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New guidelines paints Sri Lanka in much better light

UK Home Office publishes new policy on Sri Lanka

(TamilGuardian.com) - The British Home Office this week published an updated policy guidance and information note on Sri Lanka aimed at decision makers handling the granting of protection and human rights claims for Sri Lankan Tamils. The updated policy guidance, which follows the country guidance of GJ & Others in 2013, stated that there had been "positive developments" since the new government led by President Sirisena came to office and "an improved environment for civil society and human rights defenders has also been reported".

Some extracts are reproduced below:

"Unlike in the past, returnees who have a previous connection with the LTTE are able to return to their communities without suffering ill-treatment. Civil society groups on the ground did not report recent issues of ill-treatment. The police interest, if any, is not in any previous involvement with the LTTE, but on whether the person has committed any criminal act. This is because many had left the country using forged identities and the police were therefore seeking to establish the true identity of the returning person and whether they are wanted for any criminal acts in addition to leaving the

country with false documents."

"There are reports of arrest and detentions. However, the scale and extent is difficult to quantify. Reliable information is not available due to a lack of published data, vagaries and/or exaggeration in numbers cited and the potential lack of neutrality in pro-Tamil reportage."

"Since GJ & Others was handed down, the new government under President Sirisena has de-proscribed a number of Tamil groups/diaspora organisations, which indicates that involvement with such organisations is not of itself seen as a threat to the integrity of the state (see De-proscription of Tamil groups). However, the situation is not sufficiently different in principle to justify a departure from the Tribunal's findings in GJ & Others. Decision makers must consider each case on its facts and consider whether any diaspora activities in which the person has engaged are, or are likely to be, perceived as a 'significant role' such to make them of ongoing interest to the Sri Lankan authorities and/or that their activities will be, or will be perceived as being, a threat to the integrity of the state."

"Unlike its predecessor, the current government -

which was formed since GJ & Others was heard and promulgated - has shown willingness for allegations of war crimes during the final phase of the conflict to be fully investigated, and has established its own truth, justice, and reconciliation commission to investigate potential war crimes." "Since the new government came to office in 2015, 'white van' abductions are now seldom reported. The number of torture complaints has greatly reduced. However, new cases of Tamil victims continue to emerge and police reportedly often continue to resort to violence and excessive force, particularly when extracting confessions. Such treatment is reported to be common in relation to criminal investigations, regardless of the nature of the suspected offence. Decision makers should also note that many human rights reports on Sri Lanka use the term 'torture' to cover a very wide range of treatment ranging from forceful questioning or threats, through to the most severe forms of ill-treatment."

The brighter picture of Sri Lanka was not believed by some. Jan Jananayagam of Together Against Genocide (TAG) said, "this home office policy flies in the face of recent events in Sri Lanka...SEE P12



Hon Sagala Ratnayake MP, Minister of Law & Order meets UNP UK Branch

The President, United National Party UK branch, Mr Dinesh Kapukotuwa and Mr Heshan Perera, President UNP Youth League UK met Hon Sagala Ratnayake MP Minister of law and Order on a visit to London. The venue was at Park Plaza Hotel on Sunday 26 March 2017. The meeting, at the request of Hon Sagala Ratnayake, was held to discuss branch matters and the way forward.

L/R Heshan Perera, President UNP Youth League, Hon Minister Sagala Ratnayake MP and Dinesh Kapukotuwa, President UNP UK Branch.



Congratulations Adam Amarasinghe crowned the IMMAF European Champion

SEE P10



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