further information on the TGTE).
- 10.5.7 The Commission for Truth, Unity and Reconciliation Bill had not been passed by Parliament at the time of writing this note¹⁴⁷.

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10.6 Reintegration

- 10.6.1 Citing sources dated between 2020 and 2024, the Netherlands MoFA report noted that:

'The fact that many former LTTE members were still being monitored by the authorities often made it more difficult for them to fully reintegrate in their communities, as was pointed out by various sources consulted in this context. Other Tamils would often treat former members with suspicion. This was partly out of fear that associating with them would attract the negative attention of the authorities. But they reportedly also feared that former members of the LTTE would themselves be put under pressure to pass on information about fellow citizens to the authorities. Among others, this made it more difficult for former LTTE members in northern and eastern Sri Lanka to find paid employment to support themselves or otherwise develop socially.'¹⁴⁸

- 10.6.2 According to the May 2024 DFAT report, 'Most former LTTE members who remain in Sri Lanka have undergone rehabilitation and reintegrated into society.'¹⁴⁹ The rehabilitation programme, designed to support former LTTE members reintegrate into society, no longer operates¹⁵⁰.
- 10.6.3 An article published by German broadcaster, Deutsche Welle (DW), dated 4 April 2025, focussed on former female fighters for the LTTE and the difficulties they faced in reintegrating into society nearly 16 years after the civil war. According to one former fighter, many such women continued to face social stigma and distrust in their communities. Despite undergoing government rehabilitation, they were often pushed into low-paid jobs because their leadership and technical skills from the conflict went largely unrecognised, or due to a lack of formal education as many left school to join the LTTE¹⁵¹.

See also [Reintegration of returnees](#).

¹⁴⁵ Newswire, [FM Vijitha addresses UNHRC: What did He Say?](#), 25 February 2025

¹⁴⁶ TGTE, [Sri Lankan President's Call For 'Sri Lankan Identity' Sparks ...](#), 20 December 2024

¹⁴⁷ Parliament of Sri Lanka, [Acts & Bills](#), no date

¹⁴⁸ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 45), June 2024

¹⁴⁹ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.80), 2 May 2024

¹⁵⁰ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraphs 3.78, 4.37), 2 May 2024

¹⁵¹ DW, [Sri Lanka: Former 'Tamil Tigers' struggle to reintegrate](#), 4 April 2025

11. Tamil diaspora

11.1 Population

11.1.1 According to the May 2024 DFAT report, ‘At least 1 million Sri Lankan Tamils live outside Sri Lanka, mostly in Canada, Europe (with large communities in the United Kingdom, France and Switzerland), Australia and Tamil Nadu, India. Members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora may be citizens or legal residents of these and other countries, or dual nationals.’¹⁵²

11.1.2 According to the 2021 census dataset on country of birth, there were around 144,300 ‘usual residents’ who identified as born in Sri Lanka living in England and Wales as at Census Day, 21 March 2021^{153 154}. Just over 69,096 people identified as Tamil although the census data did not indicate how many of those were born in Sri Lanka¹⁵⁵. The Northern Ireland Census 2021 and Scotland’s Census 2022 did not record the number of its residents born in Sri Lanka^{156 157}.

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11.2 Diaspora groups de-proscribed by Sri Lanka

11.2.1 In 2022 the Sri Lankan government lifted the ban on 6 Tamil diaspora groups, including:

- Australian Tamil Congress (ATC)
- British Tamils Forum (BTF)
- Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC)
- Global Tamil Forum (GTF)
- Tamil Eelam People’s Assembly
- World Tamil Co-ordinating Committee^{158 159}.

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11.3 Diaspora groups proscribed by Sri Lanka

11.3.1 The Tamil Guardian reported on 24 February 2025 that the Sri Lankan government continued the ban on several Tamil diaspora groups, claiming that they ‘repeatedly provided financial support for terrorism.’¹⁶⁰ The list of prohibited groups, published in an Extraordinary Gazette, dated 20 February 2025, and repeated on 30 May 2025, included:

- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
- Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO)

¹⁵² DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.96), 2 May 2024

¹⁵³ ONS, [Census 2021 Country of birth \(detailed\)](#), 28 March 2023

¹⁵⁴ ONS, [England and Wales: Census 2021](#) (Country of birth: SP135 Sri Lanka), September 2023

¹⁵⁵ ONS, [England and Wales: Census 2021](#) (Ethnic group data: SP112 Tamil), September 2023

¹⁵⁶ NISRA, [Census 2021 Country of birth – intermediate detail](#), 2021

¹⁵⁷ Scotland’s Census, [Census 2022 Country of Birth by Individuals](#), 2022

¹⁵⁸ Tamil Guardian, [Selfish and cynical – Sri Lanka lifts ban on some Tamils but ...](#), 7 August 2022

¹⁵⁹ Deccan Herald, [No longer funding terror: Sri Lanka on lifting ban on Tamil ...](#), 16 August 2022

¹⁶⁰ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lanka continues ban on Tamil organisations despite ...](#), 24 February 2025

- Tamil Coordinating Committee (TCC)
- World Tamil Movement (WTM)
- Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE)
- World Tamil Relief Fund (WTRF)
- National Council of Canadian Tamils (NCCT)
- Tamil Youth Organisation (TYO)^{161 162}

11.3.2 The Tamil Guardian article noted ‘Successive Sri Lankan governments have used terrorism laws to ban Tamil organisations that continue to function openly and legally in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and throughout Europe. This ban, however, stifles links between these diaspora organisations and Tamils on the island, making it a criminal offence for Sri Lankan citizens to maintain contact with them.’¹⁶³

11.3.3 The TGTE is a transnational government-in-exile among the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, which aims to establish an independent Tamil state through political means^{164 165}. It is regarded by the GoSL as a ‘front’ for the LTTE¹⁶⁶.

11.3.4 The list of proscribed groups also included 222 people with alleged links to terrorism¹⁶⁷, including some described as LTTE members^{168 169}. The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that most proscribed people were Muslims¹⁷⁰.

11.3.5 The LTTE has been proscribed by the UK Government since March 2001¹⁷¹.

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11.4 Monitoring of the diaspora

11.4.1 The USSD HR Report 2023 referred to proscribed groups and noted that, ‘The government engaged in transnational repression against Tamil and Muslim diaspora organizations as well as certain individuals, primarily Muslims, living abroad.’¹⁷²

11.4.2 The May 2024 DFAT report noted that:

‘Members of pro-independence diaspora groups, particularly diaspora groups banned under Sri Lankan law and/or people who glorify the LTTE, may come to the attention of the Sri Lankan authorities due to participation in public demonstrations or other activities deemed to be promoting Tamil statehood in their countries of residence. According to in-country Tamil sources, the authorities monitor the social media of Tamils living abroad who fit this profile.’¹⁷³

¹⁶¹ Dept of Government Printing, [Extra-Gazette 2424/51, Ministry of Defence ...](#), 20 February 2025

¹⁶² Dept of Government Printing, [Extra-Gazette 2438/47, Ministry of Defence](#), 30 May 2025

¹⁶³ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lanka continues ban on Tamil organisations despite ...](#), 24 February 2025

¹⁶⁴ TGTE, [Mission statement](#), no date

¹⁶⁵ EIN Presswire, [New Sri Lankan Govt. Continues State Policy of Impunity, Denying ...](#), 4 April 2025

¹⁶⁶ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lanka reimposes ban on Tamil diaspora organisations](#), 10 June 2024

¹⁶⁷ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lanka continues ban on Tamil organisations despite ...](#), 24 February 2025

¹⁶⁸ Dept of Government Printing, [Extra-Gazette 2424/51, Ministry of Defence ...](#), 20 February 2025

¹⁶⁹ Dept of Government Printing, [Extra-Gazette 2438/47, Ministry of Defence](#), 30 May 2025

¹⁷⁰ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 1F), 22 April 2024

¹⁷¹ Home Office, [Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations](#), updated 27 February 2025

¹⁷² USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 1F), 22 April 2024

¹⁷³ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.99), 2 May 2024

11.4.3 The Netherlands MoFA report noted that:

‘During the reporting period, there were reports that the Sri Lankan authorities monitored persons who carried out activities for Tamil organisations outside Sri Lanka. This reportedly particularly happened in the UK and other countries with a significant Tamil diaspora. Based on the information from the sources consulted for the purpose of this Country of Origin Information Report, it appears that the Sri Lankan authorities mainly monitored prominent figures from proscribed Tamil organisations abroad. These are the proscribed organisations that were published in the Sri Lanka Gazette.’¹⁷⁴

See [Diaspora groups proscribed by Sri Lanka](#).

11.4.4 The Netherlands MoFA report stated:

‘It is not known to what extent the Sri Lankan authorities monitored the social media expressions of persons who resided abroad. One of the sources [a confidential source] consulted in 2024 reported that, if persons living abroad actively posted anti-government statements on social media, their family members in Sri Lanka could be questioned about it by Sri Lankan authorities. The source was also aware of an example of a person who had been denied entry to Sri Lanka because of expressions on social media.’¹⁷⁵

11.4.5 Protests by Tamils outside the Sri Lankan High Commission (SLHC) in London on Sri Lanka’s Independence Day (4 February), were reported in 2023¹⁷⁶ ¹⁷⁷, 2024¹⁷⁸ ¹⁷⁹, and 2025¹⁸⁰.

11.4.6 According to the Tamil Guardian, reporting on 13 February 2024, the GoSL planned to lodge a complaint to the UK Government regarding protests held by Tamils outside the SLHC on Independence Day in 2024:

‘Sri Lanka’s Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Sabry said his government would “express its displeasure with the British government” against the protest held by Tamils in London, at a time when Sri Lanka was holding its 76th Independence Day Celebrations and Tamils worldwide marked it as a “Black Day”.

‘Sabry reportedly said that Sri Lankan government’s displeasure over the incident would be conveyed to the United Kingdom through the Sri Lankan High Commission in London. He also said that the government in Sri Lanka would bring to the notice of the Foreign Ministry in the UK that an organization banned in Sri Lanka and other countries was protesting in London, but did not specify which organisation he was talking about.’¹⁸¹

11.4.7 The GoSL reportedly lodged a protest with the UK Home Office after Tamil diaspora activists displayed banned LTTE emblems during a demonstration outside the Oval Stadium on 8 September 2024. The protest, held during the Sri Lanka-England cricket match, called for a ban on Sri Lankan cricket over

¹⁷⁴ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 65), June 2024

¹⁷⁵ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 58), June 2024

¹⁷⁶ Socialist Party, [Tamil Solidarity protests against 75 years of repression](#), 8 February 2023

¹⁷⁷ Tamil Guardian, [British Tamils protest Sri Lanka’s 75th Independence Day](#), 4 February 2023

¹⁷⁸ Socialist Party, [Tamils protest Sri Lanka Independence Day](#), 7 February 2024

¹⁷⁹ Tamil Guardian, [Tamil Eelam is the only solution' - Tamils protest in London ...](#), 5 February 2024

¹⁸⁰ Tamil Guardian, [British Tamils protest through London on Sri Lanka’s ...](#), 4 February 2025

¹⁸¹ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lankan government to lodge complaint over Tamil ...](#), 13 February 2024

alleged human rights violations^{182 183}.

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12. Freedom of speech and expression

12.1 Treatment of journalists

- 12.1.1 The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression¹⁸⁴. According to Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's departure in July 2022 '... marked the end of his relentless crackdown on press freedom.'¹⁸⁵ The Netherlands MoFA report noted that 'Although some of Sri Lanka's most important media outlets were state-owned, the country also had active independent media that could report on events objectively and report critically on government activity.'¹⁸⁶
- 12.1.2 In 2025, Sri Lanka ranked 139 out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index of RSF (a score of one being most free and 180 being least free), an increase from 2024 when it ranked 150 (compared to 135 in 2023)¹⁸⁷. The May 2024 DFAT report noted that the situation for journalists had 'improved greatly' since the end of the civil war in 2009¹⁸⁸.
- 12.1.3 The 2023 USSD HR Report stated:
'There were reports of harassment and intimidation of journalists covering sensitive topics. Some journalists including citizen journalists, reported harassment, threats, intimidation, and interference from members of state security services, especially when reporting on topics related to the civil war or its aftermath, including missing persons. Tamil journalists reported military officers requested copies of photographs, lists of attendees at events, and names of sources for articles. They also reported the military directly requested that journalists 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, and that they feared repercussions if they did not cooperate.'¹⁸⁹
- 12.1.4 According to the May 2024 DFAT report:
'Journalists openly criticise the government, generally without fear of retaliation. Colombo-based media outlets operate with the greatest freedom, although in-country sources said this can be conditional on avoiding certain topics, including human rights and politicians' personal lives. According to in-country sources, Tamil journalists reporting on human rights in the north-east (including alleged historical human rights violations, missing persons, land disputes and war commemorations) continued to experience harassment.'¹⁹⁰
- 12.1.5 The August 2024 OHCHR report to the HRC noted that:
'During the reporting period, OHCHR observed a persistent trend of the surveillance, intimidation and harassment of journalists and civil society

¹⁸² Daily Mirror, [Govt. protests with UK over display of LTTE emblem](#), 11 September 2024

¹⁸³ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lankan High Commissioner complains to Home Office ...](#), 12 September 2024

¹⁸⁴ Parliament of Sri Lanka, [Constitution](#) (Article 14), as amended up to 31 October 2022

¹⁸⁵ RSF, [Sri Lanka](#), no date

¹⁸⁶ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 51), June 2024

¹⁸⁷ RSF, [World Press Freedom Index](#) (2023, 2024 and 2025), no date

¹⁸⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.128), 2 May 2024

¹⁸⁹ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 2A), 22 April 2024

¹⁹⁰ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.130), 2 May 2024

actors, especially those working on enforced disappearances, land seizures or environmental issues or with former combatants in the north and east of the country. Civil society organizations reported that police officials from the Criminal Investigation Department or the Terrorist Investigation Division often summoned or visited them to question them about their programmes and funding, the participants in their events and the contacts and international travel of their staff, without a legal basis. Journalists in these regions face abusive lawsuits, violence, intimidation and surveillance. For instance, in October 2023, Punniyamoorthy Sasikaran and Valasingham Krishnakumar were questioned after covering a protest about State-supported land seizures. In November 2023, they received a court order to hand over unedited footage of a Buddhist monk threatening violence against Tamils.¹⁹¹

12.1.6 The Netherlands MoFA report noted that:

‘The tendency of many journalists to self-censor did not improve after Ranil Wickremasinghe took office (July 2022). He reportedly fuelled fears among journalists that critical reporting could lead to problems, particularly with bills that were seen as an attack on freedom of expression. During this period too, journalists continued to complain of monitoring by the authorities. This was not limited to journalists who investigated Tamil or civil war-related issues; publications on corruption, the Aragalaya protests or economic mismanagement could also attract negative attention from the authorities. Journalists who published about these matters could face questioning about their sources or research methods and conclusions, for example. As far as could be ascertained, no large-scale arrests or long-term detentions of journalists took place. Nor were there any criminal convictions of journalists. A source consulted reported that representatives of the traditional media had more freedom to report on sensitive issues at the end of the reporting period, as the authorities’ attention had shifted towards social media (particularly since the 2022 Aragalaya protests). The authorities apparently saw social media as a greater threat than traditional media ...¹⁹² (see also [Social media monitoring](#)).

12.1.7 The May 2024 DFAT Report cited ‘in-country sources’ who said that:

‘... it was not uncommon for journalists who reported on sensitive issues in the north to be questioned about their reporting, including through visits or telephone calls. As a result, journalists often self-censor. According to in-country sources, the space for journalists in the north had improved slightly under the [Wickremesinghe] government, although they continued to be monitored. In-country sources reported that monitoring was more subtle today, and included surveillance by plain clothed officers and the collection of information from the community, such as in relation to a person of interest’s movements and personal life. According to in-country sources, a journalist in the north was asked to tone down their reporting during a call from military intelligence, during which the caller also made reference to recent, otherwise undisclosed changes in the journalist’s personal circumstances.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ HRC, [Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 21), 27 August 2024

¹⁹² Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 53), June 2024

¹⁹³ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.131), 2 May 2024

12.1.8 RSF reported that no journalists had been killed since 2015 (although previous killings had gone unpunished), and that there were no journalists or media workers in detention¹⁹⁴.

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12.2 Treatment of human rights activists

12.2.1 The Netherlands MoFA report stated that ‘A multitude of organisations were active in Sri Lanka during the reporting period, working for the Tamil people of the north and east of the country. These organisations worked in a variety of areas, including human rights, legal aid and other issues related to the Tamil population or the civil war.’¹⁹⁵

12.2.2 However, the August 2024 OHCHR report to the HRC noted that:

‘... restrictive operating space and increasing administrative and legal restrictions are making the environment for service delivery, development work and advocacy for human rights even more difficult. Civil society organizations are required to be registered with the nongovernmental organization (NGO) secretariat, which was transferred to the Ministry of Public Security in July 2022. The activities and sources of funding of civil society organizations are closely monitored by the intelligence services, in particular in the north and east of the country.’¹⁹⁶

12.2.3 According to the 2023 USSD HR Report:

‘Numerous human rights defenders reported police and security services continued a high degree of monitoring and surveillance of them through “burdensome and arbitrary” reporting requirements and harassment and intimidation during in-person home and office visits. These visits were often followed by additional visits, letters, or telephone calls. The frequency of these actions varied depending on the organization or individual’s mission or geographic location, with those in the north and east reporting the greatest number of follow-up actions. Individuals reported the visits caused distress, anxiety, and other mental health problems for themselves and their families, as well as affecting their work. Women reported they were particularly affected by surveillance, intimidation, and harassment, given their prominent role in advocating for justice.’¹⁹⁷

12.2.4 The Netherlands MoFA report indicated that, whilst all human rights organisations were restricted or monitored to some extent regardless of their area of interest, according to sources consulted:

‘... it appears that the monitoring and harassment of NGOs applied to a greater extent to activists involved in the rights of the Tamil population in northern and eastern Sri Lanka. The most sensitive issues addressed by human rights activists were the militarisation of the north and east of the country, Tamil victims of the civil war, calls for accountability for crimes committed during the civil war, and the search for Tamils who disappeared during the war. Especially in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, human rights activists could face visits from the police, when they would have to answer questions about the origin of their organisations’ finances, their precise

¹⁹⁴ RSF, [Sri Lanka](#), no date

¹⁹⁵ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 54, 55), June 2024

¹⁹⁶ HRC, [Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 19), 27 August 2024

¹⁹⁷ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 5), 22 April 2024

activities and the recipients of their services. NGOs also reported that officials of the security forces visited their workshops and asked for information from all the participants.

‘Exact numbers of human rights activists who faced the situation described above are not available. There is no evidence that human rights activists were victims of targeted killings or enforced disappearance during the reporting period.’¹⁹⁸

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12.3 Social media monitoring

12.3.1 The Netherlands MoFA report noted regarding social media that:

‘Sri Lanka had a vibrant and diverse social media landscape during the reporting period, with widespread criticism of the government and support for protest movements and civil war or LTTE-related themes. The authorities did monitor online expressions on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. A source said that the government had focussed more on social media since the 2022 Aragalaya protests. The authorities apparently saw social media as a greater threat than traditional media. Whether a social media user could face problems in response to online expressions did not depend on the size of the user’s public footprint or the number of followers. Based on the information from the sources, it appears that both users with much influence or many followers, and those with little influence or few followers, could face problems. Particularly during the presidencies of Gotabaya Rajapaksa (2019-2022) and Ranil Wickremasinghe (from July 2022), posting expressions that the authorities deemed critical on online platforms could lead to questioning and sometimes arrest and prosecution. Courts usually ruled in favour of the defendants in those cases. There were no known convictions based on expressions on social media during the reporting period.’¹⁹⁹

12.3.2 There were no reports of arrests being made for social media posts relating to the civil war or the LTTE in the USSD HR reports covering 2022 and 2023^{200 201}.

12.3.3 Freedom House reported in their Freedom on the Net report, covering the period June 2023 to May 2024, that in January 2024 the Online Safety Act (OSA) was passed, which criminalises “false” and “harmful” online speech such as online harassment and abuse or content which would promote ill will and hostility ...²⁰² The same report noted that ‘A May 2024 solidarity protest held to commemorate the end of Sri Lanka’s civil war in Colombo was marked by a heavy police presence, indicating that protesters’ online activity might have been surveilled.’²⁰³

12.3.4 On 10 March 2024, the Tamil Guardian reported that a former LTTE-cadre and activist, Selvanayagam Aravinthan, was summoned to appear before the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) ‘over a Facebook account.’²⁰⁴ After

¹⁹⁸ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 54, 55), June 2024

¹⁹⁹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 56), June 2024

²⁰⁰ USSD, [2022 HR Report](#), 20 March 2023

²⁰¹ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#), 22 April 2024

²⁰² Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2024](#) (B3), 16 October 2024

²⁰³ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2024](#) (B8), 16 October 2024

²⁰⁴ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lanka's TID summons former LTTE cadre over Facebook ...](#), 10 March 2024

he failed to appear, a second summons was issued and when Aravinthan went to the TID in Colombo he was arrested for 'allegedly supporting the LTTE.'²⁰⁵ On 11 April 2024, the Tamil Guardian reported that Aravinthan's 18-year-old son demanded the reason for his father's arrest and called for his release from Welikada prison where he was reportedly being held²⁰⁶. No corroborating information could be found, nor any further information on Aravinthan's detention, amongst the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

- 12.3.5 The Tamil Guardian reported on 30 November 2024 that a Tamil man from Jaffna was reportedly arrested and detained under the PTA after posting a photo of the late LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, on Facebook²⁰⁷. Sri Lankan news site, The Morning, reported on 1 December 2024 on the arrest of 3 people from Maradana, Vunnakam, and Baddegama, for allegedly sharing videos promoting Maaveerar Naal (Heroes Day), falsely presenting them as being from 2024²⁰⁸. The Daily FT stated that the 3 suspects were also accused of sharing photos and videos on Facebook of Velupillai Prabhakaran²⁰⁹. No further information on those concerned could be found in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 12.3.6 On 2 December 2024, the Daily FT reported that political and social activist, Kelum Jayasumana, was arrested by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) under Section 120 of the Penal Code, accused of resharing content related to Maaveerar Naal, which 'had the potential to incite unrest'²¹⁰. On 4 December 2024 he was released on bail after the court stated there was no evidence to remand him^{211 212}.

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13. Freedom of movement

13.1 In-country movement and checkpoints

- 13.1.1 Citing sources dated from 2020 up to February 2024, the Netherlands MoFA report noted that:

'Tamils in Sri Lanka experienced no formal travel restrictions. However, there were checkpoints in the north and east of the country throughout the reporting period, staffed by the national army or police. Sources indicated that there were fewer checkpoints at the end of the reporting period than in previous years. The number was reported to have been higher before 2015 in particular. Nevertheless, the UN and the Australian DFAT described, in 2021 and 2022 respectively, that the number of checkpoints in areas inhabited mainly by Tamils, especially in Northern Province, was disproportionately high compared to the rest of Sri Lanka. The checkpoints were not only intended to monitor the activities of the people in these areas; they were also said to be intended as a measure against drug smuggling, that was reportedly on the rise since the end of the civil war (particularly by sea from India into northern Sri Lanka, and from there by land towards the

²⁰⁵ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lanka's TID arrests former LTTE cadre and activist](#), 27 March 2024

²⁰⁶ Tamil Guardian, [We are in a hopeless situation' - Detained former LTTE cadre's ...](#), 11 April 2024

²⁰⁷ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lanka arrests Tamil man under PTA for Facebook post](#), 30 November 2024

²⁰⁸ The Morning, [Maaveerar Naal: Three arrested under PTA](#), 1 December 2024

²⁰⁹ Daily FT, [Kelum Jayasumana remanded for sharing misleading Maaveerar ...](#), 2 December 2024

²¹⁰ Daily FT, [Kelum Jayasumana remanded for sharing misleading Maaveerar ...](#), 2 December 2024

²¹¹ Ada Derana, [Kelum Jayasumana granted bail](#), 4 December 2024

²¹² Newswire, [Maaveerar Naal post : Activist Kelum Jayasumana granted bail](#), 4 December 2024

south). An exact number of checkpoints cannot be given. Sources did indicate that, around symbolic commemorative days like Independence Day or Maaveerar Naal, the number of checkpoints in the north and east increased.²¹³

13.1.2 As noted in their May 2024 report, 'DFAT counted five checkpoints between Jaffna and Batticaloa, a distance spanning approximately 350km. There are no checkpoints within Jaffna or Batticaloa, only on entry. Checkpoints were manned by the military, police or a combination of the two. Some in-country sources reported discriminatory treatment or harassment during security checks. Other in-country sources told DFAT that most people passed through checkpoints unimpeded.'²¹⁴

13.1.3 The Netherlands MoFA report noted that, according to confidential sources consulted in 2023 and 2024:

'At most checkpoints, identity checks were not carried out on every passing person. The identities of some persons were checked, while others were allowed to continue their journey unchecked. The same applied to passing vehicles. It is not known on what basis the authorities decided which persons and vehicles were checked and which were not.

'Two consulted sources additionally reported that some former LTTE members who had a reporting obligation were required to report to the authorities when they left their area of residence.'²¹⁵

13.1.4 According to an article in the Tamil Guardian, dated 22 January 2025, although many military checkpoints were removed following the change of government in November 2024, several had been reinstated in the Pannai, Mukamalai, Mandaithivu and Eluthumadduval regions of Jaffna²¹⁶. No reason was given for their reinstatement and no corroborating information could be found amongst the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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13.2 Departing the country

13.2.1 As noted in the Netherlands MoFA report, 'As far as is known, during the reporting period Tamils did not experience any problems leaving Sri Lanka based on their ethnicity. Under section 51c of Sri Lanka's Immigrants and Emigrants Act, judicial authorities could issue travel bans to persons suspected of committing a crime, charged with a crime or who had witnessed a crime.'²¹⁷ Travel bans were registered with the Department of Immigration and Emigration (DIE) and consulted when people left the country^{218 219}. In theory, a person with a travel ban against them could not leave the country [via legal routes], and 'A person released on bail had to surrender his or her passport to the authorities, and could not legally travel out of the country.'²²⁰

²¹³ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 55, 56), June 2024

²¹⁴ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 2.76), 2 May 2024

²¹⁵ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 49), June 2024

²¹⁶ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lankan military checkpoints return in Jaffna](#), 22 January 2025

²¹⁷ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 49, 50), June 2024

²¹⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a Home Office FFM to Sri Lanka](#) (pages 24, 42, 59), 20 January 2020

²¹⁹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 50), June 2024

²²⁰ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 50), June 2024

13.2.2 According to Airport & Aviation Services (Sri Lanka) (Private) Limited (AASL), a 'government owned company with statutory powers to manage and develop civil airports in Sri Lanka'²²¹, departing passengers must go through the following procedures:

- 'A first identification of passengers shall be carried out by Airport Security Department (ASD) staff at the entrance to the passenger terminal building on production of valid airline ticket documentation.
- 'A second identification shall be carried out by ASD staff at the entrance to the check-in counter area on production of valid airline ticket documentation.
- 'A third identification shall be carried out by Sri Lankan Airlines handling agent staff at the check-in counters on production of valid travel documentation (i.e. airline tickets together with passport and any necessary visas).
- 'A fourth identification shall be carried out by Department of Immigration and Emigration staff and agents of the Directorate of Internal Intelligence for the purposes of establishing the bona fides of passengers.
- 'A fifth identification shall be carried out by ASD staff at the pre-boarding passenger and cabin baggage screening checkpoint on production of a valid boarding card.
- 'Final passenger identification shall be carried out by Sri Lanka Airlines handling agent staff or the staff of the relevant aircraft operator at the departure gate as part of the passenger / hold baggage reconciliation process on production of a valid boarding card and passport or other identity document containing a visual image of the holder.'²²²

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14. Situation of returnees

14.1 Return procedure at the airport

14.1.1 The Netherlands MoFA report on Tamils noted that 'Sri Lanka's Department of Immigration and Emigration (DIE) is part of the Ministry of Public Security. The service is responsible for monitoring entry into and departure from Sri Lanka. The DIE has headquarters in Colombo and regional offices in Matara (Southern Province), Kandy (Central Province), Vavuniya (Northern Province) and Kurunegala (North Western Province).'²²³

14.1.2 The same report noted that 'Sri Lanka's State Intelligence Service (SIS) falls under the Ministry of Defence and is responsible for intelligence collection at home and abroad. The service also plays a role in the immigration process at the national airport in certain cases ...'²²⁴

14.1.3 The Netherlands MoFA report on Tamils described the process for returning migrants arriving at Colombo International Airport [Bandaranaike

²²¹ AASL, [About AASL](#), no date

²²² AASL, [Security information for passengers](#) (Security screening), no date

²²³ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 11), June 2024

²²⁴ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 12), June 2024

International Airport (BIA)^{225]}²²⁶. The report cited numerous confidential sources who provided information on the returns procedure in the final years of the reporting period (October 2014 to April 2024)²²⁷, which was broadly consistent with information obtained on the airport arrivals process during the UK [Home Office Fact-finding mission \(FFM\) to Sri Lanka](#) in 2019²²⁸.

- 14.1.4 The authorities installed facial recognition technology at Colombo's international airport in January 2024, which was intended to identify criminals trying to enter or depart the country²²⁹ ²³⁰. The Netherlands MoFA report noted that, according to 4 confidential sources, 'There was no indication that the authorities used facial recognition technology to identify returning Tamils who had been active for the Tamil cause abroad.'²³¹ According to the weekly English-language newspaper, the Sunday Observer, 'The system will also work in unison with the biometric data capture and e-gate systems which are being installed at the BIA in several phases.'²³²

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14.2 Treatment on return, including of failed asylum seekers

- 14.2.1 According to May 2024 DFAT report, it was not illegal for Sri Lankans to seek asylum abroad²³³.
- 14.2.2 The May 2024 DFAT report noted that the process for returnees travelling on a valid passport was 'swift.'²³⁴ According to the same report, failed asylum seekers 'may face further questioning' from the authorities (Sri Lankan Immigration, the State Intelligence Service (SIS), Navy Intelligence (SLNI) and the CID) depending on whether they left the country legally or not, whether they travelled on a temporary travel document (TTD), or whether they have any criminal matters outstanding²³⁵. Citing February 2024 interviews with confidential sources, the Netherlands MoFA report stated that officers from the Department of Immigration and Emigration (DIE) questioned returnees about how they had left Sri Lanka and '... mainly interviewed those persons returning on a temporary travel document.'²³⁶ DFAT stated that it was '... not aware of recent returnees being mistreated during this process.'²³⁷
- 14.2.3 The IRB response on the situation and treatment of returnees (2022 to August 2024), cited correspondence, dated June 2024, between the Research Directorate and a senior lecturer with the Department of Economics at the University of Jaffna in Sri Lanka, who said:

“if immigration authorities are aware” that a Sri Lankan person, including a failed asylum seeker, “had left the country with forged documents or through

²²⁵ Airport and Aviation Services (Sri Lanka), [Bandaranaike International Airport](#), no date

²²⁶ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 61 to 62), June 2024

²²⁷ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 61 to 62), June 2024

²²⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a Home Office FFM to Sri Lanka](#) (pages 24 to 27), 20 January 2020

²²⁹ Daily Mirror, [Automated Facial Recognition System at BIA to identify criminals ...](#), 6 January 2024

²³⁰ Daily FT, [BIA implements facial recognition system to combat crime](#), 8 January 2024

²³¹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 63), June 2024

²³² Sunday Observer, [Facial Recognition System at BIA to nab criminals](#), 7 January 2024

²³³ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.36), 2 May 2024

²³⁴ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.38), 2 May 2024

²³⁵ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.39), 2 May 2024

²³⁶ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 61), June 2024

²³⁷ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.39), 2 May 2024

alleged human traffickers,” they “could” “questio[n]” such returnees to learn about human traffickers “in order to deter such irregular migration in the future” ... The same source added that unless returnees are suspected of “criminal or terrorism activities,” they are “unlikely” to face legal consequences ... The Senior Lecturer, when asked if the treatment of returnees varies across different ethnic, political, or socioeconomic profiles, stated that there is “not much discrimination” faced by returnees on the grounds of their “ethnicity, religion, etc.”²³⁸

- 14.2.4 Citing ‘in-country sources’ in Sri Lanka, the May 2024 DFAT report stated that Tamils in Jaffna and Batticaloa, who voluntarily returned from Australia between 2019 and 2024 after failing to secure asylum, had described the process of return at Colombo International Airport as ‘straightforward.’²³⁹ They reported receiving ‘simple’ and ‘less extensive’ questioning than in the past by the authorities, after which ‘most returnees were presented before a magistrate in Negombo, charged with breaking immigration law and bailed within 24 hours.’²⁴⁰ Also citing ‘in-country sources’, the same report added that ‘at the discretion of individual immigration officers,’ returnees in Batticaloa, including in 2023 and 2022, were not questioned by intelligence services or the police once they passed immigration, nor were they charged for leaving the country illegally²⁴¹.
- 14.2.5 The IRB response on the situation and treatment of returnees (2022 to August 2024), cited a July 2024 interview with a human rights lawyer and former Human Rights Commissioner in Sri Lanka, who told the IRB Research Directorate that:
- ‘... failed asylum seekers and people who exited the country without the required documentation will “most likely” be interrogated by the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID), the CID, or both at international points of entry upon their return ... According to the same source, the process could take several hours after which such persons could either be:
- Released with, “often[times],” no consequent charges;
 - Detained on a detention order under the PTA;
 - Presented to a magistrate and remanded in prison.’²⁴²
- 14.2.6 The Netherlands MoFA report cited conflicting sources regarding the treatment of Tamils during the returns process, with some stating that Tamils were treated no differently to other returnees whilst others suggested they faced more questioning than others²⁴³.
- 14.2.7 The Netherlands MoFA report cited 3 confidential sources interviewed in December 2023 and February 2024, noting that there were ‘... no indications that Sri Lankan authorities checked the online activities of returning migrants upon their arrival at Colombo airport.’²⁴⁴
- 14.2.8 Regarding the presence of scars and tattoos that might indicate a person

²³⁸ IRB, [Sri Lanka: Situation and treatment by authorities of returnees ...](#), 14 August 2024

²³⁹ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.44), 2 May 2024

²⁴⁰ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.44), 2 May 2024

²⁴¹ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.45), 2 May 2024

²⁴² IRB, [Sri Lanka: Situation and treatment by authorities of returnees ...](#), 14 August 2024

²⁴³ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 63), June 2024

²⁴⁴ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 62), June 2024

had fought with the LTTE, the Netherlands MoFA report stated that ‘Most sources consulted in 2024 confirmed that, to the best of their knowledge, returning migrants had not been checked for the presence of scars or tattoos in recent years. Three of those sources said they had never heard of this happening.’²⁴⁵

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14.3 Court procedure following illegal exit

14.3.1 Under the 1948 Immigrants and Emigrants Act it is an offence to depart Sri Lanka other than via an approved port of departure, and/or without a valid passport²⁴⁶. According to the May 2024 DFAT report, penalties can include ‘... imprisonment of up to five years and a fine, although DFAT is unaware of a prison sentence being given solely for illegal departure.’²⁴⁷ The Netherlands MoFA report noted that, according to confidential sources, fines were imposed on returnees who had left the country illegally²⁴⁸. Research for the same report could not establish whether prison sentences had been issued²⁴⁹.

14.3.2 The May 2024 DFAT report stated that failed asylum seekers who were found to have departed Sri Lanka illegally were questioned at the airport, charged with breaking immigration law²⁵⁰, and then:

‘Once airport processes, including questioning by the SIS, SLNI and CID, are complete, failed asylum seekers who departed Sri Lanka illegally are presented to court in Negombo (near Colombo Airport) and bailed. To the best of DFAT’s knowledge, couples and families returning together are not separated during the court process and returnees are not mistreated. Once bailed, returnees are free to go – they do not spend any time in prison (payment is not required to secure bail). This process in its entirety (questioning at the airport, court appearance, bail, release) generally takes between 12 and 24 hours to complete from the point of arrival, depending on the number of returnees. If Negombo court is closed by the time returnees are presented (the court closes at 16.30), they will be remanded and presented to court the following day ... Those who departed Sri Lanka legally and unsuccessfully sought asylum abroad do not face this process, as they did not break any law.’²⁵¹

14.3.3 Information provided in the May 2024 DFAT report noted that people charged under the Immigrants and Emigrants Act must appear in court where the matter was first heard, usually Negombo Court. Bail hearings occur every 3 months for the first year, then less frequently. Cases typically take 12 to 24 months to complete. Defendants face legal and transport costs. Most returnees plead guilty to breaking the Immigrants and Emigrants Act and they may also be witnesses in related cases involving the organisers and facilitators of ‘illegal maritime ventures.’ Convicted people usually receive a fine of LKR50,000 [about £125²⁵²], payable in instalments, and are

²⁴⁵ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 62), June 2024

²⁴⁶ DIE, [Immigrants and Emigrants Act](#) (Articles 34 and 35), 1948

²⁴⁷ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.48), 2 May 2024

²⁴⁸ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 65), June 2024

²⁴⁹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 65), June 2024

²⁵⁰ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.41), 2 May 2024

²⁵¹ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.43), 2 May 2024

²⁵² XE.com, [50,000 LKR to GBP - Exchange Rate](#), as at 9 May 2025

banned from travel for 5 years²⁵³.

- 14.3.4 In addition to citing information provided in the May 2024 DFAT report regarding court proceedings for people who had departed Sri Lanka illegally, the IRB response on the situation and treatment of returnees (2022 to August 2024) noted:

‘According to the Senior Lecturer [Dept of Economics, University of Jaffna], because Sri Lankan courts are “overwhelmed by hundreds of thousands of pending cases,” as they have been for decades, authorities do not “overburden” the courts with cases as “mundane” as those of returnees (2024-06-29). According to the [human rights] Lawyer, the legal process in Sri Lanka is time consuming and persons can remain in remand for several weeks or months before being granted bail (2024-07-02).’²⁵⁴

- 14.3.5 The May 2024 DFAT report noted that it was ‘... not aware of failed asylum seekers being subjected to mistreatment during processing at Colombo Airport and subsequent court hearings.’²⁵⁵

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14.4 Stop and watch lists

- 14.4.1 A query response on Sri Lanka by IRB, regarding entry and exit procedures at international airports (2022 to July 2024) noted that, according to a national programme officer with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Colombo, ‘... border agents conduct mandatory checks against INTERPOL and “national watchlists” to identify “high-risk travelers”; passengers with a “positive match” will be referred to relevant law enforcement authorities.’²⁵⁶
- 14.4.2 The May 2024 DFAT report noted that ‘Authorities retain comprehensive countrywide “stop” and “watch” lists of those suspected of involvement in terrorist activities or serious criminal offences. People on either list will be unable to avoid adverse attention from the security forces.’²⁵⁷ The same report noted that ‘Stop lists include names of people who have an existing court order, arrest warrant or order to impound their Sri Lankan passport. Watch lists include names of people whom the security services consider to be of interest, including for suspected separatist or criminal activities.’²⁵⁸
- 14.4.3 The Netherlands MoFA report noted that according to one confidential source consulted in December 2023, stop and watch lists were based on the central criminal records system, which ‘... also contains the details of persons who are not subject to formal criminal proceedings, but have attracted the authorities’ attention for other reasons, such as suspicion of separatist activities or links to the LTTE.’²⁵⁹
- 14.4.4 The query response by the IRB (2022 to July 2024) noted that, according to ‘... a senior research fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies of the University of London, who has provided expert testimony on asylum cases

²⁵³ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraphs 5.49 to 5.50), 2 May 2024

²⁵⁴ IRB, [Sri Lanka: Situation and treatment by authorities of returnees ...](#), 14 August 2024

²⁵⁵ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.47), 2 May 2024

²⁵⁶ IRB, [Sri Lanka: Entry and exit procedures at international airports ...](#), 31 July 2024

²⁵⁷ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.34), 2 May 2024

²⁵⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.76), 2 May 2024

²⁵⁹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 38, 39), June 2024

from Sri Lanka, “primarily” in the UK, but also in other countries ... passengers are screened through an electronic database containing a “watch list” and a “stop list”; a person's appearance on the stop list results in their “being handed over to either” the CID or the Counter Terrorism Investigation Division, depending on whether or not authorities consider them to be a “criminal” or a “security” risk (2024-07-10).²⁶⁰

See also [Departing the country](#)

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14.5 Arrest and detention of returnees

14.5.1 The Netherlands MoFA report noted that, unless a person faced charges for exiting the country illegally²⁶¹:

‘... the vast majority of sources consulted in 2024 reported that, as far as is known, there were no arrests of returnees in the final years of the reporting period. One source specified that arrests of returnees occurred sporadically before 2015, but not after 2015. Another source was aware of a single arrest in the final years of the reporting period. The case involved a returned Tamil who was arrested by the SIS and released after several days of detention.’²⁶²

14.5.2 The May 2024 DFAT report noted that ‘In-country sources reported that Tamils returning from abroad were able to be arrested for committing a crime before emigration. In-country sources said they were not aware of recent returnees being arrested for political reasons, including for suspected links to the LTTE.’²⁶³

14.5.3 The IRB response on the situation and treatment of returnees (2022 to August 2024) noted:

‘According to the [human rights] Lawyer, there have been instances of returning failed asylum seekers and people who exited the country without the required documentation who were detained for one to two days for interrogation before being released, and of others who have been detained on a detention order issued under the PTA (2024-07-02). The same source noted that if the police produce a person before the magistrate, they will file a “B report,” which will contain the facts of the case, the reason for the arrest, and the law under which the arrest was made; the “B report” will also include a request to hold that person on remand where they could stay for up to 14 days before being bailed and released (Lawyer 2024-07-02).

‘The Lawyer ... added that Tamil failed asylum seekers, and particularly those from the north and east of the country, are “more likely” to be arrested and detained under the PTA upon their return (Lawyer 2024-07-02).’²⁶⁴ However, the statement did not clarify who Tamil failed asylum seekers were more likely to face arrest and detention in comparison to.

14.5.4 According to a Tamil Guardian article of 2 December 2024, a British citizen of Tamil origin, who left Sri Lanka in 2009, was arrested on arrival at

²⁶⁰ IRB, [Sri Lanka: Entry and exit procedures at international airports ...](#), 31 July 2024

²⁶¹ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 63 and 65), June 2024

²⁶² Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 63), June 2024

²⁶³ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 3.76), 2 May 2024

²⁶⁴ IRB, [Sri Lanka: Situation and treatment by authorities of returnees ...](#), 14 August 2024

Colombo international airport (BIA) on 30 November 2024, for allegedly collecting money for the LTTE whilst abroad. The report noted that the man, originally from Kilinochchi, ‘... was detained by the Immigration Department based on a travel ban issued by the Colombo Magistrate’s Court at the request of the Colombo North Crime Division in 2009. The individual was handed over to the Airport Police, who formally placed him under arrest.’²⁶⁵ A later Tamil Guardian article of 17 December 2024 reported that the travel ban was issued in 2012²⁶⁶. According to the same article the man, who had travelled to Sri Lanka for the first time in 14 years to attend his mother’s funeral, was held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) but was released after a court found no evidence of criminal activity²⁶⁷.

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14.6 Monitoring of returnees

- 14.6.1 A report by UNHCR on Sri Lankan refugee returnees over a 5-year period between 2018 to 2022, based on interviews undertaken in 2023 on a randomly selected sample of 326 returnee households (744 family members) in all 5 districts of the Northern Province (Jaffna, Vavuniya, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar) and in the Trincomalee district of the Eastern Province, voluntarily repatriated from India²⁶⁸, noted that ‘There are numerous and persistent anecdotes regarding the close surveillance of civilians in the North and East by security or intelligence personnel, including repeated visits to homes.’ The research attempted to ‘... ascertain if the returnees are visited by the security forces or the police, for registration or any other purposes, and the frequency of such visits.’²⁶⁹
- 14.6.2 The UNHCR report found that all respondents said their households were registered with the offices of the DS (Divisional Secretary) or GD (Grama Niladhari – local government official)²⁷⁰, and that very few mentioned home visits by the authorities, including by the military or the police²⁷¹. Over the 5-year period, 58% of households said they were visited by people other than from the DS or GD for registration purposes – 95% said they were visited by NGOs, 2% were visited by CID/TID and 5% by the police²⁷². Over the same period, 44% said they received additional home visits other than for registration – 95% of visits were by NGOs, 3% by the military, 2% by a government officer and 1% by the police²⁷³.
- 14.6.3 In contrast to the UNHCR’s findings indicating little mention by refugee returnees of home visits by the authorities²⁷⁴, the Netherlands MoFA report, citing confidential sources consulted in December 2023 and February 2024, stated that:

‘Most of the sources consulted reported that Tamils were monitored by the authorities after returning to Sri Lanka from abroad. This monitoring

²⁶⁵ Tamil Guardian, [Sri Lanka arrests British citizen at Colombo airport claiming ...](#), 2 December 2024

²⁶⁶ Tamil Guardian, [British Tamil arrested under PTA released after Sri Lankan ...](#), 17 December 2024

²⁶⁷ Tamil Guardian, [British Tamil arrested under PTA released after Sri Lankan ...](#), 17 December 2024

²⁶⁸ UNHCR, [Sri Lankan Refugee Returnees during 2018-2022](#) (pages 8, 10 and 21), January 2023

²⁶⁹ UNHCR, [Sri Lankan Refugee Returnees during 2018-2022](#) (page 26), January 2023

²⁷⁰ UNHCR, [Sri Lankan Refugee Returnees during 2018-2022](#) (page 26), January 2023

²⁷¹ UNHCR, [Sri Lankan Refugee Returnees during 2018-2022](#) (pages 27 to 28), January 2023

²⁷² UNHCR, [Sri Lankan Refugee Returnees during 2018-2022](#) (pages 26 to 27), January 2023

²⁷³ UNHCR, [Sri Lankan Refugee Returnees during 2018-2022](#) (pages 27 to 28), January 2023

²⁷⁴ UNHCR, [Sri Lankan Refugee Returnees during 2018-2022](#) (pages 27 to 28), January 2023

reportedly consisted of home visits and sometimes phone calls from the security forces. This was still the case at the end of the reporting period, according to these sources. The sources provided differing reports regarding the scale at which this had occurred in recent years. For example, a source consulted in 2024 reported that Tamil returnees were “definitely” monitored, while other sources reported that likely only returning former members of the LTTE were monitored, and that there was less monitoring of returnees than in the period prior to 2015.²⁷⁵

- 14.6.4 Citing ‘in-country sources’ in Sri Lanka reporting on ‘the lived experience of recent failed asylum seekers from Jaffna and Batticaloa,’ the May 2024 DFAT report noted that ‘... there was no evidence of official harassment or threats to their security, including state surveillance or visits to their homes, since returning to Sri Lanka, nor evidence of societal discrimination after returning to their communities. In-country sources reported that, while failed asylum seekers could not discount the possibility of visits by the TID or CID in the past, including for suspected LTTE links, such visits were very rare today, and recent returnees had not experienced this.’²⁷⁶
- 14.6.5 The same report, again citing ‘in-country sources’, stated they told DFAT: ‘... they were not aware of failed asylum seekers, including those with suspected LTTE links, being subjected to official harassment, including monitoring, or official or societal discrimination following their return to Sri Lanka. In-country sources said it was possible that a failed asylum seeker with a criminal history could be monitored, but it would be on the basis of their criminal history, not their ethnicity. Passengers of illegal maritime ventures convicted of illegal departure on their return to Sri Lanka would unlikely be the subject of monitoring.’²⁷⁷
- 14.6.6 Two confidential sources consulted in February 2024, cited in the Netherlands MoFA report, said that ‘... monitoring of Tamil migrants did not involve more than a one-off home visit by the authorities after their return.’²⁷⁸
- 14.6.7 The IRB response (2022 to August 2024) cited correspondence with a human rights lawyer in July 2024, who stated that ‘... returning failed asylum seekers and people who exited the country without the required documentation and were released after interrogation or on bail, may face further questioning, surveillance, and harassment by security agencies after their release ...’²⁷⁹
- 14.6.8 Regarding the situation of returnees after involvement with Tamil organisation outside Sri Lanka, the Netherlands MoFA report cited sources dated between 2020 and February 2024, noting that: ‘Several sources reported that it was not unusual for Sri Lankan Tamils living abroad to regularly visit Sri Lanka and not get into trouble there. The same was said to be true for Tamils with a more prominent political reputation. However, other sources pointed out that Tamils who had been active abroad for Tamil organisations reportedly could encounter problems on their return to Sri Lanka. However, this information was anecdotal in nature, and

²⁷⁵ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (pages 63 and 64), June 2024

²⁷⁶ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.55), 2 May 2024

²⁷⁷ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.57), 2 May 2024

²⁷⁸ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 64), June 2024

²⁷⁹ IRB, [Sri Lanka: Situation and treatment by authorities of returnees ...](#), 14 August 2024

insufficient to establish exactly what those problems consisted of and whether it happened frequently. In this context, two sources indicated that diaspora members who were prominently active for Tamil organisations usually did not return to Sri Lanka for fear of getting into trouble. However, two other sources reported that the agencies who interviewed returning Tamils at Colombo airport were not aware of their political activities abroad.²⁸⁰

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14.7 Reintegration of returnees

14.7.1 The UNHCR report on refugee returnees found, when asked about relations with the community, that ‘Only 2% of all the returnees (8 respondents) felt they were treated differently by the community on account of being refugee returnees. Most did not give a reason why they felt this way, but two respondents said people in the community try to avoid them. Even in the survey conducted in 2021/22 among 2019 and 2020 returnees, only 1% felt they were treated differently by the community.’²⁸¹

14.7.2 The IRB response (2022 to August 2024) cited correspondence with a human rights lawyer (2 July 2024) and senior lecturer (Dept. of Economics, University of Jaffna, 29 June 2024), who stated that ‘... failed asylum seekers [including Tamil people according to the lawyer] who return to the country are not “stigmatized” by their families or communities. The Lawyer added that those returnees “might face challenges” in accessing employment in Colombo, as some employers “might” request a police report.’²⁸²

14.7.3 According to the May 2024 DFAT report, ‘... failed asylum seekers ... can often fall back on family and community networks for support.’²⁸³

14.7.4 On 18 December 2024, the Tamil Guardian reported on the Governor of Northern Province, who called for Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu, India, to return to the country:

‘Northern Province Governor Nagalingam Vedanayagam called for Eelam Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu to return to the island, pledging land allocation, housing schemes, and livelihood assistance ...

‘The Governor made these remarks during a meeting with Sanchitha Sathyamoorthy, former National Office Head of the UNHCR, at the Governor’s Secretariat this week. Vedanayagam acknowledged the UNHCR’s past assistance to the people of the North and emphasized the organization’s role in facilitating the return of Tamil refugees from Tamil Nadu. He outlined plans to provide returning refugees with employment opportunities, housing, and access to land, and requested the UNHCR’s cooperation in these efforts.

‘While the Governor’s intentions suggest a renewed focus on reconciliation and development in the North, they stand in contrast to the lived realities of Tamil families fleeing the island. Over recent years, there have been multiple cases of families departing the North-East by boat, seeking refuge on the

²⁸⁰ Netherlands MoFA, [Thematic COI Report: Tamils in Sri Lanka](#) (page 64), June 2024

²⁸¹ UNHCR, [Sri Lankan Refugee Returnees during 2018-2022](#) (page 51), January 2023

²⁸² IRB, [Sri Lanka: Situation and treatment by authorities of returnees ...](#), 14 August 2024

²⁸³ DFAT, [Country Information Report Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 5.54), 2 May 2024

Tamil Nadu coast near Rameswaram. These families have cited dire economic conditions and ongoing persecution as their reasons for leaving.²⁸⁴

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15. Avenues of redress

15.1 Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL)

- 15.1.1 The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), an independent commission established in 1997, aims to ‘... promote and monitor protection of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution and ensure compliance by the Sri Lankan State of international human rights standards.’²⁸⁵
- 15.1.2 The 2023 USSD HR Report noted that ‘The HRCSL had jurisdiction to investigate human rights violations ... [it] accepted complaints from the public and could also initiate investigations.’²⁸⁶ Complaints can be filed in Sinhala, Tamil or English²⁸⁷.
- 15.1.3 The HRCSL’s Annual Report 2022 (the last available as of 30 May 2025), noted that the HRCSL ‘... operates through 10 Regional Offices (Ampara, Anuradhapura, Badulla, Batticaloa, Jaffna, Kalmunai, Kandy, Matara, Trincomalee and Vavuniya), and six sub-offices (Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaithivu, Nuwara Eliya, Polonnaruwa, and Puttalam,) to carry out its functions ... In 2022, the HRCSL established and inaugurated a new regional office in Nuwara Eliya, bringing the total number of regional offices to 11.’²⁸⁸
- 15.1.4 The 2022 and 2023 USSD HR Reports stated that, ‘Rights groups assessed the HRCSL did not operate independent of and without interference from the government.’²⁸⁹ ²⁹⁰ The 2022 USSD HR Report noted ‘... in October 2021 the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) recommended downgrading the HRCSL accreditation from A-status to B-status, largely due to the lack of an independent process to appoint commissioners and concerns regarding the HRCSL’s effectiveness.’²⁹¹
- 15.1.5 A May 2023 report on the HRCSL by the Sri Lankan human rights NGO, Right to Life Human Rights Centre, noted that, despite criticisms for not adhering to international standards and its downgrading to B, the HRCSL: ‘... has managed to regain a certain level of public trust by taking swift action in response to human Rights violations in the country, even without receiving formal complaints. The commission has proactively called in major parties involved and provided recommendations to address these violations. Notably, it has established a quick response unit specifically dedicated to addressing cases of torture and extrajudicial killings. Additionally, the commission has worked to streamline police station examinations and expedite the processing of pending public complaints. Furthermore, it has

²⁸⁴ Tamil Guardian, [Northern Governor urges refugees to return as Tamils ...](#), 18 December 2024

²⁸⁵ HRCSL, [About us – History](#), no date

²⁸⁶ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 5), 22 April 2024

²⁸⁷ HRCSL, [Make a Complaint](#), no date

²⁸⁸ HRCSL, [Annual Report 2022](#) (page 4), no date

²⁸⁹ USSD, [2022 HR Report](#) (section 5), 20 March 2023

²⁹⁰ USSD, [2023 HR Report](#) (section 5), 22 April 2024

²⁹¹ USSD, [2022 HR Report](#) (section 5), 20 March 2023

increased transparency and accountability by publishing its recommendations, announcements, and guidelines aimed at protecting human Rights in Sri Lanka.²⁹² [HRC-Report-English.pdf](#)

- 15.1.6 The August 2024 OHCHR report to the HRC noted that, 'In May 2024, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions recommended that the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka be re-accredited with A status. In its report, the Global Alliance provided several recommendations, including the recommendation that the Commission take proactive steps to ensure its accessibility to the wider community, including in the north and east of the country.'²⁹³

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²⁹² Right to Life, [HRCSL Study of Role and Complaint Investigation](#) (page 5), May 2023

²⁹³ HRC, [Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka](#) (paragraph 19), 27 August 2024

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Political situation
 - 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections
 - Tamil parties
- Demography, population, map
- Treatment of Tamils
 - Treatment of Tamils generally
 - Land appropriation/repatriation
 - Women, including female-headed households (FHH)
- Treatment of Tamil separatist groups
 - Proscribed groups
 - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
 - Monitoring and surveillance
 - Arrest and detention
 - Rehabilitation and reintegration
- Treatment of Tamil diaspora
 - Tamil diaspora population
 - Proscribed groups
 - Monitoring and surveillance
- Freedom of speech
 - Treatment of journalists, human rights activists
 - Social media monitoring
- Treatment of returnees
 - Procedures at airports
 - Failed Asylum Seekers
 - Stop and watch lists
 - Monitoring and reintegration

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **9.0**
- valid from **21 August 2025**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information and updated assessment in line with this.

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Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

1st Floor

Clive House

70 Petty France

London

SW1H 9EX

Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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