



**International Truth
& Justice Project
Sri Lanka**

Press release: “Silenced: survivors of torture and sexual violence in 2015”

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Johannesburg: New evidence has emerged of on-going torture and sexual violence by the Sri Lankan security forces one year after a new government came to power promising a radical clean up. “Sadly Sri Lanka’s notorious ‘white vans’ are still operating; it’s very much business as usual,” said ITJP’s Yasmin Sooka, “this demonstrates there can be no accountability without urgent security sector reform that leads to the dismantling of the state’s machinery of repression”.

Twenty Tamil survivors in four countries around the world gave detailed testimony about brutal and repeated torture and sexual assault while in the custody of the Sri Lankan military and police units during 2015. Details of these witnesses have been withheld for their protection and that of family members still in Sri Lanka, all of whom have faced repeated reprisals throughout 2015.

The report by ITJP provides graphic details of the torture and rape of both men and women by members of the Sri Lankan security forces under the period in office of the new government. This abuse occurred in both secret and identified sites, including Joseph Camp in Vavuniya, which ITJP named in previous reports as a torture site. The most recent “white van” abduction involving torture and sexual violence known to ITJP occurred as recently as December 2015.

According to ITJP, several Tamil politicians, ICRC, and diplomats in Sri Lanka are aware of the on-going violations. The report sets out steps that the Government of Sri Lanka could immediately take to investigate these cases if it is serious about stopping torture and sexual violence. It also warns Tamils formerly connected to the LTTE who are now abroad about the risks of returning to the country.

The ITJP report notes the importance of security sector reform, law reform and the establishment of an effective witness protection programme if the Sri Lankan government is serious about accountability processes in accordance with the 2015 Geneva resolution.

“It is hard to see how a war survivor could safely testify to a Truth Commission in this atmosphere of on-going repression and intolerance,” commented Yasmin Sooka, “one year on it’s time for the Government of Sri Lanka to take urgent meaningful action”.

*For the full report by the International Truth and Justice Project please see www.itjpsl.com .
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