



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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16 May 2006

### LKA101349.E

Sri Lanka: Whether Tamils living in Sri Lanka, who have relatives living in the West, are subject to extortion by members of the Sri Lankan Army (SLA), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), and/or other organizations (February 2002 - May 2006)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Reports of extortion specifically of Tamils living in Sri Lanka who have relatives living in the West could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

However, some sources indicated that extortion has continued to occur despite the signing of the ceasefire agreement in February 2002 (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Intro.; ISN 4 Aug. 2005; NRC 1 Sept. 2005), which provides that "[p]arties shall in accordance with international law abstain from hostile acts against the civilian population, including such acts as torture, intimidation, abduction, extortion and harassment" (NRC 1 Sept. 2005, 26).

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) raises funds by means of extortion (Freedom House 2005, 594; see also *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Intro.), and according to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), this practice appeared to be widespread, particularly in the northeast, where many displaced persons had returned (NRC 1 Sept. 2005, 133).

According to *The Globe and Mail*, on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka, Tamils who had received funding to rebuild their businesses following the December 2004 tsunami complained of extortion attempts by the LTTE (12 Dec. 2005). One hotel owner said LTTE representatives asked that he make a LKR3,500,000 (CAN\$40,000) donation or "something bad would happen to [his] guests" (*The Globe and Mail* 12 Dec. 2005). Aid organizations working in the region corroborated the complaints of the business owners, *The Globe and Mail* reported (ibid.). Further information on LTTE extortion efforts targeting Tamil business owners during 2005 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Reports of extortion by the LTTE are numerous for the year following the 2002 ceasefire agreement (*The Globe and Mail* 12 Dec. 2005; NRC 17 Jan. 2003, 10; *The Economist* 10 July 2003; AP 26 Dec. 2002; AFP 10 July 2002; ibid. 10 Feb. 2002; *Indian Express* 27 July 2002; AP 8 July 2002; HRW July 2002; *Daily News* 11 Mar. 2003). *The Economist* explains that the LTTE runs "a shadow Tamil statelet which [it] call[s] an Eelam, in the areas under [its] control in the north

and east" (10 July 2003). The LTTE imposes taxes, an act which the government has identified as extortion (*The Economist* 10 July 2003; IPCS n.d., 3; *Daily News* 11 Mar. 2003; *Sunday Observer* 16 Mar. 2003; AFP 10 Feb. 2002). The Press Trust of India reported in 2002 that LTTE militants,

... allowed to move freely in government-controlled areas after the signing of the truce accord, were now going to the houses of civil servants and professionals with demands for money, or summoning citizens to their "financial office" to get them to pay "taxes" or make "donations."

The LTTE ... denied charges of extortion and abduction, but claimed that it had a right to collect taxes in areas under its control. It has promised to formalize the taxation arrangements as soon as it gains control of an interim administration for the north-east (25 Apr. 2002; see also *Daily News* 11 Mar. 2003).

The government publicly announced that the LTTE was not authorized to collect such "taxes" (PTI 10 July 2002).

During efforts to broker the 2002 ceasefire, government officials, including military sources, accused the LTTE of increased extortion of civilians (AFP 10 Feb. 2002; *ibid.* 8 Feb. 2002). One rights group noted in spring 2002 that LTTE extortion was "rampant" (PTI 25 Apr. 2002) while another group, the University Teachers for Human Rights-Jaffna, reported that abductions and extortion by the LTTE, such as in Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka, was on the rise (IPS 21 June 2002). But while in 2003 the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) received a total of forty complaints of LTTE extortion, in 2004 it reported a total of seven (SLMM 12 Jan. 2004; *ibid.* 11 May 2005). Between February 2002 and August 2005, the SLMM recorded 96 complaints of extortion by the LTTE, with 35 of those complaints ruled to be violations of the ceasefire agreement (SLMM 6 Sept. 2005).

Aside from the LTTE, the Sri Lankan government and the Sri Lankan Army have also reportedly been responsible for extortion of civilians (TamilNet 22 Jan. 2003; *ibid.* 15 Feb. 2002; ISN 4 Aug. 2005). The SLMM reported that between February and December 2002, there were 13 complaints of extortion filed with the SLMM against government forces (TamilNet 22 Jan. 2003). However, in 2003 and 2004, there were no complaints of government extortion reported to the SLMM (SLMM 12 Jan. 2004; *ibid.* 11 May 2005).

During a 2002 fact-finding mission to Sri Lanka, the executive director of the non-governmental organization INFORM told the Research Directorate and the Danish Immigration Service that the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) was involved in extortion in Colombo's Tamil neighbourhoods while the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) was responsible for extortion in the Vavuniya region in the northeast (Canada/Denmark May 2002, Sec. 1.4). Further information on extortion specifically by government forces and other organizations besides the LTTE could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Some articles published in 2002 indicated that extortion was being committed against Tamils (IPS 21 June 2002; *ibid.* 3 June 2002; PTI 25 Apr. 2002), while other reports indicated that extortion was also taking place against Muslims (AFP 10 July 2002; BBC 28 June 2002; HRW July 2002), although in 2004 incidents of extortion against Muslims reportedly "lessened" (*Country*

*Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2c). Additional information on victims of extortion could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to a 2006 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on extortion of members of the Tamil diaspora, Tamil expatriates who returned to visit relatives in northern Sri Lanka complained of being targeted by the LTTE, which pressured them into making financial contributions to the organization (HRW 15 Mar. 2006, 2; *ibid.*, 35). The LTTE reportedly told visitors that they could not leave the country unless the extorted sum was paid (*ibid.*, 2; *ibid.*, 38) or, in some cases, that their passports would be confiscated pending payment (*ibid.*, 2). In an interview with HRW, a Toronto lawyer related that Tamil clients who had made return trips to Sri Lanka reported the LTTE would visit them on several occasions to demand payment, which raised fears among their host relatives that refusal to pay "will create a problem for us" (*ibid.*, 38). Further information on the LTTE's extraction of funds from Tamils visiting Sri Lanka could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The United States (US) Department of State indicated in its 2003 *Patterns of Global Terrorism* report that the LTTE "exploits large Tamil communities in North America, Europe, and Asia to obtain funds and supplies for its fighters in Sri Lanka" (29 Apr. 2004). The previously cited 2006 HRW report details efforts of the LTTE to raise funds from the Tamil diaspora in Canada, the United Kingdom (UK) and other parts of Europe through the use of "intimidation, extortion and physical violence" (HRW 15 Mar. 2006, 1). These efforts included a "massive fundraising drive" in late 2005 and early 2006 in Canada and Europe "pressuring" members of Tamil communities to contribute to the LTTE's activities in Sri Lanka, to what it calls the "'final war'" (*ibid.*, 1-2; see also *The Globe and Mail* 12 Dec. 2005). In Toronto, home to the largest overseas Sri Lankan Tamil community (Mackenzie Institute May 2003), local Tamils charged that members of the LTTE were asking families to contribute CAN\$2,500 each or else be prevented from travelling through LTTE-controlled areas of Sri Lanka on future visits (CBC 30 Nov. 2005; *The Globe and Mail* 12 Dec. 2005). Similar reports of extortion in late 2005 were being investigated in Australia (*ibid.*). However, members of the Tamil community who spoke at a press conference organized by the Canadian Tamil Congress after the release of the HRW report argued that the allegations of fundraising activities by the LTTE in Canada were untrue (*The Toronto Star* 16 Mar. 2006). The LTTE retains a large number of "front" organizations such as "'development agencies'" and "'human rights organizations'" as well as a criminal network overseas to raise funds, procure weapons and lobby on its own behalf (Mackenzie Institute May 2003; see also SATP n.d.). Besides Canada, countries where the LTTE networks are well established include the US, the UK, Australia and Switzerland (*ibid.*). In Canada, the World Tamil Movement and the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils are among the most prominent LTTE organizations (Mackenzie Institute May 2003; see also *National Post* 18 Apr. 2006). According to the Mackenzie Institute, which produced a report on overseas terrorism in Canada, LTTE members involved in criminal groups outside of Sri Lanka have been involved in various activities, including extortion rings used to extract funds for LTTE operations in Sri Lanka (*ibid.*). In late 2002, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) indicated that "'LTTE members in Canada [were] involved in extortion'," and "maintain[ed] an iron grip on the Tamil community" in Canada (*National Post* 5 June 2003). Estimates of the total amount of money raised by the LTTE in Canada range from CAN\$1 million to CAN\$22 million yearly (HRW 7 Feb. 2005).

On 10 April 2006, the Canadian government announced that it listed the

LTTE as a terrorist organization under the country's Anti-Terrorism Act (*The Globe and Mail* 10 Apr. 2006; see also *The Toronto Star* 11 Apr. 2006; *The Christian Science Monitor* 3 May 2006). According to the Criminal Code, it is illegal to provide or raise funds for a terrorist organization and to support or participate in its activities (*The Globe and Mail* 10 Apr. 2006). In the days following the government announcement, police raided the Toronto and Montreal offices of the World Tamil Movement, though the organization denied any involvement in raising funds for LTTE activities in Sri Lanka (*National Post* 18 Apr. 2006; *ibid.*, 24 Apr. 2006). The LTTE was declared a foreign terrorist organization by the US in 1997 (US 29 Apr. 2004), while in 2005 the European Union (EU) imposed a travel ban on the group and was said to be considering designating the LTTE as a banned terrorist organization (BBC Sinhala 27 Sept. 2005; *Daily News* 28 Sept. 2005). The EU also agreed that member states should further curtail fundraising and "propaganda" activities by the LTTE in their jurisdiction (*ibid.*; BBC Sinhala 27 Sept. 2005).

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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**Internet sources, including:** Amnesty International (AI), European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), South Asia Analysis Group (SAAG), Tamilnation.org, United Kingdom Home Office, World News Connection (WNC).

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