



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka & the Maldives Team
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

14 May 2015

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0390-15

Thank you for your email of 21 April asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked for:

information about what steps if any the FCO has taken to monitor reprisals against those who protested, attempted to protest or organised protests during the visit of the UK Prime Minister David Cameron to Jaffna in Sri Lanka on 15 November 2013 during CHOGM. You will recall the families of the Disappeared in Sri Lanka protested when the Prime Minister visited Jaffna, holding up photographs of their loved ones and weeping, asking for help in finding them.

Please indicate with regard to these protestors (a) to your knowledge were there any reprisals or allegations of reprisals after the PM's visit and if so (b) how many people suffered reprisals and (c) the severity of the reprisal. Also please indicate, if applicable, if there were allegations but you did not find them credible.

In addition please indicate if you have any information that there were reprisals or allegations of reprisals against people the Prime Minister met and actually spoke to in Jaffna.

The likelihood of reprisals was considered high by the UK Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, which wrote in its 2014 report on the FCO's human rights work in 2013:

*"We recommended that the Prime Minister, prior to the CHOGM, should obtain assurances from the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that people who approached him to talk about human rights would not face reprisals or harassment by security forces. The FCO, in its response to our report, said that it had emphasised to the Sri Lankan government that human rights defenders, journalists and members of the public, who met with ministers during CHOGM, should not face any reprisals. It is not clear to us from this response whether the people who spoke with the Prime Minister had faced reprisals or been subject to harassment: **we recommend that the FCO, in its response to this report, outline how it monitored whether people who spoke with the Prime Minister about human rights have faced reprisals, and whether the FCO has any knowledge of reprisal attacks on people who met the British delegation during its visit to Sri Lanka in November 2013**".*

Please indicate if the FCO did respond to the Foreign Affairs Committee's report on this point - highlighted in bold above.

Finally if you have found credible allegations of reprisals I would like to know if and how this has been raised with the Sri Lankan government.

For the purposes of clarification I exclude from the remit of this FOI request the much reported detention of Mrs Balendran Jayakumari who was one of the protestors that day in Jaffna and was later detained for over a year without charge but recently released.

The British High Commission in Colombo remains in contact with many of those who met the Prime Minister in Sri Lanka in 2013. High Commission staff have also returned to visit places including Uthayan Press and the Sapapathypillai Welfare Centre, to follow up on the PM's visit. We have no knowledge that any of those met by the delegation have experienced reprisals as a result of the PM's visit, neither have we received allegations of reprisals, credible or otherwise.

We responded to the Foreign Affairs Committee report on this point in the Government Response to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2014-15, publically available on the www.parliament.uk website.

We have consistently made clear to the current Sri Lankan government, as we did to the previous government, the importance of safeguarding freedom of expression and protecting human rights defenders. The Sri Lankan government have committed to uphold their international human rights obligations and to ensure that civil society, human rights defenders and activists are allowed the space to act freely.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on gov.uk in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

Yours sincerely,

Desk Officer, Sri Lanka and the Maldives
South Asia Department



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