



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR PREVENTION AND PROSECUTION OF GENOCIDE

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TO

JEAN-PIERRE LACROIX,

UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL FOR UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS,

NEW YORK.

jean-pierre.lacroix@un.org

c/o Debbie Berman , berman@un.org

Copy to

OHCHR, Geneva: registry@ohchr.org

Inner City Press: innercitypress@gmail.com

6 April 2018

Dear Mr. Lacroix,

SRI LANKAN ARMY'S FLOUTING OF VETTING AGREEMENT FOR UN PEACEKEEPERS

We write to draw your attention to allegations that the Sri Lankan Army has deployed UN peacekeepers in violation of the vetting agreement it reached with the national Human Rights Commission, as well as their obligation to conduct their own due diligence process to ensure that those who may constitute a risk to peacekeeping are not sent out. The failure to abide by these commitments constitutes a mockery of the whole process. Below are also a few remedial steps we think should be taken now.

The complaint regarding the vetting comes from no less than the country's national Human Rights Commission (HRCSL), a body appointed by the Government itself. You can see this complaint in a Sinhala letter from the HRCSL to the President of Sri Lanka in his capacity as commander in chief on the HRCSL website¹. The gist of it has been reported in English by exiled Sri Lankan journalists². It says that the HRCSL and the Sri Lankan Army signed an agreement in 2016 for the HRCSL to vet Sri Lanka's peacekeepers but the Army deployed 49 of them to Lebanon on 18 February 2018 before this process was complete and they had handed over all the information on them requested by the HRCSL. Indeed, some of the information requested by the HRCSL is said to be still pending.

Ultimately the responsibility lies with your department for the vetting process in terms of the Secretary General's 'Zero Tolerance' policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) as well as his new policy statement which he announced in 2017 "Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A New Approach", which has clearly failed spectacularly again in Sri Lanka. According to the UN, it seeks to ensure that only "individuals with the highest standards of integrity, competence and efficiency" are hired – this has not been the record with regard to Sri Lanka. You will note that to date there has been

¹ <http://hrsl.lk/english/2018/04/05/letter-sent-by-hrcsl-to-he-the-president-on-the-vetting-by-hrcsl-of-un-peace-keeping-troops-from-sri-lanka-correction-of-news-reports/>

² <http://www.jdslanka.org/index.php/news-features/human-rights/768-sl-human-rights-commission-slams-army-for-violating-agreement-on-peacekeeping>



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no criminal accountability for the 134 Sri Lankan peacekeepers sent home from Haiti in connection with systematic child sexual exploitation from 2004-7, which was confirmed by an OIOS investigation³.

Furthermore, if your department allows peacekeepers from any country to deploy before the vetting process in place is complete, then you are complicit in undermining the vetting process.

We therefore call on DPKO:

1. To confirm whether (a) the 49 peacekeepers from Sri Lanka were indeed deployed on 18 February 2018 without being vetted and (b) explain how this was possible and (c) what you will do to prevent this reoccurring.
2. To confirm that the deployment constitutes a violation of the Memorandum of Understanding between Troop Contributing Countries and DPKO in respect of vetting.
3. To inform us whether the HRCSL raised objections about contingent commander Lt. Col Hewage's deployment before we raised this issue with you in our letter of 14th February. We understand (from the HRCSL letter online) that they had the PHP forms for the 204 Lebanon-bound soldiers from 21 December 2017 so should have been able to identify the problems regarding the contingent commander that we ourselves identified from a quick online search once his name was made public. Specifically, were concerns raised by the HRCSL before the 18 February 2018 deployment of the 49 men? Their letter suggests they didn't know the men were about to be deployed, despite the issue being raised by us and being published officially on the army's website⁴.
4. To make public the vetting/due diligence criteria used by the HRCSL/OHCHR to screen soldiers. This should not be a secret.
5. To conduct a retrospective vetting of all other Sri Lankan peacekeepers currently deployed – other than the 200 that went to Mali who were vetted by OHCHR in Geneva. We know Sri Lankan peacekeepers are currently deployed in many other countries and it's probable they haven't been properly vetted for their human rights record.

Yours Sincerely,

Miss Ambihai Seevaratnam BSc, MSc, FCCA, MBA

ICPPG Country Co-ordinator and an Executive member

³ <http://www.itjpsl.com/assets/press/haiti-FINAL.pdf>

⁴ http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=Army_Contingent_for_UN_Mission_in_Lebanon_ready_to_leave_20180208_02