
Government regrets British Foreign Secretary's statement

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The Government has regretted the statement of the British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband in the House of Commons recently, expressing disappointment at the continued rejection of the appointment of the British Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Sri Lanka, Des Browne. Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama reiterated in Parliament today (07 April 2009), the Government's position that the British Government had failed to adhere to the time honoured tradition in diplomatic practice of consultation and following the procedure in making the said appointment. This has been further vindicated by Mr. Browne's participation in a conference in London recently, organized by a front of the LTTE terrorist group, at which it was resolved to establish a sovereign state of Tamil Eelam – the doctrine of the LTTE, proscribed by the UK – and his utterances in that forum.

The Foreign Minister, in a wide ranging and comprehensive statement to the Parliament, saluted the valiant military personnel for their success in clearing all areas in the Vanni from the subjugation of the LTTE, which all peace loving Sri Lankans would welcome as a signal of freedom. Today, the country is poised on the threshold of defeating terrorism and embarking on an era of lasting peace and security for all the people. The Minister further noted that when the history of Sri Lanka is recorded, “Mahinda Rajapaksa's name will be written in golden letters as the ‘Great Unifier’ of our motherland Sri Lanka”. Referring to the Ministerial statement issued earlier this month by the British Foreign Secretary that “the LTTE is a terrorist organization and that the Government of Sri Lanka has a need to root out the threat of terrorism”, however regretted that punitive action on the LTTE by the international community remains largely on paper, where a proscription, though in force, amounts to nothing in terms of its implementation. Elaborating further, the Minister said, “Fund raising by LTTE operatives continues unabated, public demonstrations have now graduated to the blatant use of the terrorist organisation's name, insignia, cut outs of the leader, etc., and are held in the proscribed territories with excuses of how legal action cannot be taken. I am only left to question the validity of a proscription. While some countries thankfully have been taking action against such activities, there are those who churn out excuses. For instance, it would not be wrong to expect some uniformity of action in relation to the EU proscription being an integrated entity of member states. However, this has not been the case”. Minister Bogollagama assured the House that no one is more concerned than the Government about the civilians trapped as human shields in the safe zone by the LTTE. He rejected the notion that the Government needs to be reminded by anyone of its responsibility towards its own citizens and emphasized that, throughout the conflict, the Government has followed a strict zero tolerance policy on civilian casualties, notwithstanding the LTTE's modus operandi of using civilians as human shields. He also categorically rebutted the British Foreign Secretary's contention that the Government has denied access to the welfare villages; the visits of the UN Under Secretary General, Sir John Holmes, some Colombo based Heads of Diplomatic Missions, and EU delegation and most recently the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Human Rights for IDPs, Dr. Walter Kaelin have all visited these IDP centres and seen for themselves the factual situation. He also pointed out that the UN and the ICRC, together with 14 INGOs who have recommended by the UN, are working in these welfare centres. In conclusion, the Foreign Minister reiterated the Government's commitment to pursue a sustainable solution to the conflict in terms of a Sri Lankan agenda. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Colombo 07 April 2009 The full text of the Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs : [Click here](#)