

Enough Evidence to Charge Sri Lanka's new Chief of Army Staff with War Crimes.

New dossier out on Shavendra Silva.

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, January 29, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- There is more than enough evidence to suspend Sri Lanka's new Chief of Army Staff, Major General Shavendra Silva, and charge him with war crimes and crimes against humanity, said the International Truth and Justice Project. The South Africa-based investigative group published a 137-page dossier on Silva, detailing his role as one of the most important Field Commanders during the 2008-9 War. The dossier presents the most extensive body of evidence against him – or any Sri Lankan War-time commander - to date. It amalgamates photographs, contemporaneous SMS and witness testimony, including from insiders, and evidence of official Army releases which were deleted offline after the war to hide the truth, as well as drawing on the findings of past UN investigative reports.

“There is a staggering amount of evidence in this dossier meticulously collected by my team over many years,” said [ITJP's](#) Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka, “Many successful cases at international tribunals or the International Criminal Court had less to work with. There is now no excuse for this man to remain as number two in the Sri Lankan Army; he must be suspended immediately and a criminal investigation instituted.”

Ms. Sooka was one of three international legal experts appointed in 2010 by the United Nations Secretary General to look into the conduct of the final War in Sri Lanka. This was followed in 2012 by an internal review of the UN's own grave failures in Sri Lanka and then an investigation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

“After the UN investigation completed its work in 2015, the ITJP continued to document and collect evidence regarding the War. This means our NGO now has the most extensive archive of



Shavendra Silva 2009



Shall Attack - Injured in Pokkanai 2009

evidence pertaining to the final phase of the Civil War and violations in its aftermath. This dossier is just a fraction of the information we hold," said Ms. Sooka. "This illustrates the importance of a dedicated team of experts to do this work with knowledge that builds up over years."

Promising reform, in 2015 Sri Lanka's new Government co-sponsored a UN resolution backing an ambitious transitional justice programme, including a hybrid court - which it then refused to implement. Despite promises to address the past, no senior military official has been convicted for their role in the conflict which ended a decade ago. Instead many alleged perpetrators have been promoted.



Shavendra Silva (pointing, May 2009)

Shavendra Silva's promotion to Chief of Army Staff in January 2019 was the most shocking. It caused alarm and horror in the former conflict areas of Sri Lanka where Tamil war survivors still live. However, some in the south still regard him as a hero.

"The international community cannot seriously talk about progress on rule of law and accountability so long as Shavendra Silva enjoys impunity. How can the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations continue to recruit peacekeepers from Sri Lanka when the army is run by this man? It would condone the gravest international crimes. If Sri Lanka fails to act, we look especially to countries in the region with close military ties to Sri Lanka to deny Shavendra Silva visas or, better still, to arrest him under universal jurisdiction," added Ms. Sooka.

In 2017, the ITJP filed a series of war crimes cases under universal jurisdiction against Shavendra Silva's immediate Commander in the War, General Jagath Jayasuriya, who was an ambassador in Latin America. Jayasuriya fled on the eve of the filing of the cases and has shown no sign of returning to Brazil or Chile to test the allegations against him in an independent court of law.

See a Summary of the Dossier: <http://www.itjpsl.com/assets/press/29-Jan-2019-Shavendra-Silva-press-release.pdf>

And the Full Dossier: <http://www.itjpsl.com/reports/shavendra-silva>

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