



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

DFAT Country Information Report

Sri Lanka

31 July 2013

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This country information report has been prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for protection status determination purposes only. It provides DFAT's best judgment and assessment at time of writing and is distinct from Australian Government policy with respect to the source country.
- 1.2 The report does not represent an exhaustive country overview and has been prepared with regard to the current caseload for decision makers in Australia.
- 1.3 The report is not intended as the sole basis for decisions and the decision maker is not precluded from considering other relevant information about the country. The report does not contain policy guidance for decision makers.
- 1.4 Where DFAT does not refer to a specific source of a report or allegation, this may in some instances be to protect the source.

2. Background Information

- 2.1 This section provides background and context to the situation in Sri Lanka for the purposes of the country information report.

Recent history

- 2.2 From mid-1983, Sri Lanka was afflicted by a serious civil conflict between Government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE began a military campaign, with the main aim of establishing a separate Tamil state, Tamil Eelam, in the north and east. On 18 May 2009, the Government announced its military victory over the LTTE and complete territorial control over Sri Lanka. Over the course of the conflict hundreds of thousands of people were displaced and tens of thousands of people were killed.
- 2.3 In May 2010, President Mahinda Rajapaksa appointed a Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) to investigate events from the failure of the ceasefire agreement in February 2002 to the end of the conflict in May 2009. The LLRC report was tabled in Parliament on 16 December 2011. The Government released a National Action Plan to implement the recommendations of the LLRC report on 26 July 2012 (the National Action Plan).

Economic Overview

2.4 Sri Lanka has been growing steadily economically since the end of the civil conflict in 2009. Its economy is worth approximately US\$65 billion and its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is approximately US\$3134, putting it ahead of most other South Asian countries. There is a continued imbalance in the distribution of wealth and economic growth in the country. Although conflict-affected areas in the north and east are recovering, many people in these areas, as well as in other areas around the country, remain economically vulnerable.

2.5 While Sri Lanka reported strong growth in the years after the conflict, this dropped from approximately eight per cent in 2010 and 2011 to approximately six per cent in 2012 and 2013. According to the International Monetary Fund, Sri Lanka's fiscal position is still weak but the country's high public debt-to-GDP ratio, at 79 per cent, is falling steadily. Inflation stands at 7.9 per cent in 2013.

2.6 Sri Lanka's export-oriented policies have shifted from a reliance on agricultural exports to an increasing emphasis on the services and manufacturing sectors. The services sector accounts for almost 60 per cent of GDP. Manufacturing, accounting for almost 30 per cent of GDP, is dominated by the garment industry. The agriculture sector, though decreasing in economic importance, accounts for approximately 11 per cent of national output and employs more than one-third of the workforce. The public sector remains large, and the state continues to dominate in the financial, utilities, health and education sectors.

2.7 Sri Lanka's exports (mainly garments, tea and rubber) contributed US\$20.5 billion to the economy up to July 2013. Sri Lanka imports mainly oil, textiles, machinery and food. Large numbers of Sri Lankans work abroad and send approximately US\$5 billion in remittances to Sri Lanka each year, the major source of foreign exchange earnings.

Political System

2.8 Sri Lanka is a Democratic Socialist Republic. The President is directly elected and is Head of State, Head of Government and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected to office in November 2005. He was re-elected for a second term in January 2010 and Parliament passed legislation that same year removing restrictions on Presidential terms.

2.9 The Sri Lankan Parliament consists of 225 members, of whom 196 are elected on a district basis and the rest by proportional representation. The present Parliament was elected at the last general election held in April 2010. The ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) coalition Government won 144 seats and the opposition United National Party won 60 seats. Other seats were divided among the Tamil National Alliance (TNA—which generally contests elections as the Illankei Tamil Arasu Katchchi), which won 14 seats and the Democratic National Alliance, which won seven seats. However, currently the UPFA controls 161 seats in Parliament after some opposition members crossed over to the Government.

2.10 The next tier of the Sri Lankan political structure consists of provincial councils governing the nine provinces and over 300 local councils at the grassroots level. The Northern Provincial Council has not yet been formed although elections are planned for September 2013. All other councils are operational and governed by the ruling UPFA. The vast majority of local councils are also run by the UPFA.

Security Situation

2.11 The conflict between the Government and the LTTE ended in May 2009 with the military defeat of the LTTE. No terrorist attacks have occurred since the end of the conflict.

2.12 On 25 August 2011, the Government announced it would not extend the state of emergency, which had been in place almost constantly since 1971. The state of emergency lapsed on 31 August 2011 with the removal of emergency regulations and new regulations were introduced under the *Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)*. With the removal of the emergency regulations, the police force (which comes under the authority of the Defence Minister) is responsible for maintaining law and order within Sri Lanka, including under the PTA.

2.13 The security situation in the north and east has greatly improved since the end of the military conflict. Military and security forces maintain a significant presence in the Northern Province, including Mannar, Vavuniya, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Jaffna Districts, although the number of personnel has reduced since the end of the conflict.

2.14 The role of the security forces in the north and east, including intelligence operatives, includes monitoring of anti-Government sentiment, any possible LTTE activity and any form of civil resistance. Although not officially mandated to do so, in many areas military officers and personnel take a visible and active role in aspects of civilian life. This includes participating in community functions, openings of development projects (schools, houses etc.), and undertaking community work. DFAT assesses that this quasi-official role is increasing rather than decreasing over time.

2.15 Incidents of abduction across the country have reduced significantly since the time of the military conflict and its immediate aftermath, although credible cases continue to be reported. There have been incidents of kidnapping for ransom as well as incidents of kidnapping that appear to be politically motivated. No particular group has been the target of these attacks and they do not appear to be ethnically-based. According to the Sri Lankan police department's official figures, 985 cases of abductions and kidnappings were recorded as true (i.e. genuine) cases (out of 1012 total cases recorded) in 2011. Twenty-seven cases resulted in convictions, four cases resulted in acquittal, 15 cases were 'otherwise disposed of', and 75 cases were investigated and recorded as 'accused unknown'. At the end of 2011, 864 cases were pending investigation or in the courts. For the first quarter of 2012, 285 cases of abductions and kidnapping were recorded as true cases by the police department.

2.16 Incidents of violence, including sexual assault and robbery, can occur with little warning. Policing in remote areas is often hampered by a lack of resources and poor infrastructure.

Demography

2.17 Sri Lanka has a population of approximately 20.2 million citizens (2012 census). Sri Lanka's Department of Census and Statistics has reported an average population growth rate of one per cent per annum when comparing population in 2012 to population numbers in 1981 (the last whole-of-island census). Sri Lanka is characterised by high levels of literacy (91 per cent) and life expectancy (75 years) and a low rate of infant mortality (14 per 1,000 live births), figures comparable to those of developed countries.

2.18 Approximately 29 per cent of the population lives in the Western Province (composed of the districts of Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara) where Sri Lanka's commercial capital, Colombo, and political capital, Sri Jayawardenapura are located. Approximately five per cent of Sri Lankans reside in the Northern Province and 7.6 per cent in the Eastern Province.

2.19 Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic society consisting of Sinhalese, Tamil (Sri Lankan and Indian origin), Sri Lanka Moor, Burgher, Malay, Sri Lanka Chetty and Bharatha. Ethnic groups can be identified by their language, religion or race.

2.20 Sinhalese are the largest ethnic grouping in Sri Lanka. According to the 2012 census, 74.9 per cent of the population are Sinhalese. Sinhalese are distinguished primarily by their language (Sinhala). The majority are Buddhists.

2.21 Sri Lanka Tamils are the next largest ethnic group, representing 11.2 per cent of the population. Sri Lanka Tamils are characterised by their language, Tamil. The majority of Sri Lanka Tamils are Hindus. According to the 2012 Census, 43 per cent of Sri Lanka Tamils reside in the Northern Province, where they constitute approximately 93 per cent of the residents. Just over a quarter of Sri Lanka Tamils reside in the Eastern Province and 14.8 per cent in the Western Province (which includes the district Colombo).

2.22 In addition to Sri Lanka Tamils, Indian Tamils represent 4.2 per cent of the Sri Lankan population. Indian Tamils are sometimes known as 'Hill-country Tamils' or 'Up-country Tamils'. Fifty-seven per cent live in the Central Province.

2.23 The third largest ethnic group are Sri Lanka Moors who represent 9.3 per cent of the population. Sri Lanka Moors speak Tamil and are generally Muslim. The majority of Sri Lanka Moors live in the Eastern Province.

2.24 Four major religions are practiced in Sri Lanka: Buddhism; Hinduism; Islam; and Christianity (mainly Roman Catholicism). According to the 2012 census, 70.2 per cent of the population are Buddhist, 12.6 per cent Hindu, 9.7 per cent Muslim, 6.1 per cent Roman Catholic and 1.3 per cent other Christian denominations, with less than 10,000 from other religions. Buddhists generally follow the Theravada tradition. The majority of Muslims are Sunnis, although there is a small number of Shia, including members of the Bohra community.

2.25 Buddhists are concentrated in the southern, central and eastern areas of Sri Lanka. The Northern Province is predominately Hindu. Muslims are predominately located in the Eastern, Western and North-Western Provinces. Christians are concentrated in the Western and North-Western Provinces.

Human Rights Overview

2.26 Although Sri Lanka is a party to all the major human rights conventions, the international community continues to express concerns about the failure to uphold basic freedoms, including freedom of association and freedom of expression. While less pronounced than during the civil conflict, there continue to be credible reports of instances of arrest and detention without charge, as well as reports of enforced disappearances and abductions, and intimidation and harassment of the media and members of civil society.

2.27 The Government has made concrete progress on some post-conflict issues, including resettlement of internally displaced persons, demining and demilitarisation. The Government has focused on large-scale economic development, including in areas which directly affect the poorer elements of society (health, sanitation, water supply, schools, infrastructure, micro-economic development).

2.28 The Government has also made efforts to address issues arising from the conflict, particularly its end-phase in 2009, including commissioning the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report, launching the National Action Plan to implement the recommendations of the LLRC, and launching a National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (2011–2016). However, while there has been movement in certain areas, there has been limited concrete progress on genuine measures to improve reconciliation.

2.29 Australia was one of 41 co-sponsors of the resolution on Sri Lanka adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 21 March 2013. At Sri Lanka's 2012 Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human rights Council, Australia recommended that Sri Lanka:

- . take action to reduce and eliminate all cases of abductions and disappearances;
- . take action to reduce and eliminate all cases of abuse, torture or mistreatment by police and security forces; and
- . take action to facilitate greater participation by citizens and civil society in helping to implement human rights action plans.

2.30 The national human rights body, the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC), is charged with protecting and promoting human rights in law, policy and practice. In October 2007, the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions Sub-Committee on Accreditation decided to change the SLHRC's accreditation from Status A (compliance with the *Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions* (the Paris Principles) to Status B (observer status—not fully in compliance with the Paris Principles or insufficient information provided to make a determination). At the time, the Sub-Committee on Accreditation noted that:

- . the appointment of the Governing Body in 2006 was done without the recommendation of the Constitutional Council prescribed in the Constitution;
- . measures to ensure the independent character and political objectivity of the Governing Body were not taken; and
- . the SLHRC had failed to issue annual reports on human rights as required by the Paris Principles.

2.31 While Sri Lanka is a party to the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women and espouses strong protection for women's rights, on-going issues of gender-based violence demonstrate a need for stronger institutional protection.

Country Map



3. Refugee Convention Claims

Race/Nationality

3.1 The Sri Lankan Constitution provides that “no citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any such grounds”. Sri Lankan citizens can seek relief or redress should this fundamental right be infringed or about to be infringed by the authorities by lodging a fundamental rights petition with the Supreme Court.

Ethnicity

3.2 Ethnicity is highly politicised in Sri Lanka with parties representing the interests of Sinhala Buddhist nationalists, Muslims and Tamils. Since its independence in 1948, Sri Lanka has experienced tensions between the majority Sinhalese Sri Lankans and the minority Tamil population. Sinhalese perceived the Tamils as having received preferential treatment under British rule.

3.3 The growing dominance of Sinhala nationalist politics contributed to the implementation of successive policies designed to assist Sinhalese, particularly in the areas of education and employment. Past policies meant that many Tamils felt discriminated against and faced barriers to education and employment.

3.4 DFAT assesses that today there are no official laws or policies that discriminate against Sri Lankans (including Tamils) on the basis of their ethnicity, including in relation to access to education, employment or access to housing. DFAT further assesses that there is no government-sanctioned discrimination in the implementation of laws and policies.

3.5 However, in practice, the Northern Province (as an area formerly controlled by the LTTE) is more heavily militarised than the rest of the country. Activities such as public gatherings are generally monitored by the police or military. While the population of the Northern Province is predominantly Tamil, this monitoring would apply to any persons who live in the province. Such monitoring does not apply to Tamils who live in other parts of Sri Lanka.

3.6 People in the conflict-affected north and east may receive fewer opportunities to access education and employment, but this is due to the effects of the conflict (e.g displacement, loss of housing and livelihoods, interruption to education) as well as general economic conditions, and not as a result of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. Similarly, many people living in conflict-affected areas remain economically vulnerable, but this is due to the challenges of post-conflict recovery and lack of opportunities in these regions, and not to discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. Ultimately, a person’s ability to gain employment is based on their education and skills (including language skills) and employment opportunities in the local area.

Ethnic tension

3.7 In various parts of Sri Lanka, different ethnic groups live in close proximity. For example, Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims (or Moors) and Burghers live and work alongside each other in Colombo and the Eastern Province. DFAT assesses that incidents of ethnic tension or discrimination among communities is rare (although attacks against religious places of worship occur—see Religion, below).

Language

3.8 In 1956 the *Sinhala Only Official Languages Act* was introduced, making Sinhala Sri Lanka’s only official language. A Constitutional amendment in 1987 saw Tamil become the second official language. According to the Constitution and the Government’s ‘Trilingual Policy’, all

people have the right to communicate in Sinhala, Tamil or English in all parts of Sri Lanka. The Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration is responsible for implementation of the Trilingual Policy and all public servants employed after 1 July 2007 must obtain proficiency in a second national language (i.e. either Sinhala or Tamil) within seven years of employment, or they will not receive annual salary increments.

3.9 DFAT assesses that there are no official laws or policies that discriminate on the basis of language and that there is no Government-sanctioned discrimination in the implementation of laws and policies.

3.10 In practice, there remain challenges in implementing the Trilingual Policy and there is a shortage of Sinhala–Tamil interpreters across the country. In November 2012, the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration established a phone hotline for the public to report violations of the Trilingual Policy. The Official Languages Commission (OLC) has advised that common complaints have been about noticeboards, letterheads, medicine prescriptions, bus nameboards and some Government circulars not being written in the three languages.

3.11 In practice, DFAT assesses that Tamil speakers who speak no other language can face difficulties in Sri Lanka, including in the Tamil-dominated Northern Province. For example, Tamils can sometimes have difficulty communicating with the police, military and other government authorities as there is a shortage of Tamil speakers in these institutions. The OLC has received complaints about the lack of Tamil-speaking police officers, though these are decreasing (probably due to Tamil-language training programs provided to police officers).

3.12 DFAT assesses that these practical difficulties are not due to discrimination as such, but are the result of the disruption to civilian life caused by the conflict and previous discriminatory language policies. The Sri Lankan Government is aware of these practical problems, and is attempting to resolve the issue through implementation of the Trilingual Policy.

Religion

3.13 The Sri Lankan Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and belief while giving Buddhism a “foremost place”. Attacking places of worship or religious objects is punishable with a fine and/or a maximum of two years imprisonment. Acts intending to insult religion are punishable by a fine and/or a maximum of one year imprisonment.

3.14 There is a strong place for religions other than Buddhism in public life. Prominent Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian leaders are invited to all national functions, although only Buddhist rituals are performed at most events. Government dignitaries host and attend important events for different religions and Sri Lanka recognises religious holidays for all four religions.

3.15 School students are able to study their choice of Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian religions in most public and private schools, depending on the availability of teachers. There are also state-run schools for Hindu and Muslim students.

3.16 DFAT assesses there is very little official discrimination on the basis of religion. There are no official laws or policies that discriminate on the basis of religion and no government-sanctioned implementation of these laws and policies. However, credible NGOs have reported that in the north, the application of legal rights to religious worship appears to depend on local relationships between religious groups, local communities, government officials and security forces. Such reports are isolated in nature and DFAT has no additional information.

Religious tension

3.17 A rise in religious tension was observed in mid- to late-2012 and in 2013 to date. In a 2013 report, the Centre of Policy Alternatives (CPA) listed 65 cases of attacks on places of worship

throughout the country between May 2009 and January 2013. The majority of cases reported by CPA were against non-traditional Christian churches. There were also a number of attacks on Muslim places of worship. The majority of incidents, where perpetrators were identified, were instances of Sinhala Buddhist attacks on other religious places of worship. Charges were laid in some cases.

3.18 Late 2012 and early 2013 also saw a rise in anti-Muslim sentiment in Sri Lanka. There were a number of incidents of verbal and physical attacks on Muslims and Muslim businesses.

Political opinion (actual or imputed)

3.19 Sri Lanka has a diverse political landscape, with 64 registered political parties. Democratic elections have been held on a regular basis since independence in 1948. Elections have not been marred by large-scale violence or rigging but cannot always be described as entirely free and fair.

3.20 The Northern Province has been centrally controlled since the end of the civil conflict. President Rajapaksa has announced that the first Northern Provincial Council election will be held in September 2013, although an exact date has not yet been nominated.

3.21 DFAT assesses that there are no official laws and policies that discriminate on the basis of political opinion nor is there systemic discrimination against particular individuals or groups. However, the space for dissent in Sri Lanka is shrinking. Those with anti-Government views are often described as ‘LTTE or terrorist sympathisers’ who ‘want to destroy Sri Lanka’. Anti-Government protests are also sometimes disrupted by the police or pursuant to court orders. Opposition political parties engaging in activities in the north, particularly the Tamil National Alliance, may be subject to harassment and monitoring.

Political representation of minorities, including ethnic and religious minorities

3.22 Sri Lanka has no legal or other restrictions barring minorities from participating in politics on the same basis as any other citizen. There are 27 Tamils and 18 Muslims in Sri Lanka’s Parliament (which is made up of 225 members). There are two Tamil and five Muslim Ministers in the current Cabinet. Two Tamils and two Muslims serve as Deputy Ministers in the current Government.

3.23 Since 1989, no party has been able to claim a majority in Parliament in its own right, meaning that groups such as Buddhist monks, ethnic and religious minorities and other groups such as plantation sector workers often influence the political landscape and policy decisions. President Rajapaksa presides over a diverse coalition, consisting of more than a dozen political parties including Muslim, Tamil and Buddhist parties.

Banned political parties or groups

3.24 There are currently no banned political parties in Sri Lanka. However, under the *Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)* certain actions by political parties or groups can be restricted. According to the PTA, any person who “causes or intends to cause commission of acts of violence or religious, racial or communal disharmony...” can be sentenced to a maximum of five years imprisonment.

3.25 During the civil conflict, more Tamils were detained under the PTA and emergency regulations than any other ethnic group. This was largely due to LTTE members and supporters almost all being Tamil. However, there were also likely instances of discrimination in the application of these laws. There are no published statistics on the numbers or ethnicity of those arrested under the PTA (although credible anecdotal reports indicate that numbers are far smaller since the conflict).

Attacks or restrictions on Government opponents, critics and civil society activists

3.26 The Sri Lankan Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association. Political parties in Sri Lanka are largely free to operate as they wish. This applies to representatives, office holders, members and general supporters or volunteers, including people putting up fliers or handing out leaflets. There is no evidence to suggest this differs between Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim or other representatives, office holders, members, supporters or volunteers of the various parties.

3.27 There are no widespread or systematic attacks against opposition political activities. However, attacks against specific individuals are frequently reported by credible sources. Violent confrontations between members of the same coalitions or same parties (including the ruling party) are also reported.

3.28 Credible allegations regularly surface about Government/military monitoring and disruption of political activities by opposition Tamil political parties in the north and east. The Government and the military deny such allegations. DFAT is aware of a number of incidents and allegations.

Paramilitary activity

3.29 Some Tamil militant groups, such as the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) and Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal, switched their allegiance to the Government during the conflict and play a key role supporting the Government in the north and east. While such parties state that they have renounced paramilitary activities, DFAT is aware of allegations that paramilitary groups continue to be active in the north and east, although largely involved in criminal activity. These allegations are difficult to verify.

Protests

3.30 Protests are common in Colombo and cover a variety of causes. Opposition political parties and groups and ordinary citizens are known to protest. Lawful anti-Government protests are not prevented, although police interventions to disperse protests are common. Tear gas attacks and baton charges are frequently used to break up protests if the police judge the situation is becoming hostile. DFAT is aware of a number of incidents of violence during protests.

Groups of interest

LTTE

Detention

3.31 A large majority of former LTTE cadres surrendered to the military in the final days of the conflict and were sent to Government-run 'rehabilitation' programs. The rehabilitation programs focus on education and training. Adult males are given training in welding, masonry, plumbing, driving, tailoring, wiring, language skills, computer skills and livelihood opportunities such as vegetable cultivation. Females are given training in cookery, beauty therapy, tailoring, language and computer skills. The rehabilitation program also includes sporting, aesthetic and spiritual development aspects. Former child soldiers have been tutored for Ordinary Level and Advanced Level examinations.

3.32 The Commissioner-General of Rehabilitation told media in May 2013 that at the end of the conflict 12,165 LTTE militants were interned at 24 rehabilitation centres located across Sri Lanka. According to the Commissioner-General, as at June 2013, 11,600 persons had undergone rehabilitation and been released into society.

3.33 In addition to those who surrendered, LTTE cadres—or suspected cadres—were arrested during the conflict pursuant to the Emergency Regulations (repealed in 2011) and the *Prevention of Terrorism Act* (PTA). Those arrested were presented to a magistrate and detained pending formal charges. Some suspects were detained for years in prisons and military-run detention centres while cases were being examined.

3.34 When a detainee's case is brought to court, the police may recommend rehabilitation for selected cases, on the advice of the Attorney-General. Such recommendations are usually only given when a detainee is identified as having a low level of involvement with the LTTE. However, senior cadres have also gone through the rehabilitation process (some senior cadres have been given prison sentences followed by rehabilitation).

3.35 According to the Commissioner-General, as at 21 May 2013, 340 ex-combatants (including 18 females) remain in rehabilitation under court orders. Only three rehabilitation centres remain functioning, in Vavuniya, Welikanda and Kandakadu.

Experiences following rehabilitation

3.36 The vast majority of former LTTE cadres who have undergone rehabilitation have returned to their home villages to lead normal lives. In 2010, the Commissioner-General announced that the Government would provide a loan scheme for ex-combatants and internally displaced persons who require assistance to commence livelihood activities. DFAT is not aware of any claims that the scheme has not been implemented fairly.

3.37 However, there are credible reports about monitoring, harassment and intimidation of those who have undergone rehabilitation by local authorities. Those released after rehabilitation are generally required to report to the nearest police station or military camp. Monitoring is ad hoc, varies from district to district and often depends on the background of the individual (i.e. nature of involvement in the LTTE or suspicions held by military officials). According to some ex-combatants, they report every week (especially when first returning to their homes), others report on a monthly basis, others do not have to report but receive irregular visits at home and still others have no contact at all with local police or military.

3.38 Persons subject to such monitoring are concerned it might limit their ability to travel outside their own villages for work. Families may be questioned if returnees fail to 'register' or are found to have left the village when officials visit to check on them. Monitoring has a negative impact on these persons within their communities, as they are often suspected of being military informants. Former female cadres face additional difficulties, including the risk of sexual harassment and stigmatisation within the community (such as the inability to find a marriage partner or secure employment). While credible NGOs have reported on these issues, it is very difficult to verify complaints. The military strongly denies that there is an issue.

3.39 Some ex-combatants who completed rehabilitation have been recruited to the Civil Defence Force (CDF), with about 2000 recruited in late 2012. There has been some criticism of such recruitment by civil society groups, with credible reports that it is not always voluntary. DFAT assesses that, while it is unlikely the military is forcing individuals to join the CDF, it is credible that some individuals may feel pressured into signing up because they fear the consequences of not doing so. It is, however, difficult to assess the proportion of recruits to whom this applies. Many recruits would likely also feel compelled to join for economic reasons, as they would be unlikely to receive better employment opportunities in most areas of the Northern Province.

3.40 It is also alleged that persons who have undergone rehabilitation have been asked to take part in government-initiated activities, such as rallies, in the north. Refusal to do so may result in harassment and intimidation. It has been reported that the group that attacked a Tamil National Alliance (TNA) political meeting in Kilinochchi in March 2013 included former LTTE members who are now employed in the CDF.

3.41 Further, DFAT is aware of reports that some of the rehabilitated have been re-arrested. Such arrests are based on suspicions related to individuals and their activities and have applied to both high-profile and low-profile ex-cadres. The Government has said that arrests of rehabilitated cadres are generally made due to additional information unearthed about alleged involvement in terror acts. Such arrests are not widespread, and generally occur in response to specific information received.

Participation in public life

3.42 There are no formal barriers to former LTTE cadres participating in public life, including in politics and several former LTTE figures may contest elections for the ruling coalition. There have, however, been allegations that such candidacies would be the result of pressure to create an alternative to the TNA for Tamil leadership in the north.

3.43 The Government remains sensitive to those expressing views that could be considered sympathetic to the LTTE. In November 2012, Jaffna University students clashed with security forces during protests on campus. The protests were in response to the military entering the university to disrupt commemoration of LTTE “Martyr’s Day”. During the protest, security forces were filmed charging at students with batons and beating them. A number of students were subsequently detained under the PTA and sent for rehabilitation. All have since been released.

3.44 There is no significant evidence of differential treatment for Tamil and Sinhala LTTE sympathisers, or those who are considered as such.

Media

3.45 State-owned media, which follows the Government line, consists of two television stations, a radio station (with eight channels) and a large newspaper group (publishing newspapers in English, Sinhala and Tamil). There are many privately owned and operated television and radio stations, newspapers, magazines and websites

3.46 While the Sri Lankan Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, Sri Lanka ranked 162 of 179 countries on the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index 2013. The Government blocks Internet access to several anti-Government Tamil news web sites. Since 2011, the Ministry of Mass Media and Information has required all news websites to register with the Government. There are reports that independent journalists’ phones and emails are monitored, and credible anecdotal reports suggest that most Sri Lankan journalists and editors practice some form of self-censorship due to fears of reprisal.

3.47 A draft Code of Ethics for the Media was released in May 2013 by the Ministry of Mass Media and Information, though was withdrawn after considerable media and civil society criticism. The Government instead suggested a code of ethics for media should emerge from within the industry. The Press Council of Sri Lanka has a code of practice endorsed by the International Federation of Journalists.

3.48 Four years after the end of the conflict, attacks against independent media organisations and individual journalists continue (though in greatly reduced numbers). There have not been any conclusive investigations into past killings or abductions of journalists. A comparatively large number of Sri Lankan journalists live in exile abroad, with few having returned to Sri Lanka in peacetime.

3.49 Amnesty International estimates that at least 15 Sri Lankan journalists have been killed since 2006. However, there are no documented cases of killings since the end of the conflict. One media worker—cartoonist Prageeth Ekneligoda—disappeared in 2010.

3.50 DFAT is aware of a number of attacks against the media and instances of concern since the end of the conflict, including journalists being attacked and threatened, police raiding the offices of media organisations and offices of media organisations being set on fire.

NGOs

3.51 There is a substantial NGO and civil society sector operating throughout Sri Lanka. NGOs must register with the National Secretariat for NGOs, which has operated under the Ministry of Defence since 2010.

3.52 NGOs and their staff, especially those working on human rights issues, continue to face challenges while executing their duties. Sri Lanka's state-run media regularly accuse NGOs and civil society activists of being traitors, LTTE sympathisers or supporters or being backed by 'foreign' or 'western' powers. NGO and civil society workers often report threats (including death threats) and intimidation. In recent years there have been a small number of reports that NGO workers in the north have been abducted and subsequently released.

3.53 NGO workers often report being detained and questioned by the authorities, having their offices searched and equipment and documents seized. International NGO staff sometimes face difficulties obtaining or renewing work visas. NGOs, particularly in the north, sometimes report difficulties implementing projects relating to sensitive subjects, such as psychosocial counselling, governance issues and legal aid.

Women

3.54 Gender equality is guaranteed in the Constitution and Sri Lanka is a party to the major international conventions concerning women. Women are considered equal under civil and criminal law. However, in matters relating to divorce, custody of children and inheritance, the law favours males. Women's participation in politics is very low, even compared with other South Asian countries.

3.55 Rape and domestic violence are criminalised under the *Prevention of Domestic Violence Act* No. 34 of 2005. Marital rape is an offence only in cases where the individuals are legally separated. Sexual harassment is punishable under Section 345 of the *Penal Code (Amendment) Act* No. 22 of 1995 and can carry a maximum five-year prison sentence.

3.56 Women for Rights, a women's rights organisation, has said that Sri Lanka ranks fifth in the world for domestic violence. Sexual assault and rape are considered to be increasing, though a majority of cases go unreported due to the social stigma. Domestic violence is also reported to be high, although again underreported for cultural issues. The Asian Human Rights Commission has said that most cases reported to authorities result in 'settlements', although sentences are sometimes given in serious cases.

3.57 The Sri Lanka Police Service (SLPS) has established 36 SLPS Children and Women Bureau desks across the country (including in Northern Province) to provide an avenue for the public to report abuses. The Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs opened the first Government-run shelter for victims of trafficking in Sri Lanka with the support of the US Government and IOM in December 2012.

Female-headed households

3.58 Since the conclusion of the conflict, the number of female-headed households in the north and east of the country stands at 40,000, according to research by the Centre for Women and Development. Such women face many challenges, including lack of permanent housing, lack of livelihood opportunities, access to health services and lack of physical security for the family. While the military has been blamed for taking advantage of vulnerable women, NGOs report that this behaviour is more widespread.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

3.59 Same-sex sexual activity is a criminal offence in Sri Lanka. Persons can be given sentences of up to 10 years imprisonment, although convictions are very rare. NGOs working in this sector report regular harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex (LGBTI) individuals, especially in rural areas outside Colombo. Such incidents generally go unreported. There are few support mechanisms for LGBTI individuals in the community except through a small number of NGOs working in this area. There are a number of high-profile LGBTI individuals, particularly in Colombo. LGBTI ‘Pride’ events take place annually in the capital without sparking protests or reaction by the authorities.

State Protection

3.60 The Sri Lankan legal system allows those vulnerable to harm or ill-treatment to seek protection from the state. The criminal and civil legal system is available to all citizens regardless of ethnicity. DFAT assesses there is no law or government policy which hinders access to state protection on the basis of religion or ethnicity.

3.61 Sri Lanka’s Courts are located across the country and Tamil-speaking judges are assigned to courts in majority Tamil-speaking areas. Consistent with Sri Lanka’s Constitution, a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty and the onus of proof is on the prosecution (except for offences under the *Prevention of Terrorism Act* where the onus is on the person to prove their innocence). Where the law dictates, judges can use their discretion in determining a sentence considering the facts of the case (for example, if the person is a multiple offender).

3.62 DFAT assesses that the introduction of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution in 2010, which empowered the President to appoint senior members of the judiciary including the Chief Justice and the President and Judges of the Court of Appeal, represents significant erosion of the independence and impartiality of the Sri Lankan judiciary. The Chief Justice was impeached in January 2013 following a controversial Parliamentary probe into her financial affairs. Domestic courts judged the impeachment as unlawful and the Sri Lankan legal profession, some opposition politicians and civil society activists alleged that the impeachment was politically motivated. The impeachment was evidence of a further deterioration of the independence and impartiality of the Sri Lankan judiciary. This does not mean, however, that the judiciary does not exercise independence as a matter of course.

3.63 Further, DFAT assesses that there is a lack of effective legal protection for victims of crimes in Sri Lanka. The Government has been drafting a law on protection and assistance to victims and witnesses for a number of years. The process has stalled on the issue of compensation. Sri Lanka’s National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights recommends the enactment of the draft law be expedited and the Ministry of Justice has advised the draft is currently progressing through the legislative drafting process.

3.64 DFAT is not aware of any cases over the last few years where persons were denied access to legal remedies based on ethnicity or religion. Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims have the same access to judicial authorities subject to logistical and resource limitations. DFAT is not aware of any difference in providing protection to low- and high-profile Tamils by the police and military. As is the case with Sinhalese and Muslim communities, high-profile Tamils may seek to use their influence to seek favours from politicians and high-ranking Government officials.

3.65 Any member of the public can make complaints against ill-treatment by police to senior officials in the chain of police command. The SLPS has a separate unit to deal with disciplinary issues of its members. The public also can make complaints directly to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) through a service called “Tell IGP” available online. The public can also lodge

complaints with the National Police Commission which investigates complaints against individual police officers or the police force in general. Complaints against military officers can be lodged with the police. Given the police and military both sit under the Ministry of Defence, this reporting mechanism cannot be considered fully independent.

3.66 In December 2012, Transparency International ranked Sri Lanka 79th out of 176 countries in its Global Corruption Perception Index. DFAT assesses there has been an increase in law enforcement activity against bribery in 2013 in comparison to previous years.

Internal relocation

3.67 According to the 2012 census, 18 per cent of the total population relocated to their current district after being born in another district. The census reported the top five districts to which people had internally migrated were Colombo district (593,942), Gampaha (563,363), Kurunegala (202,826), Anuradhapura (169,421) and Puttalam (140, 690).

3.68 DFAT assesses that there are no official restrictions to internal relocation in Sri Lanka. In 2011, the Government agreed to stop the forced registration of residents in Jaffna and Kilinochchi by the military after a fundamental rights petition was lodged in the Supreme Court. Registration of Tamils living in the south no longer occurs.

3.69 The Government does not place any legal, financial or geographic restrictions on citizens to inhibit internal relocation. All citizens of Sri Lanka, including Tamils and Muslim Sri Lankans, can relocate to any part of the country they choose. Generally, anyone arriving to a new locality will need to register with the local Grama Sevaka (Village Officer) for administrative purposes such as obtaining documents to confirm place of residence for school admission, employment, election registration and access to essential services such as water etc. In addition, when a citizen purchases land or property they must register with the local council for land/property tax purposes.

3.70 NGOs that assist with the voluntary return of Sri Lankans have told DFAT that some Tamil Sri Lankans have chosen to reside in Colombo rather than return to their former place of residence in the north due to better job prospects in Colombo.

Treatment of Returnees

3.71 Sri Lankans are able to re-enter the country on temporary travel documents if they do not have their passport. However, Sri Lankan citizens exiting Sri Lanka can only do so with a passport and visa (if required) and are not able to depart on a temporary travel document. If a returnee has committed an offence under Sri Lankan law, they will be investigated and prosecuted for the offence.

3.72 DFAT assesses that Sri Lankan returnees are treated along standard procedures applying to all Sri Lankans, regardless of their ethnicity and religion. DFAT has not observed any difference in the way Tamil returnees are treated in comparison to Sinhala or Muslim returnees.

3.73 Upon arrival in Sri Lanka, authorised officers check passport/travel document and visa information against the Department of Immigration and Emigration (DoIE) immigration database. Under Sri Lanka's *Immigrants and Emigrants Act* (the *I&E Act*), it is an offence to depart other than via an official port of entry/exit (such as a seaport or airport) and without a passport. A returnee suspected of involvement in the organisation of irregular migration of people from Sri Lanka can also be charged with an offence under Section 45C of the *I&E Act* for organising or attempting to organise for another person to leave in contravention of the *I&E Act*. The *I&E Act* empowers authorised officers to detain and examine any person arriving in or leaving Sri Lanka and to require the production of any documents by such a person.

Application of the law in practice

3.74 Returnees from Australia on charter flights are processed by DoIE, the State Intelligence Service (SIS) and Airport Criminal Investigations Department (CID). This process involves:

- . DoIE confirming the returnee's identity, their nationality and any offences committed under immigration law;
- . State Intelligence Service checking the returnee against intelligence databases; and
- . Airport CID verifying a person's identity to then determine whether the person has any outstanding criminal matters.

3.75 Returnees are considered to have committed an offence under the *I&E Act* if they depart Sri Lanka irregularly by boat. The CID will commence an investigation into the offence, including interviewing returnees about their illegal departure from Sri Lanka. Returnees are considered to be under arrest for the offence during this process in accordance with Sri Lankan law. As part of the investigation, fingerprints would usually be taken and the person photographed. Deputy Inspector General of CID has advised that the CID endeavours to complete all processing at the airport as quickly as possible.

3.76 For returnees traveling on temporary travel documents, police undertake an investigative process to confirm the person is not trying to conceal their identity due to a criminal or terrorist background. This involves interviewing the returning passenger, contacting the person's claimed home suburb or town police, contacting the person's claimed neighbours and family and checking criminal records.

3.77 Some returnees have been charged with people smuggling offences and other criminal offences which they allegedly committed before departure. For example, in October 2012, warrants were issued for the arrest of a group of returnees in regard to robbery of a vessel used to travel to Australia, causing grievous harm to persons and people smuggling.

3.78 For offences committed under the *I&E Act*, a prison sentence of up to five years and a fine of up to 200,000 Sri Lankan Rupees may be applicable. The Attorney-General's Department advises that no one to date has been given a custodial sentence for departing Sri Lanka illegally but fines have been issued to act as a deterrent towards joining boat ventures in the future. The Department further advises that the Magistrates Court in Colombo has been handing out fines of around 5,000 Sri Lankan Rupees for persons attempting to depart Sri Lanka irregularly on boats. However, in Negombo, the magistrate, who handles a large number of these cases, has been handing out fines up to 50,000 Sri Lankan Rupees to act as a deterrent.

3.79 Since November 2012, Sri Lankan irregular maritime arrivals (IMAs) returned from Australia have been charged under the *I&E Act* for offences related to departing Sri Lanka and remanded in police custody until they are presented to a magistrate at the first available opportunity. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has advised DFAT that, from their experience in delivering post-arrival support for voluntary returnees from Australia, those who have departed illegally under Sri Lankan law have been arrested by the police at the airport. They have been taken by the police from the airport and presented at the Negombo Magistrates Court at the first available opportunity. The returnees have been granted bail on personal surety immediately by the magistrate. Sometimes returnees then need to wait until a family member comes to court to collect them. IOM is present with the returnee during this process.

3.80 The two main NGOs involved in facilitating voluntary returns have told DFAT that they have not witnessed any differentiation in treatment by authorities towards returnees from Tamil Nadu, India, in comparison to other returnees.

3.81 Sri Lankan asylum seekers and refugees who return to Sri Lanka through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees facilitated voluntary repatriation program are processed through DoIE

and SIS on return to Sri Lanka but not CID. This process is the same for all persons returned regardless of the country from which they are being returned or when they departed Sri Lanka.

3.82 In practice, where a returnee is travelling voluntarily on their own passport on a commercial flight they will not come to the attention of local authorities if they departed Sri Lanka regularly (legally through the airport/seaport) on the same passport, as they have not committed any offence under the *I&E Act*.

Documentation

3.83 Sri Lankans use the National Identity Card (NIC) as their primary identification card, though birth certificates, driver's licences, and passports are also frequently used. Every Sri Lankan citizen is required by law to register their identity under the *Registration of Persons Act* of 1968 and is issued a NIC.

3.84 Sri Lankans are entitled to apply and obtain identity documents regardless of their ethnicity, religion, language or geographic location. In the north and east, people have reported delays in obtaining identity documents due to insufficient numbers of Tamil-speaking officials to service applicants. People who reside in rural communities have reported difficulties in obtaining identity documents because of the need to travel to major townships (sometimes several times) to submit applications.

3.85 Sri Lankans residing overseas can apply for identity documents from any Sri Lankan overseas mission. The Sri Lankan Deputy High Commission office in Chennai, Tamil Nadu provides services for Sri Lankan refugees living in camps to obtain their identity documents and to register births.

Birth certificates

3.86 Births at hospitals are recorded at the hospital and forwarded to the Divisional Secretariat for registration, while births taking place at home must be registered through the Grama Niladhari (Village Officer). After registration a birth certificate is issued. An individual is eligible to obtain a copy of his/her birth certificate from the divisional secretariat of the area where the certificate was issued.

National Identity Card

3.87 The NIC is considered by Government and commercial sectors to be the primary identity document in Sri Lanka and every citizen is required to hold a NIC by law. All citizens over the age of 16 are eligible to apply for a NIC and there is presently no renewal period for the card. The NIC does not specify a race, ethnicity or religion and is issued in Sinhalese, or Sinhalese and Tamil in some instances (e.g. for Tamils, or for those living in the north and east).

Marriage Certificates

3.88 Sri Lanka has several systems of marriage according to religious background and geographic location. The general law is applied to every citizen except for those who have personal laws governing their marriage. Marriage certificates issued to Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Kandyans are in the same format. The marriage certificates issued to Muslims are slightly different as they contain details about the dowry given by the groom and details about the *nikah* (the Muslim religious marriage ceremony). Under the general law, the dissolution of a marriage is adjudicated by the District Court. Muslim divorces are adjudicated by the Quazi court.

Documentation Fraud

3.89 Document fraud is prevalent in Sri Lanka due in part to the lack of computerised databases to store information. Government departments continue to keep most records in hard-copy format. Applicants are able to obtain genuine identity documents by submitting forged supporting documents. Counterfeit documents are the primary cause of fraud within the NIC, passport and driver's licence issuance processes.

4. Complementary Protection Claims

Arbitrary Deprivation of Life

4.1 Disappearances, abductions for ransom and extra-judicial killings occurred frequently in Sri Lanka during the civil conflict, particularly in the north and east. These were attributed to both the Sri Lankan security forces (or related paramilitary groups) and the LTTE (or other Tamil armed groups). Some victims were also killed or abducted in relation to business or personal disputes.

4.2 According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), over 15,000 Sri Lankans remain missing or unaccounted for since 1990.

Extra-judicial killings

4.3 DFAT assesses that the number of extra-judicial killings has dropped considerably since the end of the conflict. Many extra-judicial killings appear to be criminal acts, although others could be politically motivated. No particular groups appear to be targeted.

4.4 There continue to be reports of killings and assaults committed by politicians, including those associated with the Government. Such attacks are not targeted at any particular group and can constitute intra or inter party violence (for example, the shoot-out involving government MP Duminda Silva and Presidential Advisor Bharatha Lakshman Premachandra in 2011, resulting in the latter's death).

Enforced or involuntary disappearances

4.5 According to a 2012 report by the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, 5,671 cases of involuntary disappearances remain outstanding in Sri Lanka (while 6,535 cases have been clarified on the basis of information provided by the Government).

4.6 DFAT assesses that the number of disappearances has dropped considerably since the end of the conflict, although there continue to be reports of enforced or involuntary disappearances. No particular groups are targeted. According to media and human rights reports, 58 people were abducted or 'disappeared' in Sri Lanka between October 2011 and August 2012, an increase over numbers abducted in the years following the end of the conflict. While reported abductions can often be linked to drugs and crime, abductions of political activists were also reported.

4.7 For example, breakaway JVP political activists Lalith Kumar Weeraraj and Kugan Muruganandan were abducted in Jaffna in December 2011 and have not been seen since. Tamil businessman Ramasamy Prabhakaran was abducted in February 2012, two days before a fundamental rights case challenging his detention and abuse during the conflict that he had filed against senior police officers was due to be heard by the Supreme Court. He has not been seen since.

Deaths in custody

4.8 Some criminal suspects have died in custody. In some instances, police argued the deaths were in self-defence. Deaths in custody are generally unrelated and isolated in nature. Disciplinary and legal actions related to such incidents have been recorded. There have recently been incidents of prison riots (unrelated incidents in different prisons), resulting in several deaths.

Detention

4.9 The *Prevention of Terrorism Act* (PTA) provides for people to be detained without charge for a period of up to 18 months, in irregular places of detention (e.g. not police stations, detention centres or prisons), and allows wide-ranging powers of search and arrest by police officers without

a warrant. However, under the PTA a person detained without charge must be brought before a magistrate after the first month.

4.10 The ICRC is able to register and have access to all persons detained for terrorism offences under the PTA in connection to the conflict. The ICRC is able to visit persons at their place of arrest including at prisons, police stations including the Terrorism Investigation Division at police headquarters, and rehabilitation centres.

Death penalty

4.11 Sri Lanka maintains the death penalty for murder and drug trafficking, although it has not been carried out since 1976. The method of execution in Sri Lanka is hanging. According to Sri Lanka's Department of Prisons, 1199 persons were sentenced to death during 2001–2011. Prison officials have told DFAT that 385 prisoners are currently on death row.

4.12 Under the Criminal Procedure Code, all death penalty sentences have to be appealed and the court will appoint a legal aid lawyer to defend the accused. Presidential ratification is required for a death penalty to be implemented.

4.13 Until 2004, all death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. However, at this time then President Kumaratunga seized on the murder of a High Court judge as a pretext to reactivate implementation of the death penalty. While Sri Lankan courts have handed down the death penalty for offences committed since 2004, presidential ratification has not been obtained.

4.14 In 2012, media coverage of serious sexual assaults and murders sparked calls to implement the death penalty. However, domestic debate on the reactivation of the death penalty was dampened after the execution of Sri Lankan maid Rizana Nafeek in Saudi Arabia in January 2013.

Torture

4.15 Article 11 of the Sri Lankan Constitution, and other laws, prohibit torture and Sri Lanka has ratified the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Torture is an offence punishable by imprisonment of no less than seven years and no more than 10 years.

4.16 Victims of torture can complain to the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC) or directly to the Supreme Court about violation of their fundamental rights. The SLHRC operates a 24-hour hotline enabling torture complaints to be reported. Disciplinary action can also be taken if such complaints are made against the police or in prisons.

4.17 In practice, there are reports that Sri Lankan citizens of all ethnic groups have been tortured and/or abused by the Sri Lankan police and security forces. This includes reports of torture resulting in death. Such allegations come from a wide range of actors, including political activists, suspects being investigated for criminal offences and civilians detained in all parts of Sri Lanka, including in relation to suspected LTTE connections.

4.18 There is no evidence that all such reports are credible. Few formal reports or complaints are lodged. While this may be related to problems with complaint and inquiry mechanisms, it means few reports are proved or disproved. There have been cases where charges have been brought against police officers for torture, though these are few.

4.19 The Sri Lankan National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2011–2016 contains a priority section on 'Prevention of Torture'. There has been little action taken to implement the suggested changes in the Plan. However, the Government is taking steps to raise awareness of basic human rights principles among law enforcement agencies.

Cruel or inhuman treatment or punishment and degrading treatment or punishment

4.20 Article 11 of the Sri Lankan Constitution states that “[N]o person shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. In 2005, Sri Lanka banned the use of corporal punishment by repealing the *Corporal Punishment Act* and omitting the sentence of whipping from other laws.

4.21 The SLHRC has stated that during 2010 and 2011 arrest and detention complaints significantly dropped. In 2011, the SLHRC began random visits to police stations to check whether illegal detention or abuse was taking place. It identified the following issues during such visits:

- . delays in producing suspects to courts
- . overcrowding of cells
- . no proper sanitary facilities in cells of certain police stations
- . assaults in custody
- . arrests without prior investigations

4.22 Reports of Government members engaging in cruel or degrading treatment or punishment occasionally surface.

4.23 Incidents of students being beaten by teachers, cruel treatment to minors and child abuse cases are frequently reported to police or other relevant authorities, including the SLHRC. Such cases are generally promptly followed up by authorities, although this may not always be the case if suspects have political connections.