

November 10, 2006

Hon. Peter G. Mackay, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Lester B. Pearson Building  
125 Sussex Drive Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

Dear Minister:

The violence in Sri Lanka has escalated in the last few months and many Canadians of Sri Lankan heritage have every right to be very concerned about the silence of the Canadian government.

Other jurisdictions and international affairs commentators certainly find it odd that the Canadian government, a government that says it wants to support justice and peace in the world, has no voice at all when it comes to the murder of innocent civilians and democratically elected representatives.

The unending carnage has resulted in considerable loss of human life and still, while the international community has no trouble expressing its direct and clear concerns about what is happening in Sri Lanka but, as yet, Canada remains virtually mute.

The world has witnessed the shelling of a school in Kathirveli by Sri Lankan Armed Forces that cost at least fifty lives. Sri Lankan security forces fired a barrage of artillery on a centre at Vaharai in Batticaloa that housed Tamil refugees, killing more than 40 people, including children, and injuring a large number of innocent civilians. Other countries, including the United States, India, and the European Union have condemned the deaths at Vaharai, but not a word from Canada or our prime minister. Why is Canada so silent? Why is our government turning its back on people living in fear and destruction? This has not been Canada's traditional approach to international affairs.

It seems that other members of the world community have no problem pointing out atrocities conducted by the Sri Lankan government. Two months ago, Retired Swedish General Ulf Henricsson, then head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, ruled the Sri Lankan military were responsible for the murders of seventeen aid workers belonging to the French group "Action Contre La Faim". He referred to the mass murder of these aid workers, all shot in the head at close range, as "one of the most serious recent crimes against humanitarian aid workers worldwide."

Today we learned of the assassination in Colombo of Mr. Nadarajah Raviraj, a Tamil National Alliance Member of Parliament. He was shot dead while on his way to work. While the assassination has been universally condemned, little has been forthcoming thus far from the Canadian government.

Minister MacKay, will Canada be using its hard-earned position in the world to lend its voice to pressure the Government of Sri Lanka to increase its efforts to find peace in that violence-torn country; or, conversely, should Canadians expect continued inaction and silence from its government?

Can you tell me if Canadian foreign policy, and Canada's respected position in The world, is being jeopardized now by ideology over responsible common sense?

To many Canadians it is unacceptable for the Government of Canada to Label one group of people as terrorists and then say nothing when another group of participants in a dispute routinely display their own brutality and aggression. Moreover, there can never be any correct side when innocent people end up being slaughtered.

It is my hope, Minister, that with the latest outbreaks of violence and death in Sri Lanka, the Government of Canada will wake up from its complacent ignorance and actually take a more leading role on the world stage calling for peace in Sri Lanka and improved dialogue between the interested parties that will lead to resolution of the conflict that has torn the country apart that country and killed and injured so many of its innocent citizens.

I look forward to your response to this urgent matter.

Yours sincerely,

Hon. Dan McTeague, P.C., M.P.