

Sri Lanka: Tamil Lawyers Forum Urges UN Rights Chief to Investigate Suspicious Deaths of Released Tamil Detainees

"Urges UN to Appoint a team of scientists & medical experts to examine the victims who complain of poisonous & chemical substance injections while in custody"

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Accusation by former LTTE cadres that they were administered with poisonous and chemical substances during rehabilitation period resulting in their being afflicted with serious physical disabilities have raised concerns as regards the accountability and justice process in Sri Lanka. It has been observed that several former LTTE



cadres in the prime of their life are suffering from physical disabilities ranging from debilitation, impairment, permanent privation of eyes, ears and other limbs, emasculation, deliriousness and disfiguration all of which could be traced from the time they were inmates of rehabilitation or detention centers. Several such victims have made complaints to the Zonal Task Force on National Consultation and to various entities including Members of Parliament about their mysterious illnesses and therefore this issue cannot be easily ignored or trifled with. The Northern Provincial Council came up with a resolution passed on 25th August 2016 calling for medical investigation to be carried on the ex cadres by competent and trusted medical experts. The numbers of dead among the category of ex cadres who have served time in Rehabilitation facilities stand at a high 107 within the last 4-5 years and have added weight to the seriousness of the allegation leveled against the Military and Defense establishment of Sri Lanka. It is also disconcerting that many of such victims have died of cancer related illnesses.

This accusation against the security force does not come as a surprise. It is widely accepted that Sri Lankan soldiers have perpetrated grave crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide over the last three decades in the war against Tamil rebels. In addition to subjecting Tamil civilians to illegal arrest, detention, extra judicial killings, torture and inhuman treatment, thousands of people have been made to disappear without a trace. There are innumerable reports filed with UN Human Rights Council and other interested bodies about rape, torture, molestation and dehumanization of Tamil women by Sri Lankan soldiers. There are heaps of material which prove that Sri Lankan troops used rape as a weapon of war. Testimony of such victims have been dispatched to international agencies by womens organizations, lawyers, medical experts and others in the absence of credible

mechanisms within Sri Lanka to investigate and inquire into the allegations. Channel 4 videos provide disturbing evidence of brutal, savage and sadistic attacks perpetrated on men, women and even children by Sri Lankan soldiers during the last days of the war. These videos have been confirmed as authentic and genuine by independent sources although the Sri Lankan authorities and their “patriotic” lobby made vain effort to discredit the video footages. The poison injecting episode therefore comes as yet another brutal instrument in the inexhaustible repertoire of Sri Lankan military’s strategy to completely annihilate by foul means, those who dare to oppose them.

Sri Lanka is not alone in the administration of poison on unsuspecting victims. Super powers and oppressive regimes have resorted to injection of poison and lethal substances on their perceived dissidents and enemies. Victims of such covert operations suffer mysterious death, destruction of vital organs, heart attack, kidney failure, liver malfunction, cancer etc. Alexendar Litvinenko, a Putin opponent died of Polonium-210 poisoning in 2006. Kara-Matza an opposition leader in Russia survived a poison attempt on him after being in coma for a week. Alexendar Perpilichinyy who escaped to London, died of heart attack at the age of 44 in 2009, and his stomach had traces of glesmium, a rare poison plant known to have been used in China. An Arab intelligence agent Khattab died in 2002 in Chechniya after opening a letter laced with a form of sarin, a nerve agent. In 2008 Karina Mosa Kalenko, a Russian lawyer specializing in taking cases to the European Court of Human Rights, fell ill in strange manner from mercury found in her car. More prominent public figures Aleksandre Solzhenitsyn, a Nobel Prize winner in 1970, confirmed in his biography that Ricin, a deadly chemical was involved in an attempt to destabilize him. Ukrain’s pro - western President Victor A. Yushchenko was left with his face disfigured after a Dioxin poisoning. These chemical substances are mostly tasteless, colourless and odorless which make their traces difficult to identify. Poison stories abound in the international arena and therefore their existence in the local sphere cannot be discounted by any account. Chinese, Pakistanis and Russians have played a major role in bolstering the Sri Lankan Army by way of providing arms, ammunitions, training and support throughout the three decade war in Sri Lanka.

It is very likely that these militaristic nations have trained the Sri Lankan military in the use of chemical and poison injections to eliminate rivals. It is therefore extremely important that a panel of independent and competent medical experts be assigned to examine persons who complain of external substances being injected in their bodies.

It is no secret that Sri Lankan government and its institutions lack the capacity to investigate into this extremely sensitive matter. The GoSL has not fulfilled its undertakings given to the international community in the UN Human Rights Council Resolution of 2015 as its public service including the law enforcement agencies are inherently racist and cannot be trusted to perform independently and professionally. These concerns were raised in the Parliament of Sri Lanka. The very nature of poisonous substance makes it difficult for medical personnel to identify or detect such substance on the mere examination of victims. It behoves the scientists with medical background and expertise and not merely medical doctors to identify the effects of injection of external substances in the body.

But up to date the government authorities have not taken any action so far on the complaints. The victims have lost all hopes of the government initiating any action on their complaints. The opposition Tamil National Alliance sailing together with the present government and the TNA leader who is also the leader of the opposition have not made any remark, leave alone taking meaningful action. It is therefore incumbent on the international community and the UN to address the grievances of the poison injection victims of Sri Lanka.

In the circumstance, the Tamil Lawyers Forum requests the Office of the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner to:

- 1) Appoint a team of scientists including medical experts of international repute and competence to

- examine the victims who complain of poisonous and chemical substance injections while in custody.
- 2) Request the GOSL to grant access for such team of medical experts to conduct investigation on victims in Sri Lanka.
 - 3) Take appropriate action on the Report that may be submitted to you by the experts' team.

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