

Press release: UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Releases Annual Human Rights Report 2016

On [20th July] the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) made public its annual Human Rights Report for 2016. The report recognises and welcomes improvements in the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, while also emphasising the need for further progress. Sri Lanka is one of 30 'Human Rights Priority Countries' (HRPCs), countries with which the UK looks for positive engagement that contributes to addressing human rights concerns. It commends progress by the Government of Sri Lanka against commitments reflected in UN Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution 30/1, while pointing out that greater progress is needed.

The report welcomes the encouraging step towards reconciliation by the passing of legislation establishing an Office of Missing Persons (OMP), while urging the government to operationalise the OMP. The Report also calls on the Government to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and draft new counter-terrorism legislation in line with international human rights standards.

It recognises the need for further development of the police force in order to reduce the risk of human rights violations, including torture, and improving public confidence in the rule of law. The UK is continuing support for projects that build capabilities and will help the Sri Lankan Police meet international standards.

The report notes that intercommunal tensions remain an area of concern. The High Commission notes that these tensions have subsequently escalated in 2017 and hopes that calls to address hate speech as seriously as the problem merits will be heeded.

The UK Government has pledged £6.6m in the period 2016 – 2019 to continue support for reconciliation and human rights. Work with the Government of Sri Lanka will aim to continue to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, and to share UK experience and expertise.

British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka James Dauris, said:

"The purpose of our Annual Report is to draw attention to human rights issues of concern in countries around the world, to encourage progress and recognize achievements made. In the past year we have engaged closely with the Sri Lankan Government and many others to support delivery on human rights commitments."

The Report reflects the UK's desire to work positively with countries facing human rights challenges to help them improve their human rights performance.

The 30 HRPCs are: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burma, Burundi, Central

African Republic, China, Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Libya, Maldives, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Promoting human rights is a central foreign policy objective of the British Government. The FCO began publishing the Annual Human Rights Report in 1998 and it is now [published online](#) As well as the Annual Report, twice-yearly updates on the 30 HRPCs are also published.