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Labour Party calls for an international commission of inquiry into war crimes allegations in Sri Lanka

Rt. Hon Douglas Alexander MP, the British Shadow Foreign Secretary, has given the Labour Party's full support for the establishment of an international commission to investigate the "*acts of unconscionable violence*" perpetrated in the final months of Sri Lanka's armed conflict in 2009.

Speaking to a packed Tamils for Labour fringe event at the Labour Party Conference on Wednesday 28th September, Mr Alexander stated that an investigation held under international auspices was essential given that there are "*profound concerns*" regarding the independence, accountability and witness protection capacity of Sri Lanka's domestic inquiry, the 'Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission'. "***I feel it is right, and after discussions with my shadow frontbench team, to say we are not convinced that this Commission can do its work even with international participation and there does need to be an international commission that looks into the evidence.***"

Addressing Labour Members of Parliament, Lords, Councillors, other party delegates and representatives from the Tamil community, Mr Alexander stated that there was a "*pressing need*" to deal with this issue and voiced his concern that the United Nations Human Rights Council had not acted more promptly. "*Frankly I am disappointed that it has not judged the need to go further than the steps that are already taken.*"

Reflecting not only on "*what has happened but [what] is continuing to happen even many months after the conflict*", Douglas Alexander said that the current human rights situation in Sri Lanka gave further impetus for action. He declared that it was difficult to determine "*whether human rights are anyway capable of being upheld*" on the island, in light of the Government of Sri Lanka's treatment of IDPs and alleged ex-combatants and the continuing cases of enforced disappearances.

Mr Alexander resolved to continue to voice the concerns of MPs and their constituents on this issue in Parliament. He also pledged to contact the British Foreign Secretary's office regarding the recent decision of the UK Border Agency to deport 50 Tamils to Sri Lanka. "*We need to be clear that the British Government has done its job in ensuring that these people are not going to be subjected to torture*".

Thanking Tamils for Labour for "*giving voice to the concerns of the community*" and to Channel 4 for displaying "*the best of British journalism*" in making the 'Sri Lanka's Killing Fields' documentary, Mr Alexander stated that it was incumbent on everyone to stand up justice and human rights. "*The British Government and all of us [need] to ensure that we are in a position where if harms are going to be perpetrated they are avoided and where harms have taken place they are investigated and the perpetrators of that violence face justice.*"

The link to Douglas Alexander's speech can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dk3Lx3cimlQ&feature=youtu.be>

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