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JEAN-PIERRE LACROIX,
UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL FOR UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS,
NEW YORK.

jean-pierre.lacroix@un.org

c/o Debbie Berman , berman@un.org

Copy to OHCHR, Geneva: registry@ohchr.org

VETTING & SCREENING OF SRI LANKA'S SPECIAL TASK FORCE FOR PEACEKEEPING

Dear Mr. Lacroix,

We write yet again about the issue of vetting and screening of Sri Lanka peacekeepers.

We would like to draw your attention to the deployment of members of Sri Lanka's **Special Task Force** for peacekeeping. These are paramilitary police with an appalling human rights record from their inception three and a half decades ago. Some of their alleged crimes against Tamils include summary executions, abductions, enforced disappearance for which there has been no accountability. Even this year there are allegations that the STF were complicit in the recent violence targeting Muslims. We believe this is because they enjoy total impunity and unfortunately peacekeeping is a reward.

We understand from the recent report¹ published by the International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) that they have collected a list of 56 names of STF officers they say should be screened and vetted. We would like to know what action you plan to take on this list and the report itself – will the STF officers be screened in the same way as the military? We draw your attention to Annex 1 of their report which lists many of the violations the STF are alleged to have perpetrated over the past three decades – documented by a plethora of international and Sri Lankan human rights groups as well as governments and the UN. Was DPKO aware of this history when they accepted the STF as peacekeepers?

Furthermore, we are very troubled to read in the [ITJP report](#) that they have identified a senior STF commander who appears to be currently deployed in Africa in a UN peacekeeping role, despite there

¹ <http://www.itjpsl.com/reports/special-task-force>

being allegations that he was involved in ordering summary executions of Tamils in the East of Sri Lanka during the war. This is yet another instance of the failure of your vetting procedures for Sri Lanka. We urge you to send this individual home immediately and ensure he is credibly investigated. Also we note there are instances of other senior STF officers being deployed in the past in UN peacekeeping roles such as SSP Waruna Jayasundera in South Sudan, which indicate a sustained failure of vetting, in our opinion.

In addition we would like to know if any UN body or your Department have vetted and screened the senior leadership of the newly formed Directorate of Overseas Operations in Sri Lanka which is to oversee peacekeeping deployments. It would indeed be ironic if this important body was led by individuals who themselves were not vetted.

In the spirit of transparency and respect for survivors of the war in Sri Lanka, we urge you to state publicly the current criteria employed for the vetting process.

We note that the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka has been asked to vet UN peacekeepers from Sri Lanka but consider that ultimately the responsibility lies with your department, as according to the UN, it seeks to ensure that only “individuals with the highest standards of integrity, competence and efficiency” are hired.

We request the favor of your reply addressing the concerns raised in this letter. Thank you.

With utmost respect,

1. Australian Tamil Congress (**ATC**)
2. British Tamils Forum (**BTF**)
3. Canadian Tamil Congress (**CTC**)
4. Ilankai Tamil Sangam (**ITS-USA**)
5. People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (**PEARL-USA**)
6. United States Tamil Political Action Council (**USTPAC**)

To Summarize, the questions we would like answered are:

1. What action will you take regarding the list of 56 names?
2. How will the STF be screened and vetted – those already in the field and those in future deployments?
3. Will you return home the STF officer currently deployed in Africa who does not appear to have been effectively vetted?
4. Have you, or will you, vet the members of Sri Lanka’s Directorate of Overseas Operations?
5. Please state the vetting criteria currently in use – please note the ITJP report contains some suggested criteria that might be helpful to consider.