

As UN Issues oral Report on Sri Lanka - Witnesses to UN Investigation Threatened by Sri Lankan Government: TGTE

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As UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein Issues oral Report on Sri Lanka today - Witnesses to the UN Investigation are Threatened by Sri Lankan Government, said Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE).

In what amounts to be a direct challenge to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the Sri Lankan Government has taken a hostile attitude toward a UNHRC investigation. The UNHRC in its March 2014 Session created an investigative body on Sri Lanka to inquire into serious crimes committed in Sri Lanka during the war.

The Sri Lankan Government has threatened prospective witnesses to this UN investigation of dire consequences, including legal action, for giving evidence and the President of Sri Lanka has categorically denied access to the country to this investigative body.

<https://news.vice.com/article/sri-lankas-president-doesnt-want-the-uninvestigating-war-crimes-in-his-country>

The Sri Lankan Cabinet spokesman Mr. Keheliya Rambukwella, threatened legal action against those testifying before the UN inquiry.

<http://www.ceylontoday.lk/58-70207-news-detailun-inquiry-and-sri-lankas-response.htm> |

This explicit threat of prosecution coupled with the covert activities of “white van” abductions and “disappearances” place all potential witnesses in a precarious position.

Potential witness arrested for seeking her disappeared son:

<http://www.channel4.com/news/sri-lanka-jayakumari-arrest-missing-civil-war-ltte>

Non-cooperation by the Sri Lankan government to this UN investigation is one thing; but, persecution of potential witnesses is another.

Many Tamils who are either victims or witnesses are eager to testify to seek justice for the killing of their family members or for the mass killing of Tamils.

They are intimidated by threats from the Sri Lankan Government. There are also concerns that the Sri Lankan security forces may target the relatives of witnesses who testify overseas.

“I am alarmed at threats currently being leveled against the human rights community in Sri Lanka, as well as prospective victims and witnesses” noted new UN High

Commissioner for Human Rights Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein in his statement on September 8, 2014 at UNHRC.

"We are alarmed to learn of intimidation, threats and reprisals against all those perceived as likely to engage with and provide information to the investigation mandated by the UN Human Rights Council...", said a joint letter by six international organizations led by Amnesty International on August 27, 2014.

Source: Arab News - <http://www.arabnews.com/world/news/621586>

UNHRC should take steps to: Ensure the protection of witnesses and urge the Sri Lankan President not to harm Tamils who testify before this UN body.

UNHRC should also warn: the Sri Lankan Government of the consequences for its tactic of intimidation and persecution of potential witnesses.

UNHRC should consider: Requesting the UN Security Council to ensure witness protection for the UN war crimes investigation on Sri Lanka.

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