

Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for  
Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Vice President of the European Commission

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



**European Institutions Office**

Brussels, 21 May 2012

Our ref: B1162

Dear Baroness Ashton,

### **EU MUST URGE SRI LANKA TO END IMPUNITY AND ARBITRARY DETENTIONS**

Amnesty International's recent report, *Sri Lanka: Locked away: Sri Lanka's security detainees* (available [here](#)), exposes the continuing widespread practices of unlawful detention in the country as part of a pattern of human rights violations that has persisted following the armed conflict in 2009. Sri Lankan authorities continue to arrest and detain suspects without respecting minimal procedural safeguards, often in the framework of anti-terrorism laws and security measures. Hundreds of people languish in arbitrary, illegal and often incommunicado detention in Sri Lanka, vulnerable to human rights violations including torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions. A culture of impunity continues to pervert the rule of law and hamper the provision of justice. The Sri Lankan Government has failed effectively to address impunity for past and current human rights violations. The authorities also impose severe restrictions on freedom of expression and association.

Given the above, we call on the European Union to implement its clear commitment under the EU Guidelines on International Humanitarian Law to combat impunity and the EU Guidelines on Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The EU should urge Sri Lanka to:

- Halt the long-standing impunity and ensure that perpetrators from both Sri Lankan Government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are held accountable for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed during the armed conflict
- Immediately end all use of incommunicado detention, close all unofficial and secret places of detention and unconditionally release all those arrested under emergency or anti-terrorism laws, unless legitimate charges are brought against them and they are remanded by an independent, regularly constituted court
- Repeal or amend laws which do not conform to international human rights standards
- Carry out independent, impartial and effective investigations into all allegations of human rights violations against detainees and, where violations are found to have occurred, hold those responsible to account
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and establish national preventive mechanisms in accordance with it, to ensure independent monitoring of all places where people are deprived of their liberty

We are of course aware of the situation's complexities, but we urge the EU not to be complacent and insist that the Sri Lankan authorities bring perpetrators to justice. EU pressure should be applied in its dialogue with Sri Lankan authorities, and multilaterally, particularly at the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council.

We look forward to your response and stand ready to provide any further information you may require.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas J Beger  
Director

Cc:

Viorel Isticioaia-Budura, EEAS Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific

Mara Marinaki, EEAS Managing Director for Global and Multilateral Issues

Rolf Timans, EEAS Acting Director for Human Rights and Democracy

Pedro Serrano, EEAS Director for South and South East Asia

David Tirr, EEAS, Head of Division for Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives

Bernard Savage, Head of the EU Delegation to Sri Lanka

Boguslaw Majewski, Chairperson of the Council Working Group on Asia-Pacific