



Challenge to the UK ban on the Tamil Tigers

A group of Parliamentarians & members of Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) have challenged the UK ban on Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

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A group of parliamentarians and members of the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) have challenged the decision earlier this year of the UK Home Office to refuse to lift the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE, an organisation based in north-eastern Sri Lanka, has been banned in the UK since 2001 but has not been active since the end of armed conflict in Sri Lanka some ten years ago.

In its petition to the Home Secretary, the TGTE members argued that the ban on the LTTE is misperceived as a ban on advocacy for the establishment of a sovereign state of Tamil Eelam, and as a result it has a chilling effect in the people's participation of the TGTE's political work towards that goal. In addition, over the past ten years there have been no violent activities carried out by the LTTE. The act of banning the LTTE means in practice that the political activities of all Tamils are cracked down on, which is a practice encouraged by the Government of Sri Lanka, according to the Prime Minister of the TGTE Mr Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran.

In its letter of refusal, the Home Office referred only to one alleged incident, noting that it had been 'reported that in June 2018 the Sri Lankan police arrested individuals in the course of transporting explosive devices and LTTE paraphernalia including flags.' No other evidence to explain the ban was offered.

The challenge to the ban will be heard before an independent tribunal especially constituted for this purpose under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Proscribed Organisations Appeal Commission (POAC). This Commission has power to order the Home Secretary to unban the LTTE. No date for a hearing has been set yet, though the Government is seeking to have much of the evidence heard in secret, a proposal that the TGTE oppose on grounds of transparency and which they desire to challenge.

The appeal has been filed on behalf of the TGTE members by Professor Conor Gearty of Matrix Chambers and the London School of Economics.

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