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MISSION DU DANEMARK GENEVE - UN

SRI LANKA (47)

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Geneva, 10 November 1997

Im. Fin.sekr. J.nr. 97/71513-7
Akt.nr. 4 Bilagsnr. 1

Dear Ms. Skipper.

Reference is made to your letter, dated 28 October 1997, by which you transmitted a question of the Danish Authorities regarding UNHCR's assessment of the situation in Sri Lanka following recent security incidents in that country. Please find below our present position with regard to the return of rejected Sri Lankan sayam-seekers to that country.

It is known to UNHCR that an instruction was issued by the police director for increased surveillance of returnees and for compulsory checking at the airport of returnees by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). These CID checks are carried out in addition to the regular immigration checks. Even though this instruction is not always executed to the letter and, some returnees have not been checked by the CID, returnees should expect that their identity and background are checked by the Sri Lankan authorities. We would therefore like to stress the importance, in particular for Tamils, of the possession of Sri Lankan identity documents. The number of checkpoints in Colombo has increased and returnees may be confronted with identity checks, not only upon arrival to Colombo airport but also thereafter in Colombo town.

Presently, returnees in general do not encounter problems at the airport and the possibility to enter Sri Lanka is still unaffected by the above indicated control measures. At the same time the impression exists that returnees are under increased attention of the police authorities in Colombo and that therewith the risk of -at least- short term detentions has increased.

UNHCR follows closely the situation of two returnees that were detained following their return from Switzerland. One of these returnees is detained since 5 September 1997. A third returnee was detained on 25 October and has meanwhile been released. Because of the specific circumstances of these cases, one can not however draw general conclusions from these cases.

On 25 October, our Office received information that a search operation was conducted by the Sri Lankan police and armed forces in Colombo and that during that operation vehicles were not allowed to leave or enter the city. The search was mainly conducted in the areas of Colombo inhabited by Tamils and, at around 08.00 hours on the 25 October, some 850 Tamils were said to have been arrested. According to the Sri Lankan press, all but 40 of those detained were released.

Ms. K. Skipper
Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Denmark
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While, once more stressing the importance for returnees of passing Sri Lankan identity documents, on the basis of information presently available, UNHCR maintains its position regarding the return to Sri Lanka of rejected asylum seekers as laid down in our Information Note issued in March 1997. If the situation in Sri Lanka, and more in particular in Colombo, would deteriorate further, UNHCR will review the implications of such developments for the return of rejected Sri Lankan asylum seekers to their country of origin. We will inform the Permanent Mission of Denmark of any future change in UNHCR's assessment of the situation in Sri Lanka.

We hope that the above answers the questions of the Danish Authorities. We remain at your disposal to answer further inquiries from the Danish Authorities and look forward to continue our close co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

J. Paul
Kayola Paul
Deputy Director
Bureau for Europe

Udlændinge



Styrelsen

SRI LANKA

Udenrigsministeriet
Flygtningesekretariatet
Asiatisk Plads 2
1448 København K.

Dato:

15 OKT. 1996

Kontor: Dokumentationskontoret

Sagsbehandler: ELL ELL00052

Udl.nr./J.nr.: 1996 HJ 171500023

I forbindelse med de seneste nyheder om bombesprængningerne i det centrale Colombo, på Sri Lanka, skal Udlændingestyrelsen anmode om Udenrigsministeriets assistance til at søge oplysninger om, hvorledes UNHCR forholder sig til den aktuelle sikkerhedssituation, herunder UNHCR's stilling til tilbagesendelse af afviste asylansøgere.

Med venlig hilsen

Hans Peitersen

Else Øllgaard

cc:

Flygtningenævnet

