# British Tour Operators Turning a Blind Eye to Perpetrators of War Crimes in Sri Lanka?

***The Campaign:***

As part of a campaign promoting ethical tourism in Sri Lanka, the *Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice* has recently uncovered evidence that a range of **British tour operators are currently offering holiday packages that provide commercial benefit to alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses.**

Our investigation draws attention to those flights companies, hotels, restaurants and visitor attractions in Sri Lanka (many of which are included in British holiday packages), that benefit **individuals or organisations against whom there is credible evidence of war crimes, crimes against humanity or human rights abuses.**

The lack of accountability for atrocities committed in the final stages of Sri Lanka’s conflict, in which it is thought at least 40,000 civilians were killed, has engendered a culture of impunity in which continued abuses thrive. There is strong evidence of ongoing torture, murder, discrimination, land-rights abuses and press intimidation in Sri Lanka, with those in power above the law.

Our campaign seeks to enable holiday-makers to make informed choices about tourism providers to ensure that their holidays do not benefit known human rights abusers, we are at the same time eager to highlight the **many positive steps that holiday-makers** **can take so that their spending contributes to developing local communities.**

***Holiday Providers of Concern:***

A condensed list of Sri Lankan businesses with known political or financial links to alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses is detailed below. The supporting details about these relationships, and evidence against the individuals involved, are available here**:** [**bitly.com/Q6bsbD**](http://bitly.com/Q6bsbD)

Many of the Sri Lankan providers are included in the holiday packages offered by:

* Red Dot Tours
* Kayak
* Sri Lankan Expeditions.
* Kuoni
* Saga
* Expedia
* Kenwood Travel
* Experience Travel
* Virgin Holidays
* First Choice
* Thomas Cook
* STA Travel

***Hotels and Resorts:***

**Example 1 – Dutch Bay Resorts:** The Government of Sri Lanka has had a major part in the Dutch Bay tourist development in which large tracts of land have been acquired without proper consultation with local residents. The erection of high-barbed wire fences areas around coastal areas by the navy has had a huge impact on local residents, whose livelihoods depend on access to the surrounding fishing waters. Many fishermen now have to walk several miles to access beaches only a few hundred meters away.

* Thalsevana Resort (Jaffna)
* Wadduwa Holiday Resort (Colombo)
* Dutch Bay Resorts (Kalpitiya)
* Nature Park Holiday Resort (Jaffna)
* Marble Beach Airforce Resort

(Trincomalee Bay)

**Example 2 – Sri Lankan Airlines:** Owned by the Government of Sri Lanka. The CEO Nishantha Wickremasinghe is the President's brother-in-law. Another director, Shameendra Rajapaksa, is the president's nephew.

Sri Lankan Airlines flights may be included in packages from Kuoni, Saga, Kenwood Travel, Thomas Cook, STA Travel and Experience Travel.

***Flights:***

* Sri Lankan

Airlines

**Example 3 – Air Travel Services:** Registered as a private liability company in 2010 by Commander of the Army, Lieutenant General J Jayasuriya, and President of the Army 'Seva Vanitha' branch, Mrs Manjulika Jayasuriya.

* Mihin Lanka
* Helitours
* Air Travel Services (PVT)

***Restaurants, Sights and Attractions***

**Example 4 – Mullativu Wildlife Sanctuary:** The military is establishing a wildlife sanctuary in Mullaitivu, an area in the Northern region that saw much of the heavy fighting during the closing stages of the conflict. Critics argue that the arrangement is designed to prevent local ethnic minority communities from returning to their homes in the area, and that it is simply another means obstructing international investigation of an area suspected of harbouring mass graves.

* Mullativu Wildlife Sanctuary
* Chundikulam Bird Sanctuary
* Rakna Arakshaka Lanka

Catering Services

* Eagles Golf Links (China Bay)

***Major Hoteliers***

While major hoteliers in Sri Lanka have not been linked directly to alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses, to avoid the concerns raised above our Campaign encourages tourists to consider staying in small, locally run, resorts . These major hoteliers include:

* Jetwing Hotels
* Keels Hotel Chaadi (Jaffna)
* Shangri La Hotels (Colombo and Hambantota)

***Ethical Travel***

Even in this context it is still possible for travellers to take positive steps to ensure that their holidays are ethical ones, and we are keen to promote the use of the many family run hotels, small businesses and community projects in Sri Lanka that offer a wonderfully authentic experience while providing benefits to legitimate business and local communities.

The most important thing is for travellers to make informed choices about how to spend their holidays in Sri Lanka. [Tourism Concern](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/) is an organisation that provides excellent summaries of the key ethical tourism issues globally. Potential visitors to Sri Lanka can also get informed by reading [Groundviews](http://groundviews.org/), Sri Lanka's international award-winning citizens’ journalism site, or reading books such as Lucy Popescu's *The Good Tourist*.

***Activist Holidays***

Censorship and media suppression means it can be difficult for ordinary citizens in Sri Lanka to access information. Travellers seeking to pursue a more activist role on their holidays can help remedy this by distributing material that is hard to get hold of within the country. A list of free, printable resources on human rights issues and nonviolent resistance is available here: [**bit.ly/PGMlMt**](http://bit.ly/PGMlMt)

Some organisations offer homestays with human rights defenders, giving visitors an insight into the country. Where tourists do engage with local people on human rights, we encourage them to be respectful and also conscious of safety and security issues for local people.

For further information, images or interviews please contact: **info@srilankacampaign.org**

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