

UN Human Rights Office Finds Widespread Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Against Tamil Survivors in Sri Lanka

UN report finds conflict-related sexual violence in Sri Lanka was widespread and systemic, with Tamil survivors still denied justice and reparations.

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UN Human Rights Office Reports
Systemic Conflict-Related Sexual
Violence in Sri Lanka Under UN Mandate



The U.S. Tamil Diaspora today highlighted findings from a Brief issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) examining accountability for conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Sri Lanka, issued pursuant to UN General Assembly resolution 48/141 and Human Rights Council resolutions 46/1, 51/1, and 60/1 .

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The UN confirms what Tamil survivors have long said: sexual violence was used systematically, justice denied through impunity, and accountability remains a legal and moral obligation.”

U.S. Tamil Diaspora

The OHCHR Brief, titled “We Lost Everything – Even Hope for Justice,” draws on more than a decade of United Nations investigations and reporting, as well as consultations with 27 survivors from across Sri Lanka, spanning incidents between 1985 and 2024. According to the report, conflict-related sexual violence during and after the armed conflict was widespread, systemic, and enabled by institutional failures, with accountability remaining

largely absent .

The report documents patterns of sexual violence occurring in detention centres, at checkpoints, and in private homes, and concludes that these acts were not isolated incidents but reflected coordinated practices linked to the conflict. OHCHR further notes that Sri Lanka lacks specific legislation addressing conflict-related sexual violence, relying instead on general criminal provisions that leave significant protection gaps, including for male and LGBTQ+ survivors .

Additional barriers identified include a 20-year statute of limitations, prolonged investigative delays, limited forensic capacity, and institutional insensitivity. The OHCHR reports that prosecutions have been rare and that no senior officials or individuals with command responsibility have been held accountable for such violations .

Tamil survivors consulted by OHCHR described enduring physical and psychological trauma, fear of reprisals, stigma, and social isolation. Many reported receiving no reparations despite the 2018 Office for Reparations Act, and emphasized the lasting impact of impunity on families and communities .

The OHCHR Brief calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to acknowledge past violations, issue a formal apology, reform the security and judicial sectors, establish an independent prosecution mechanism, and ensure access to comprehensive psychological and social support for survivors. It also urges the international community to consider universal or extraterritorial jurisdiction, targeted sanctions consistent with international law, and sustained support for survivors and civil society organizations.

The U.S. Tamil Diaspora stated that it is sharing the OHCHR findings to promote informed public discussion and encourage lawful, international-standards-based approaches to accountability and reparations.

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