

UN Rights Chief Urged to Send Observers to the Mass Grave Found in Sri Lanka: TGTE

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In a letter to UN High-Commissioner for Human Rights Honorable Michelle Bachelet Jeria, Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam's Prime Minister Mr. Visuvathan Rudrakumaran, urged the High-Commissioner to send observers to the recent mass grave found in the Northern town of Mannar in Sri Lanka, to closely monitor the current process of unearthing and analyzing the skeletons, as well as all other connected activities, including the judicial process.

He also urged the High-Commissioner to take appropriate steps to ensure that all the evidences collected, including skeletons and the area of the mass grave, are secured, analyzed and preserved under your control as evidence for future international prosecution. We are worried that without your involvement these evidences and skeletons may be get tampered or get destroyed like what happened in the case of previous mass graves.

"Needless to say, it is extremely dangerous to allow the evidence collected, including skeletons, to be entrusted with the Sri Lankan Government for safekeeping and expect the Government not to tamper or destroy the evidences. How can anyone expect a party accused of disappearances to protect the evidences and offer justice? It's similar to entrusting a fox to guard a chicken coop".

Below, please find the letter:

Dear Honorable High Commissioner,

I am writing to bring to your attention the recent discovery of the largest mass grave found yet in Sri Lanka in the Northern Province town of Mannar. According to international media reports as of now 300 skeletons were unearthed in this mass grave consisting of 23 children below the age of 12. Some of the victims appeared to have been bound. The bodies had been heaped up and found "dumped", instead of being "laid to rest" beside each other, as would be the case in a cemetery.

The mass grave was uncovered by construction workers preparing to build a cooperative store. Local population informs that this area was under the control of the Sri Lankan Security Forces during the war, and the Military Intelligence was occupying a building close by. Even though the war has ended almost ten years ago, still there is very large number of security forces stationed in Tamil areas, raising concerns that these Security forces may tamper with the evidence. Several of these troops are accused by the UN and other international organizations are involved in disappearances, killings and rape.

According to numerous reports thousands of Tamils disappeared during the conflict, including large number of those surrendered at the end of the war in May 2009. Those surrendered include several families with babies and children. We are concerned some of those who

surrendered may have been buried there. Special concern to us are the skeletons of 23 children below the age of 12, who may be of those babies and children who surrendered at the end of the war.

Successive Sri Lankan Governments have a history of denying abuses by the Government and often took steps to cover-up international crimes, including blocking any investigation and destroy evidences. As you are aware, despite cosponsoring a unanimously passed UN Human Rights Council Resolution 30/4 and committing itself to fulfill the requirements of the Resolution in two years' time, Sri Lankan President and the Prime Minister have repeatedly and categorically said in public that they will not implement the main elements of the Resolution, including establishing of a Hybrid Court consisting of International Judges and prosecutors.

Recently, one the main suspects named by the UN of committing War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, Major General Shevendra Silva was appointed as the Chief of Staff of the Army. Please note that it is under his command that bombing and shelling of a place designated by the Government as safe zones (No Fire Zone) took place, resulting in tens of thousands killed. It is also under his command large number of Tamils including babies and children surrendered about ten years ago in May 2009 and still disappeared.

Needless to say, it is extremely dangerous to allow the evidence collected, including skeletons, to be entrusted with the Sri Lankan Government for safekeeping and expect the Government not to tamper or destroy the evidences. How can anyone expect a party accused of disappearances to protect the evidences and offer justice? It's similar to entrusting a fox to guard a chicken coop.

I would like to point out that no one was held accountable nor was the evidences including skeletons were analyzed and preserved in the previous several mass graves found in Tamil areas. Two of the examples are the mass graves found in the Northern town of Chemmani in 1998 and in the Eastern province town of Kaluwanchikudy in 2014.

There are recent reports of another mass grave found in a place called Mandathivu in Kayts in the Northern Province. There are concerns that many more mass graves may be there in Tamil areas, given that thousands of Tamils disappeared over the years.

I am writing to appeal to you to take appropriate steps to ensure that all the evidences collected, including skeletons and the area of the mass grave, are secured, analyzed and preserved under your control as evidence for future international prosecution. We are worried that without your involvement these evidences and skeletons may be get tampered or get destroyed like what happened in the case of previous mass graves. I also urge you to send an observer to closely monitor the current process of unearthing and analyzing the skeletons, as well as all other connected activities, including the judicial process. Thank you for your consideration.

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