



The European Parliament and Council of the European Union must perform due diligence on Sri Lanka's human rights abuses before reinstating GSP+

[BRUSSELS—February 01] The British Tamils Forum (BTF), Swedish Tamils Forum (STF) and United States Tamil Political Action Council (**USTPAC**) urge the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to take the full four months provided to thoroughly evaluate Sri Lanka's GSP+ application. BTF, STF, and USTPAC also call on the European Parliament to request a briefing from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights before deciding on GSP+ reinstatement.

On 11 January the European Commission [recommended](#) reinstatement of GSP+ trade benefits to Sri Lanka. The EU withdrew GSP+ benefits in 2010 in response to persistent human rights abuses. The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union now have up to four months to raise objections before benefits are reinstated.

“We respectfully [disagree](#) with the European Commission's recommendation to reinstate GSP+,” said Ravi Kumar, General Secretary of the British Tamils Forum (BTF). “Recent reports from UN treaty monitoring bodies and UN Experts demonstrate that the government of Sri Lanka has not done enough to address serious human rights abuses. In December the UN Committee Against Torture [found](#) that torture remains a “common practice” by the police. This indicates a serious failure to implement the Convention Against Torture”.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) [stated](#) that GSP+ is a conditional trade scheme based on both ratification and implementation of 27 conventions that relate to human rights, labour rights, environmental rights and good governance. Sri Lanka must follow these strict criteria to become a GSP+ beneficiary.

“We urge the European Parliament to take the full four months to review Sri Lanka's GSP+ application,” said Dr Karunyan Arulanantham, President of the United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC). “This will give the EU time to seek a briefing from the High Commissioner and obtain his in-depth knowledge of Sri Lanka's adherence to and shortcomings with the human rights conventions required under GSP+. The full four months will also provide the time needed to review the High Commissioner's report”.

High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein will present a report on Sri Lanka's human rights record at the 34th session of the Human Rights Council in March this year.

“We all want economic development in Sri Lanka. But for development to benefit all communities human rights protections must be in place”, said Govindarajah Jeganmohan, Chairman of the Swedish Tamils Forum. “Sri Lankans, including Tamils, Muslims, journalists and human rights defenders, continue to face human rights abuses. State impunity persists. GSP+ should only be provided once the rights of all of Sri Lanka's citizens are respected and the rule of law is upheld,” said Mr Jeganmohan.

About BTF: The British Tamils Forum, also widely known as 'BTF' is an organisation which represents and gives voice to a large Tamil community in the United Kingdom in political and socio-economic spheres. 'Working for peace with justice and dignity.'

About USTPAC: USTPAC is a US-based Tamil advocacy group advocating for a cessation of ongoing human rights abuses in Sri Lanka, accountability for crimes committed during and after the civil war, and a political settlement to address the root causes of the conflict. It has worked for these goals at the UNHRC since 2012.

About STF: STF is an organization in Sweden that brings together people and Tamil local organizations to pay attention to the humanitarian crises, human rights and war crimes committed by the government of Sri Lanka.

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