

From: Austen Ivereigh

Director for Public Affairs of the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor

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E5586

Dear Fr. Francis,

I enormously enjoyed my visit to Sri Lanka over Christmas and the New Year, and was touched by the generosity and the hospitality of the people of that island.

I was alarmed to find on my return that reports of a part of my meeting with President Mahinda Rajapakse on 2 January have troubled some in the Tamil Catholic community in the UK.

Although the report in *The Tablet* of 7 January was accurate, the headline may have given the impression that I accepted the premise of the President's request that I help in some way to discourage the funding of the LTTE by members of the Tamil community. As it happened, I simply noted his request, which arose very briefly in a discussion about the peace process in general.

Naturally I do not believe that Tamil Catholics in the UK are funding violence. Even less do I believe that money raised by Tamils in Catholic parishes here are being diverted to fund violence. From visiting Tamil villages in Ampara and Batticaloa, I know how devastated the Tamil people were by the tsunami, and how they have looked to relatives and friends abroad to help them in their hour of need, and how generous those in our Diocese have been.

I hope this clears up any misunderstanding.

Yours sincerely,

Archbishop of Westminster

Fr Francis Eugene Saverian
304 Garratt Lane
London
SW18 4EH