

Chemmani Mass Graves in Sri Lanka's Tamil Region Demand Action

After the gang-rape and murder of 18-year-old school girl Krishanthi Kumaraswamy in 1996, current excavations at a nearby site have unearthed over 600 remains.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Thirty years after the gang-rape and murder of 18-year-old school girl Krishanthi Kumaraswamy in 1996, current ongoing excavations at a nearby site have unearthed over 600 remains. Following the Sri Lanka's military takeover of the Tamil heartland of the Jaffna peninsula in the north of the island in 1995/96, [Amnesty International reported that it knew of 648 cases of enforced disappearance](#) in the area and described most of them as 'reprisals for attacks on security forces' and after being taken 'into custody during round-up operations.'[1]

"Immediate action must be taken to assure that there is accountability for these terrible crimes to prevent recurrence and to assure that victims are identified so that their families will learn their fate," said USTAG President Balan Kugapalan as [the 544th victim was unearthed at Chemmani on August 13.](#) [2],[3]

[The Sri Lankan state has successfully suppressed investigations](#) into the extra-



Chemmani Mass Grave site with many children's remains



Killing Fields

judicial killings and clandestine burials in Chemmani and other serious international crimes in the North-East homeland of the Tamils committed over the past 45 years to protect members of its military from serious crimes committed before, during and after the war which lasted from 1983-2009 between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. [4]



Mullivaikkal war crimes

The single domestic prosecution of military personnel that has occurred for the crimes committed in Chemmani – for Krishanthi Kumaraswamy’s gang-rape and murder - resulted in convictions of Sri Lankan soldiers in 1998, all of whom were later pardoned. One of the convicted, Corporal Somaratne Rajapakse, revealed during the case that among the hundreds of Tamils who were forcibly disappeared from Jaffna in 1995-96, he knew of 300-400

who were killed by the army and buried in mass graves in Chemmani.[5] [6] He pointed out the location of Kumaraswamy’s burial at a different spot from where excavations are currently ongoing in the Chemmani area.

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....accountability must be provided through an international judicial body such as a special court or international procedures such as universal jurisdiction.”

USTAG President

“We are grateful for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mr. Volker Turk’s visit to Chemmani in June 2025 and for the EU delegation’s visit in June 2026 for drawing attention to the important work being done at Chemmani,” noted Kugabalan. “However, excavations are just the first step towards justice and accountability. Knowing what has

happened with other mass graves and gross violations of human rights in Sri Lanka, the victims’ mothers and families have been calling for immediate, forceful and continuous international involvement to assure that the serious international crimes committed against their loved ones receive the attention they require. We support that call.”

Kugabalan continued by saying, “Following excavations at a mass grave in Mannar in 2018, DNA evidence was sent abroad for analysis and was returned with the report that the DNA was from the period of Portuguese colonization in the 1500s, which the Tamil community believes is absurd. Full control of the forensic evidence from the Chemmani mass graves by international experts is crucial. Similarly, with Sri Lanka’s track record of protecting its military at all cost, accountability must be provided through an international judicial body such as a special court or international procedures such as universal jurisdiction.”

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- [1] SRI LANKA: HIGHEST NUMBER OF "DISAPPEARANCES" REPORTED SINCE 1990 (PDF) (Report). Amnesty International. 11 April 1997. p. 1.
- [2] ITJP_MassGraves_report_v5.1.pdf
- [3] More infant remains recovered as Chemmani toll reaches 544 | Tamil Guardian
- [4] Mass Grave Sites in Sri Lanka: History and Legal Framework
- [5] Explainer - Krishanthi Kumaraswamy and the Chemmani mass graves | Tamil Guardian
- [6] British Tamils Forum Chemmani Interim Overview

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