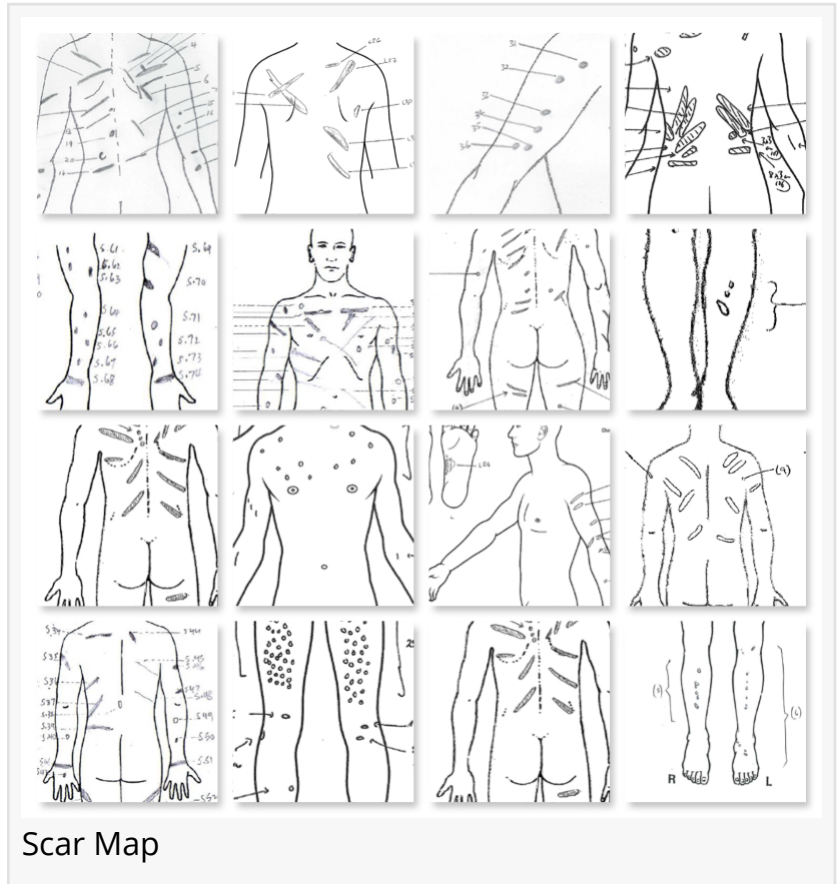


High time for Sri Lanka to investigate well-known alleged perpetrators of torture.

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, February 25, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- If Sri Lanka is serious about tackling ongoing [torture](#) it needs to suspend and investigate a number of well known security officials named in United Nations reports in connection with torture. Vague assertions by successive Sri Lankan Governments of a "zero tolerance" policy for torture are meaningless in the light of multiple reports of past and ongoing torture and the impunity for those named in a number of reports as alleged torturers.

The ITJP has identified the names of 47 alleged perpetrators of extremely brutal torture in one security unit alone, not to mention a number of alleged rapists of Tamil detainees in the Sri Lankan Army (including one recently training abroad) and perpetrators of torture in the Sri Lankan Navy. One alleged perpetrator of torture is currently posted in an overseas embassy, while two others have been living in Australia recently.



“If we sitting abroad can collect such a huge body of evidence, think what could be achieved by a credible team inside the country with appropriate investigative powers reporting to an independent authority. From the outset we offered to help this Government establish an independent international investigative unit, such as the one in Guatemala, but we never heard back from them. It's crucial to dismantle these entrenched structures of repression otherwise the broken brutalised victims just keep increasing in number,” said the ITJP's executive director, Yasmin Sooka.

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Torture Continues

The [latest report](#) of continuing torture by the police and army in Sri Lanka comes from the UK's main rehabilitation charity, Freedom From Torture based on 16 victims alleging torture between 2015-17. The ITJP has previously documented 76 very similar cases from 2015-17. In 2017 the Associated Press news agency released a major investigation into ongoing torture and male rape based on 20 interviews with victims and 32 medical reports.

“The UN report on Sri Lanka described systematic torture by the security forces and said sexual violence was part of “an institutional policy” . Illegal detention and torture doesn’t just go away with a few prison visits – the alleged perpetrators and commanders need to be suspended, investigated and prosecuted,” said Ms. Sooka.

Immediate Steps

The ITJP believes if Sri Lanka is serious about preventing torture, the following well-known individuals, among many others, should be suspended and investigated immediately:

1. **Nandana Munasinghe:** The UN Special Rapportuer on Torture Manfred Nowak in 2007 called for him (and other named officers of TID) to be promptly investigated in connection with police torture . Instead he has been repeatedly promoted and is now a Senior DIG. In 2016, astonishingly he was appointed to the body for witness protection in Sri Lanka and in 2017 put in charge of investigating an attempted white van abduction.
2. **Sisira Mendis:** He is named in the 2015 OHCHR report as being in charge of the “fourth floor” – the most notorious torture site in Sri Lankam where among others a number of prominent journalists were detained and tortured. Mr. Mendis was brought out of retirement by the coalition government and appointed as director of the Centre for National Intelligence in the Ministry of Defence and sent to Geneva as part of the Government’s delegation to the UN Committee Against Torture. Felice Gaer of the UN Committee told the New York Times “He was the person with command responsibility over the most notorious center for abuse in the country just at the end of the civil war, at a time when so many of the horrendous things happened”. Sri Lanka has yet to answer formal questions from the UN Committee about the role of Mr. Mendis.
3. **Jagath Jayasuriya:** as commander of Joseph Camp from 7 August 2007 to 14 July 2009 was in charge of one of the country’s most notorious torture sites. The ITJP brought a number of universal jurisdiction cases against him in 2017 in Latin America in connection with torture and other grave violations.
4. **Shavendra Silva:** Alleged by victims to have approved of torture of Tamil detainees by his men after the end of the war. Appointed Chief of Army Staff in 2019 despite persistent allegations of war crimes.

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ONGOING TORTURE

76 TESTIMONIES

2008

2009

2017

*This does not include every name who are diagnosed as at high risk of suicide, non-suicidal thoughts or PTSD.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

MEDICO LEGAL REPORTS

All but 50 of the victims have forensic medical reports by independent experts who have a legal duty to be impartial.

The doctors had seen huge open lacerations of torture survivors over the years from every different incident - case after documented incident in Sri Lanka since the end of the war.

Doctors follow the Istanbul Protocol when recording torture victims.

MENTAL HEALTH

Medical experts assess victims' mental health and often find them to be suicidal. The repeated threat of torture & sexual violence would be extremely difficult to face.

At least 50 of the ITJP witnesses have tried to kill themselves after being tortured, some of them on multiple occasions.

"I tried to hang myself by using some shirts tied to a ceiling fan."

WHY WOULD I THREATEN IN INDIA, AT 200 YRS OF AGE? I WAS IN LANKA.

"I decided to end my life. In July 2007 I took an overdose of paracetamol with some alcohol. I had planned to jump in front of a vehicle but I collapsed in the road and some people found me there and I was taken to hospital."

WHY IN UK?

UK GOVERNMENT CORROBORATION

As of June 2018, all of the 76 victims tortured on 2008-09 had been granted asylum in the UK.

This means the Home Office found their accounts of abduction, torture and/or sexual violence credible and deemed them at 'substantial risk' if returned to Sri Lanka.

IN COUNTRY CORROBORATION

The ITJP has copies of 23 registered complaints to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka seen at the time of disappearance by victims' families. In 7 cases there are also copies of correspondence to the local police. It sees how supporting letters from Sri Lankan military or police who took the victim to prison to reveal corroborating evidence.

"Five armed men wearing civilian dress came in a white van and asked for my son... They asked my son to go with them for questioning and when he refused they beat him and dragged and pushed him into the vehicle. I pleaded and begged them to leave my son saying he had no links with the LTTE but they pushed me aside and took my son."

WHY?

"I write to inform you my son was abducted by unknown men who came in a white van. He served as a member of the LTTE and later he worked with the TM. Please kindly trace his whereabouts and protect his life which we fear is in danger."

WHY?

The ITJP has documented 76 cases of torture and/or sexual violence by the Sri Lankan army or air police since 2003. ITJP investigations have relied on police files, the UN OHCHR, OHCHR, HRW, Amnesty, the IDP and witness truth commissions and special reports. They are extremely concerned & especially aware of the need to have a medical archive established for the purpose of eventual accountability.

Fact Sheet - ITJP cases.

This press release can be viewed online at: <http://www.einpresswire.com>

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