

From Members and Supporters of the  
All-Party Parliamentary Group  
For Tamils

Rt Hon David Cameron MP  
The Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

February 2011

Dear Prime Minister,

**The need for an independent international investigation into war crimes in Sri Lanka**

We are writing to urge you to use all the powers at your disposal to support calls for an independent international investigation into the alleged war crimes that occurred during Sri Lanka's 25-year civil war. As you know, members of the Congress of the United States have already written to the Secretary of State there to ask her to call for such an investigation, and we should like the British Government to put its full weight behind this proposal.

In October 2009, the European Commission published a report on human rights in Sri Lanka since the war. It said "During the period covered by the investigation, there has been a high rate of unlawful killings in Sri Lanka, including killings carried out by the security forces, persons for whom the State is responsible and the police." It added: "Extra-judicial killings were widespread and included political killings designed to suppress and deter the exercise of civil and political rights... Unlawful killings perpetrated by soldiers, police and paramilitary groups with ties to the Government, have been a persistent problem."

In the same month, the US State Department listed numerous crimes that they believed required further investigation, including intentional bombing of civilian and humanitarian organisations, the use of child soldiers, extrajudicial abuse and detention of unarmed civilians and former combatants, the killing of captives or combatants seeking to surrender, and individual disappearances.

There is, therefore, certainly enough evidence to conclude that war crimes could have taken place in Sri Lanka, particularly towards the end of the civil war there, and we believe they can only be investigated effectively if investigations are carried out independently.

Along with many colleagues around the world, we believe that only an independent investigation can inspire confidence and achieve reconciliation. This is because, as Congress members noted, Sri Lanka's past efforts to investigate severe human rights abuses have not been successful and inspire no confidence that new internal investigations will be credible. These concerns are supported by numerous reputable institutions around the world.

The International Crisis Group argues "An international inquiry into alleged crimes is essential given the absence of political will or capacity for genuine domestic investigations, the need for an accounting to address the grievances that drive conflict in Sri Lanka, and the potential of other governments adopting the Sri Lankan model of counter-insurgency in their own internal conflicts."

Amnesty International has pointed out that there have already been 9 commissions of enquiry formed by the Government of Sri Lanka since 1991 to investigate human rights issues including disappearances. Amnesty has said they have lacked credibility, delayed criminal investigations and have been subject to government interference, with several commission members resigning in protest.

A Report by Desmond Tutu and Lakhdar Brahimi, for The Elders, also describes a Sri Lankan commission as “not nearly enough” and that what is needed is an independent, international inquiry.

In line with the members of Congress who wrote to the Secretary of State, we believe it is in the international community’s best interests – and the best interests of the United Kingdom, as well as of Sri Lanka – to ensure a lasting peace in Sri Lanka after such a long period of ethnic conflict. However, we believe that peace can only be reached once the full truth is known and understood.

For all these reasons, we ask you to announce Britain’s support for a robust and independent international investigation that would clarify what occurred during the conflict and offer the best hope of a sustainable peace in Sri Lanka.

Yours sincerely,

**Lee Scott**  
**(Chair)**

**Virendra Sharma**  
**(Vice Chair)**

**Siobhain McDonagh**  
**(Vice Chair)**

**Simon Hughes**  
**(Vice Chair)**

**Heidi Alexander**  
**Hazel Blears**  
**Russell Brown**  
**Martin Caton**  
**Jeremy Corbyn**  
**Jon Cruddas**  
**John Cryer**  
**Clive Efford**  
**Barry Gardiner**  
**Robert Halfon**  
**Margaret Hodge**  
**George Howarth**  
**Andy Love**  
**Stephen McCabe**  
**Teresa Pearce**  
**Nick Raynsford**  
**Joan Ruddock**  
**Emily Thornberry**  
**Keith Vaz**

**Ian Austin**  
**Peter Bottomley**  
**David Cairns**  
**Katy Clark**  
**Stella Creasy**  
**Jim Cunningham**  
**Jim Dowd**  
**Mike Gapes**  
**Mary Glendon**  
**Tom Harris**  
**Sharon Hodgson**  
**David Lammy**  
**John Mann**  
**John McDonnell**  
**Steve Pound**  
**Chris Ruane**  
**Stephen Timms**  
**Gareth Thomas**