



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE



New Zealand Ministry of
Foreign Affairs and Trade
Manuatu Aorere

1 March 2016
Dhaya Haran
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Dear Dhaya Haran

I refer to your email of 26 February 2016 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

"We would like to clarify what the New Zealand Government's understanding of the Sri Lankan Government's reconciliation process is.

- 1. We request all information held by the New Zealand government about the Sri Lankan Government's "reconciliation process", which informs the opinions stated in the paragraphs above, of the existence of "the considerable efforts...the Government of Sri Lanka [is] putting into the country's reconciliation process" and of the Government of Sri Lanka's "significant programme of post-war reconciliation".*

We note some details of two support programs, The Dairy Training Excellence Initiative and Wannu Dairy Regeneration Activity, are listed in the above quoted paragraphs. We also note that some details of the Wannu Dairy Regeneration Activity from 2012-5 are detailed in a public document on the MFAT website. However some important aspects remain unclear such as the precise geographical locations and ethnicity of beneficiaries. With regards to this we note that a recent World Bank report finds that "In 2012/13, Sri Lankan Tamils had the highest rates of poverty among ethnic groups" and that "Poverty rates are highest in portions of the Northern and Eastern provinces, which were most affected by the internal conflict. The high poverty headcount rates in these regions are associated with weak links to the labor market, particularly among the youth and educated women. People with physical disabilities and psychological problems due to conflict, in particular ex-combatants and widows, are particularly vulnerable to exclusion.

- 2. We request all information giving details of any support provided to the Sri Lankan*

government since the 2002 peace-process to present, or planned in the future by the New Zealand Government or other New Zealand bodies or persons that the New Zealand Government has authority over.

We note that International Crisis Group (ICG) – an organisation that has been funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – states in their report, "Sri Lanka's North I: The Denial of Minority Rights", that:

"The slow but undeniable movement of Sinhala settlers into the fringes of the north and other forms of government-supported "Sinhalaisation" are reigniting a sense of grievance and weakening chances for a real settlement with Tamil and other minority parties to devolve power".

As far as we are aware there has been no significant change to this process, despite recent elections. The presence of Sinhala settlers, alongside the large military presence in the North-east, which the government refuses to remove, creates insecurity for Tamil population, in particular women. We are interested to know whether the New Zealand government has evaluated the impact of any support provided to the Sri Lankan government, on these types of issues, such as the issue of the settlement of Sinhalese settlers in the north-east, changing the demography and therefore in the words of ICG "weakening chances for a real settlement with Tamil[s]...to devolve power". We also note that John Key has linked "our work to boost the country's own dairy sector" directly to the Sri Lankan Government's "reconciliation process".

- 3. We request all documents relating to how the New Zealand Government evaluates support given to the Sri Lankan Government by the New Zealand Government or other New Zealand bodies or persons that the New Zealand Government has authority over.*

Finally we also interested to know whether the Prime Minister John Key will be meeting with any Tamil representatives and Tamil civil society groups, in particular in the north-east.

- 4. We request a full itinerary and any other information detailing Prime Minister John Key's visit to Sri Lanka in February 2016. ...*

The information requested in the fourth point is more closely connected with the Prime Minister. Therefore that part of your request has been transferred to that Office in accordance with the provisions of section 14 of the OIA.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joana Johnston', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joana Johnston
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade