



**THE HON JULIE BISHOP MP**

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Dr Dennis Jensen MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 3 March 2014 attaching a petition requesting the House of Representatives to initiate enquiries with the Sri Lankan Government regarding the well-being of Father Francis Joseph, a Catholic priest from northern Sri Lanka who has been reported missing since May 2009.

The Australian Government is aware of the case of Father Francis Joseph, who is one of many thousands of individuals who remain missing and unaccounted for following the brutal civil conflict in Sri Lanka. Since it was brought to our attention in 2009, the Australian High Commission in Colombo has been following the case, including through contact with church and government officials. I note that the matter is currently the subject of a habeas corpus case and ongoing consideration in the Mullaitivu Magistrate's Court in Sri Lanka.

The Australian Government has made clear to the Sri Lankan Government our interest in seeing this case, and the many other cases of unsolved disappearances, resolved as a key measure of accountability and reconciliation. We welcome the Commission of Inquiry on Disappearances established by the Sri Lankan Government in late 2013, and will continue to encourage progress on this front.

I trust that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Julie Bishop

9 MAY 2014