

THE HON JULIE BISHOP MP

Minister for Foreign Affairs

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

Dear ~~Chairman~~

Thank you for your letter of 1 September 2014 forwarding a petition calling on the Australian Government to reject any United Nations resolution targeting Sri Lanka at the Human Rights Council in March 2014.

Australia is not a member of the Human Rights Council and did not vote on the resolution. At the time however, I stated that the Australian Government was unconvinced that a separate internationally-led investigation, without the cooperation of the Sri Lankan Government, was the best way forward. A copy of my media release is enclosed.

The Government urges Sri Lanka to implement the recommendations of its Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission.

We will continue to work constructively with the Sri Lankan Government, the Tamil National Alliance and other stakeholders to identify ways to promote reconciliation.

I trust that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Julie Bishop
18 SEP 2014

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Supporting reconciliation in Sri Lanka

Media release

28 March 2014

The Australian Government considers engagement with Sri Lanka to be the most effective way to encourage progress on human rights issues.

Genuine advances in accountability and reconciliation will only be possible with the cooperation of the Sri Lankan Government.

I note the Human Rights Council passed a resolution on Sri Lanka today. I note that Australia is not a member of the Human Rights Council and does not vote. Nevertheless I am not convinced that the resolution's call for a separate, internationally-led investigation, without the cooperation of the Sri Lankan Government, is the best way forward at this time.

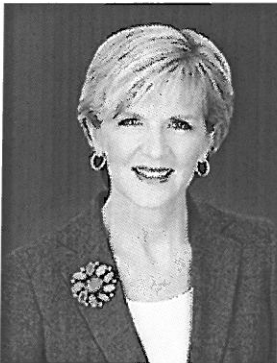
In addition, I do not think the resolution adequately recognised the significant progress taken by the Sri Lankan government to promote economic growth and its investment in infrastructure in areas formerly dominated by the LTTE in the north and north-east of the country. We should recognise the brutality of the LTTE, a proscribed terrorist organisation, during the 30-year civil war from which the country is struggling to emerge.

Australia will increase its efforts to work constructively with the Sri Lankan Government, the Tamil National Alliance and other stakeholders to identify ways to promote economic, social and cultural reconciliation.

I urge the Sri Lankan Government to implement the recommendations of its Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, and to engage with domestic and international stakeholders to advance an effective and transparent reconciliation agenda.

Media enquiries

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