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Sri Lanka: Number and situation of Tamils inside the Sri Lankan police force and army
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Sri Lanka's police force is under the jurisdiction of the country's Ministry of Defence (Sri Lanka n.d.a; US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1.d). According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005*, the Sri Lankan police force has 66,000 members, including 6,000 members in its Special Task Force [the paramilitary arm of the police force (Sri Lanka n.d.b)] (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1.d).

News and human rights sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that Tamils are underrepresented in the Sri Lankan police force (UN 27 Mar. 2006, para. 37; TamilNet 25 Sept. 2005; see also US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec.1.d). A 27 March 2006 United Nations (UN) report by the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions in Sri Lanka indicates that Tamils represent approximately 1.2 percent of the police force (para. 37). Even in predominantly Tamil areas, there are very few Tamil police officers (*The Hindu* 10 Aug. 2006; US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1.d).

Sinhalese police officers rarely speak Tamil proficiently (UN 27 Mar. 2006, para. 37; see also US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1.d). The report on the Special Rapporteur's mission to Sri Lanka states that "[t]he police ... lack sufficient linguistic ability and cultural sensitivity to interview witnesses and gather the information required to effectively investigate killings that occur within the Tamil and Muslim communities" (UN 27 Mar. 2006, para. 37). Tamils in Sri Lanka have reportedly complained that police officers working at over 200 police stations in the North and East of the country cannot speak Tamil (*The Hindu* 10 Aug. 2006). *Country Reports 2005* notes that language obstacles have "increased the level of misunderstanding and distrust" between the police and Tamil communities in Sri Lanka (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1.d).

Fear of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) targeting Tamil police officers is cited as a possible explanation for the low proportion of Tamils in Sri Lanka's police force (UN 27 Mar. 2006, para. 37; *The Hindu* 10 Aug. 2006). According to the leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), cited in a 10 August 2006 article in *The Hindu*, a daily Indian newspaper with a readership of over four million (ibid. n.d.), "a large number of Tamil police officers [have] been killed by the LTTE ... and now only a handful of them [are] left." The TULF leader further noted that there are "thousands" of vacancies in the police force available to Tamils, but that no Tamils are applying for the positions (*The Hindu* 10 Aug. 2006; see also TamilNet 25 Sept. 2005).

However, the UN report on the Special Rapporteur's mission to Sri Lanka, states that

[w]hile it was sometimes argued that the low proportion of Tamils in the police force was inevitable, given the fear that the LTTE would target Tamil officers, it was acknowledged by informed actors that if the Government made such recruitment a priority, it could be achieved with meaningful financial incentives and preferences for promotion. (27 Mar. 2006, para. 37)

Human rights and news sources consulted indicate that the Sri Lankan police force has implemented Tamil language training programs for Sinhalese police officers (*Daily News* 7 Nov. 2006; *ibid.* 12 Nov. 2003; TamilNet 25 Sept. 2005; UN 27 Mar. 2006, 27-28), as well as financial incentives for Sinhalese officers to learn Tamil (*ibid.*). However, according to the report on the Special Rapporteur's mission to Sri Lanka, the implementation of these measures has been "inadequate" (*ibid.*, 27).

Information on the number and situation of Tamils inside the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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 sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom Home Office.

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