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# LTTE loyalist Keith Vaz accused by London's Daily Mail of "shameless abuse of power and office"

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(By Walter Jayawardhana) In brilliant investigative pieces of reporting, London's Daily Mail accused Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) long standing friend and Labour parliamentarian Keith Vaz of "a shameless abuse of power and office." The newspaper, in two articles and an editorial published on March 16, accused Vaz that he used his position as chairman of the Home Affairs select Committee of the British House of Commons, which has a key role in law and order issues to intervene in a court case looking into the conduct of a conman "lawyer" whose license to practice law was cancelled.

The editorial on the same day said, "Today, we reveal the true extent of this shameless MP's grotesque abuse of his position: Mr Vaz signed the letter, written on Parliamentary notepaper, as 'chairman home affairs committee', despite the fact he was acting in a purely personal capacity, and had received lavish hospitality from Mireskandari (the alleged conman)". Keith Vaz has been constantly accusing Sri Lanka, vociferously repeating LTTE slogans in the parliament and recently brought pressure on the British government to appoint an independent investigator into the human rights record of Sri Lanka which the Sri Lanka government has angrily rejected. He is a close associate of the LTTE front, the British Tamil Forum and heads the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Tamils, which is carrying on a virulent campaign against Sri Lanka. The Daily mail accused Keith Vaz that he did these favours to the conman Mireskandari for lavish presents he bestowed upon the British Parliamentarian of Goanese origin from India who has been campaigning against Sri Lanka for the last few decades. The Daily Mail newspaper said Vaz will now be under pressure to step down as committee chairman amid accusations that he tried to interfere with the legal system and exploited his status to try to stop the case against the conman. His colleague Virendra Sharma MP, Member of the Justice Select Committee said he was misled into co-sign the letter by Vaz. Sharma also could be under pressure to resign from the committee. Vaz, who is the MP for Leicester East was intervening on behalf of Solicitor Shahrock 'Sean' Mireskandari who, following revelations in the Daily Mail last year that he had convictions in the US and bogus legal qualifications, has been suspended from practising law in Britain. The Daily Mirror said "at the time that Vaz wrote to the judge Mireskandari's law firm, Dean and Dean, was involved in a long running and costly legal dispute with an airline over a 400,000 legal bill which threatened the solicitor with bankruptcy." The Daily mail said the conman lawyer showered Vaz with gifts and appreciation. Thanks to him, Keith Vaz enjoyed the best seats at the biggest and most glamorous events around London, the newspaper revealed. Mr. Vaz' wife, human rights lawyer Maria Fernandes, was also a beneficiary of the Mireskandari largesse, the Mail further accused. The newspaper said Vaz frequented in the conman's office. A former employee of the office was quoted as telling, "He loved the high life, football, concerts, black tie dinners. It was really undignified for such a senior politician." The Daily mail in the exclusive revelation said: "Damning evidence of how senior Labour MP Keith Vaz intervened in a court case on behalf of a crooked friend can be revealed today." The following is the editorial Daily Mail published based on the revelation: "The relationship between the Labour MP Keith Vaz and Sean Mireskandari, a convicted conman with bogus legal qualifications, has carried a bad smell since it was first exposed by the Mail last Autumn. As we reported at the time, the pair became so close that Mr. Vaz was even prepared to send a letter to the High Court asking for the delay of a legal dispute that was threatening Mireskandari's law firm with financial ruin. Yet, after the most perfunctory of inquiries into this cosy friendship, parliamentary standards commissioner John Lyon cleared Mr. Vaz of wrongdoing. Too close for comfort: Vaz tried to influence a court hearing to help convicted conman Mireskandari. Today, we reveal the true extent of this shameless MP's grotesque abuse of his position: Mr Vaz signed the letter written on Parliamentary notepaper, as 'chairman home affairs committee', despite the fact he was acting in a purely personal capacity, and had received lavish hospitality from Mireskandari. Surely Mr. Vaz recognised the potential impropriety of using his chairmanship of the hugely powerful committee as part of an attempt to influence a hearing of one of Britain's highest courts? The answer, apparently, is no, and he continues to deny any wrongdoing, as he has done many times before when mired in sleaze allegations. In 2001, he was at the centre of the Hinduja brothers' passport scandal, which led to the resignation of Peter Mandelson. A year later he was suspended from the House of Commons in disgrace after a Parliamentary inquiry into his business affairs. But, despite this track record, the Labour whips still felt able, in 2007, to hand him the chairmanship of the home affairs committee, which oversees much of the justice system. Now, Mr. Vaz has dragged the good name of that committee into the legal affairs of convicted crook Mireskandari, without the consent of its members. A more wilful abuse of his office is hard to imagine. It was only few weeks ago, hundreds of Sri Lankans surrounded his Leicester political office and openly accused him of receiving favours from a banned terrorist organization, the LTTE and speaking for them. Yohan Perera one of the organizers said on the face of Vaz that he is so unbalanced in his statements supportive of the LTTE. "We came here to tell you and the people misguided by you that you are spoiling the good name of my country in an outrageous manner," he said. He added by questioning Vaz, "How dare you call an outfit that have done 350 suicide bombings and done thousands of other civilian killings in buses, trains and temples, involved in mass murdering, a bunch of freedom fighters?" In a letter handed over by the demonstrators to Mr. Keith Vaz, the organization said that it is not a secret that he supported the deadly terrorist outfit the LTTE. It further said that it is also not a secret that Keith Vaz has marched, preached and provided employment to LTTE front organizations such as British Tamil Forum, Tamil Youth organization, Tamil Councillors Association, etc. Quoting the Hansard SLAT also said that he was advocating the lifting of the proscription of the LTTE in the UK. But the letter said however the British parliamentarian has never spoken a single word about the atrocities by the LTTE, the hundreds of suicide attacks by the same terrorist outfit, conscription of children by them as child soldiers and forcefully keeping human shield by them. The letter said the parliamentarian has been

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silent about the extortion of thousands of British Tamils by the LTTE. The letter urged him to stop supporting the LTTE.Courtesy: defence.lk