



PRESS RELEASE

Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP

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Theresa Villiers MP condemns actions of Sri Lankan diplomat

Theresa Villiers, Member of Parliament for Chipping Barnet, has condemned the actions of the Sri Lankan Defence Attaché, Brigadier Priyanka Fernando, which took place during a protest held by the British Tamil community.

On Sunday 4th January 2018 the Sri Lankan High Commission held celebrations to mark the 70th anniversary of Sri Lanka's independence from the British Empire. Members of London's Tamil community held a peaceful protest outside the High Commission during the celebration to highlight the continued human rights abuses against Tamils in the north and east of Sri Lanka. Video footage shows Brigadier Fernando repeatedly making a throat slitting gesture towards the Tamil protesters.

Theresa Villiers said "I strongly condemn the actions of Brigadier Priyanka Fernando directed at peaceful Tamil protesters. His actions have caused real distress to a number of my Tamil constituents, a number of whom fled Sri Lanka because of threats and mistreatment by the Sri Lankan military. I have written to the Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary requesting that Brigadier Priyanka Fernando have his diplomatic immunity removed so his actions can be investigated."

The UN Human Rights Committee has expressed grave concern about the actions of the Sri Lankan military in the closing days of the civil war and its resolution 30/1 calls for the crimes which took place against Tamils to be properly investigated.

Ends
Notes to Editors

For further information please contact Dominic Lowe on 0208 447 4710