

JOSEPH

CAMP

INTERNATIONAL
TRUTH
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PROJECT

FORMER SRI LANKAN ARMY COMMANDER COMPLICIT IN TORTURE

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Johannesburg: Sri Lanka's former army commander, currently Ambassador to Brazil, allegedly ran an army camp at the end of the country's civil war where extremely brutal torture was routine. General Jegath Jayasuriya was the commander of the Wannu Security Force Headquarters in Vavuniya, more commonly known as "Joseph Camp", from AUGUST 2007 till MID JULY 2009.¹

"There is no way General Jegath Jayasuriya can claim not to have known that torture routinely occurred in his camp; there were purpose built underground torture chambers equipped with manacles, chains and pulleys for hoisting victims upside down," said ITJP Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka, "If the detainees could hear each other screaming at night from adjacent buildings, so could he."

The ITJP's new report, replete with sketches of cells and interrogation rooms drawn by survivors, is based on the sworn testimony of 46 people which is also corroborated by 92 other cases of torture in this site which have been reported by other groups. The ITJP says it has documented 6 torture cases that occurred under the Sirisena Government in Sri Lanka – the most recent in December 2016.

Witnesses provided ITJP with searing testimony of torture in Joseph Camp that included rape with objects such as cricket wickets and glass bottles, as well as in two cases barbed wire inserted inside a pipe and then withdrawn to tear the flesh of the rectum. All of the women and 18 of the men described being raped and sexually violated; one Tamil man was left distraught after soldiers tried to force him to rape a female cadre detained with him. One of several Tamil informers interviewed who were forced to work with military intelligence said soldiers boasted to him of raping at least 15 Tamil women each. Most victims in this illegal detention site were kept naked in dirty dark cells often underground.

¹ "Joint Operational Security Force Headquarters".

In the report the South Africa based rights group says it has scores of names and photographs of alleged perpetrators of torture and rape from Joseph Camp, several of whom have been positively identified by their victims. One alleged rapist is said to have been a Major in military intelligence; another senior officer ran abduction teams operating out of Joseph Camp at the end of the war but was sent abroad as a UN peacekeeper in 2015 despite the vetting procedures.

“This clearly shows Sri Lanka cannot be trusted to vet their own peacekeepers if they think a man with this career history is the kind of person to send abroad,” said Ms Sooka.

The South Africa based human rights group is now calling for a thorough investigation of Joseph Camp by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and the Committee Against Torture as well as the immediate recall of General Jayasuriya from his post in Brazil pending investigation. The retired General is also accredited to Argentina, Columbia, Chile, Peru and Suriname. Another army General who ran Joseph Camp from 2009-2011, Kamal Gunaratne, was also sent as deputy Ambassador to Brazil before retiring.