

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

5 February 2013

**LKA104268.E**

Sri Lanka: Treatment of non-Tamil supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by the government; whether religious minorities are viewed as LTTE supporters, including Muslims and Christians, and their treatment  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### 1. Background

Sources indicate that killings have been targeted against "LTTE sympathizers" (UN 21 Dec. 2012, 27; US 24 May 2012, 3). The US *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011* reports that some "LTTE sympathizers" have been detained, interrogated, tortured, and had disappeared (ibid., 4, 8). The UNHCR states that everyone living in the north or east of Sri Lanka or the "outer fringes of the areas under LTTE control," "necessarily had contact with the LTTE and its civilian administration in their daily lives" (21 Dec. 2012). According to the UNHCR, real or perceived association with the LTTE "can vary, but may include" the following: senior LTTE members; former LTTE combatants; people who worked in the LTTE administration, intelligence, "computer branch," or media; people who have not received any military training, but sheltered or transported LTTE members or goods; LTTE fundraisers and activists; people perceived as having links with the Sri Lankan diaspora that provided support or funding for the LTTE; and family members of people who may be considered associated with the LTTE (21 Dec. 2012).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an associate professor of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg indicated that "generally, at least in the past, accusing someone of supporting the LTTE has been a way to discredit or threaten that person. This has happened for instance to peace activists or other persons (regardless of ethnicity) criticising the government" (14 Jan. 2013). In an interview with the Research Directorate, the Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), a Sri Lankan independent and non-partisan organization that works on research and advocacy related to public policies (n.d.), stated that anyone who is critical of the government, including human rights defenders, journalists, or people who are looking into the effects of the war, such as the number and situation of victims, are labelled as LTTE supporters (14 Feb. 2013). CIVICUS, a world alliance of civil-society organizations (1 Feb. 2011), says that human rights defenders have been accused by the government of being associated with the LTTE (23 Apr. 2012). According to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the military is suspicious of NGOs, and thinks that NGOs are "soft on the LTTE" (1 June 2009). CIVICUS indicates that, in May 2009, five doctors who reported on civilian deaths during the end of the war were detained by the military on accusations of assisting the LTTE (23 Apr. 2012). On 1 June 2009, CSIS indicated that doctors who treated Tamil civilians during the war were being detained on suspicion of LTTE "collaboration."

### 2. Religious Minorities and the LTTE

According to the US *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011*, the religious composition of Sri Lanka is 70 percent Buddhist, 15 percent Hindu, 8 percent Christian, and 7 percent Muslim (US 30 July 2012, 1). The majority of the Sinhalese population is Buddhist, and "most" Tamils are Hindus (ibid.; *Christian Today* 8 May 2009). Sources state that some Sinhalese and Tamil people are Christian (ibid.; Adjunct Professor 14 Jan. 2013). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, an adjunct professor of political science at Temple University indicated that Muslims are a separate ethnic group (14 Jan. 2013).

The adjunct professor noted that, in the early 1980s, there was some small support for the LTTE among Muslim youth (14 Jan. 2013). The adjunct professor indicated that the links between Muslims and the LTTE were severed in 1986 (14 Jan. 2013). Other sources report, however, that, in 1990, Muslim LTTE cadres deserted the LTTE, resulting in the execution of many Muslim cadres by the LTTE (Lankamuslim.com 31 Oct. 2012; *Daily Mirror* 3 Nov. 2012). Sources also indicate that the LTTE expelled Muslims from the north of Sri Lanka in 1990 (Adjunct Professor 14 Jan. 2013; US 30 July 2012, 5; International Crisis Group 11 Jan. 2010). The International Crisis Group puts the number of expelled Muslims at 80,000, although it indicated at the beginning of 2010 that some of these Muslims had started returning to their homes (ibid.). According to Freedom House, "after the demise of the LTTE," the relationship between Muslims and Tamil Hindus has continued to be "somewhat tense" (2012). The adjunct professor indicated that Muslims are "very unlikely to support the LTTE" (ibid.). Similarly, the Executive Director of the CPA said that there is "not much" LTTE support from Muslims (14 Feb. 2013). The associate professor indicated that "there have been cases of...Muslims collaborating with the LTTE" (14 Jan. 2013). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the adjunct professor, there is a "higher percentage of Sinhalese supporters of the LTTE than Muslim supporters of the LTTE" (ibid.). Several sources make reference to the terms "Sinhala Tigers" or "Sinhalese Tigers" being used to describe Sinhalese people who are accused of being LTTE supporters (World Socialist Web Site 2 Jan. 2008; UK 26 June 2009, 54; Sri Lanka 30 Dec. 2010). The World Socialist Web Site, a publication that "assesses political developments in every country from the standpoint of the world crisis of capitalism" (n.d.), indicates that the Sri Lankan government has labelled some social activists as "'Sinhala Tigers'" (2 Jan. 2008).

The adjunct professor estimated that 20 percent of Sri Lanka's Tamil population is Christian (14 Jan. 2013). The adjunct professor stated that some Tamil Christians were part of the LTTE and that "a small number" of Sinhalese Christians support the LTTE (14 Jan. 2013). Similarly, the associate professor indicated that there have been "Christians in the LTTE or supporting the organisation" (14 Jan. 2012).

### 3. Treatment of Non-Tamil Supporters of the LTTE by the Government

According to the adjunct professor, a non-Tamil supporter of the LTTE would be shown "no mercy" by the government, and would "very likely" face harassment and the "use of force" (14 Jan. 2013). The adjunct professor stated that, since the end of the war, the Sri Lankan government is "knowledgeable about Sinhalese support for the LTTE" in Canada, other countries, and in Sri Lanka, where the government has also gathered intelligence about the activities of Sinhalese travellers to the north and east of Sri Lanka (ibid.). He added that the government has a "great databank and spies in the north" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. Other sources, however, do report on the use of informants to identify LTTE supporters in general (TAG 16 Sept. 2012, 10; Freedom from Torture 13 Sept. 2012, 14; CPA 14 Feb. 2013).

Sources report on the arrest of Sinhalese people allegedly associated with the LTTE (Sri Lanka 30 Dec. 2010; LankaNewspapers.com 8 Jan. 2008). Sources report on four Sinhalese men accused of supporting the LTTE being detained without charge for nearly three years (AI 2011; BBC 25 Oct. 2010). Sources indicate that these men were accused of being "Sinhala Tigers" (ibid.; *Colombo Times* 25 Aug. 2009), and of forming an organization called the "Revolutionary Liberation Army" (BBC 20 Mar. 2009). These men were part of a group of 25 union activists and journalists that were abducted in February 2007 and subsequently found in the custody of the Sri Lankan police's Terrorism Investigation Division (AI 2011; BBC 25 Oct. 2010). According to the BBC, the other 21 accused "Sinhala Tigers" were released without any charges (25 Oct. 2010). AI indicates that the treatment of the arrested Sinhalese individuals was "severe" (Mar. 2012). The BBC reports that one of the accused Sinhala Tigers who was released claimed that he was tortured when he refused to confess association with the LTTE (23 Aug. 2009).

Sources indicate that staff members of Lanka-e-News have been labelled as Sinhala Tigers (AHRC 11 Apr. 2011; International Crisis Group 18 July 2011, 19). The International Crisis Group describes Lanka-e-News as an online news source that is a "frequent regime critic" and supporter of former opposition presidential candidate, Sarath Fonseka (ibid.). Sources report on threats against staff (ibid.; AHRC 11 Apr. 2011), including a notice posted on the office door on 7 April 2011 which, among other things, stated, "We are ready to destroy these Sinhalese Tigers wherever they happen to be in the nation" (ibid.). The International Crisis Group reports Lanka-e-News being a "main target" in the repression of dissent, and states that a writer and cartoonist for Lanka-e-News "disappeared," and that, in January 2011, their office was burned down (18 July 2011, 19). The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) reports that journalists that are critical of the government's security measures have been labelled as "'Tiger sympathisers', 'LTTE supporters' or 'terrorists'" (13 Sept. 2010). According to the AHRC, such labelling is a "precursor to a threat or physical attack" (13 Sept. 2010). The AHRC adds that critical journalists have been murdered, assaulted, had their houses burned down, received death threats, and were forced to leave the country (13 Sept. 2010).

The official website of the Anglican Communion, which contains information about Anglican churches world-wide (n.d.), describes an incident in which some LTTE members and a Catholic priest "surrendered" to the Sri Lankan army and "were never seen again" (25 Apr. 2011). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. Further information on this Catholic priest could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact the following individuals and organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Associate Professor of Political Science at Wake Forest University, Canadian Tamil Congress, Centre for Asia Studies, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Centre for Land Warfare Studies, Centre for Policy Alternatives, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, constitutional and human rights lawyer, human rights lawyer in Colombo, INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre, Law and Society Trust, Network for Rights, Refugee Action (Choices AVR), Sri Lanka Human Rights Project, Transparency International (Sri Lanka), US NGO Forum on Sri Lanka. The following individuals and organizations were unable to provide information for this Response: Amnesty International, Research Coordinator at the International Conflict Research Institute, UNHCR.

**Internet sites, including:** *Ceylon Today*; Colombo Telegraph; East West Institute; [ecoi.net](http://ecoi.net); European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights; [Globalsecurity.org](http://Globalsecurity.org); *The Island*; *Jane's Intelligence Review*; *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*; *Joint Force Quarterly*; Human Rights Watch; Lanka News Web: Lessons Learnt Reconciliation Commission; Minority Rights Group International; Salem-News.com; Sri Lanka – Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs, Ministry of Rehabilitation and Prison Reforms, official website of the government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; United Nations – Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld.

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