

சிவகிதி

Brutal tactics of post-war Sri Lanka exposed in new investigation

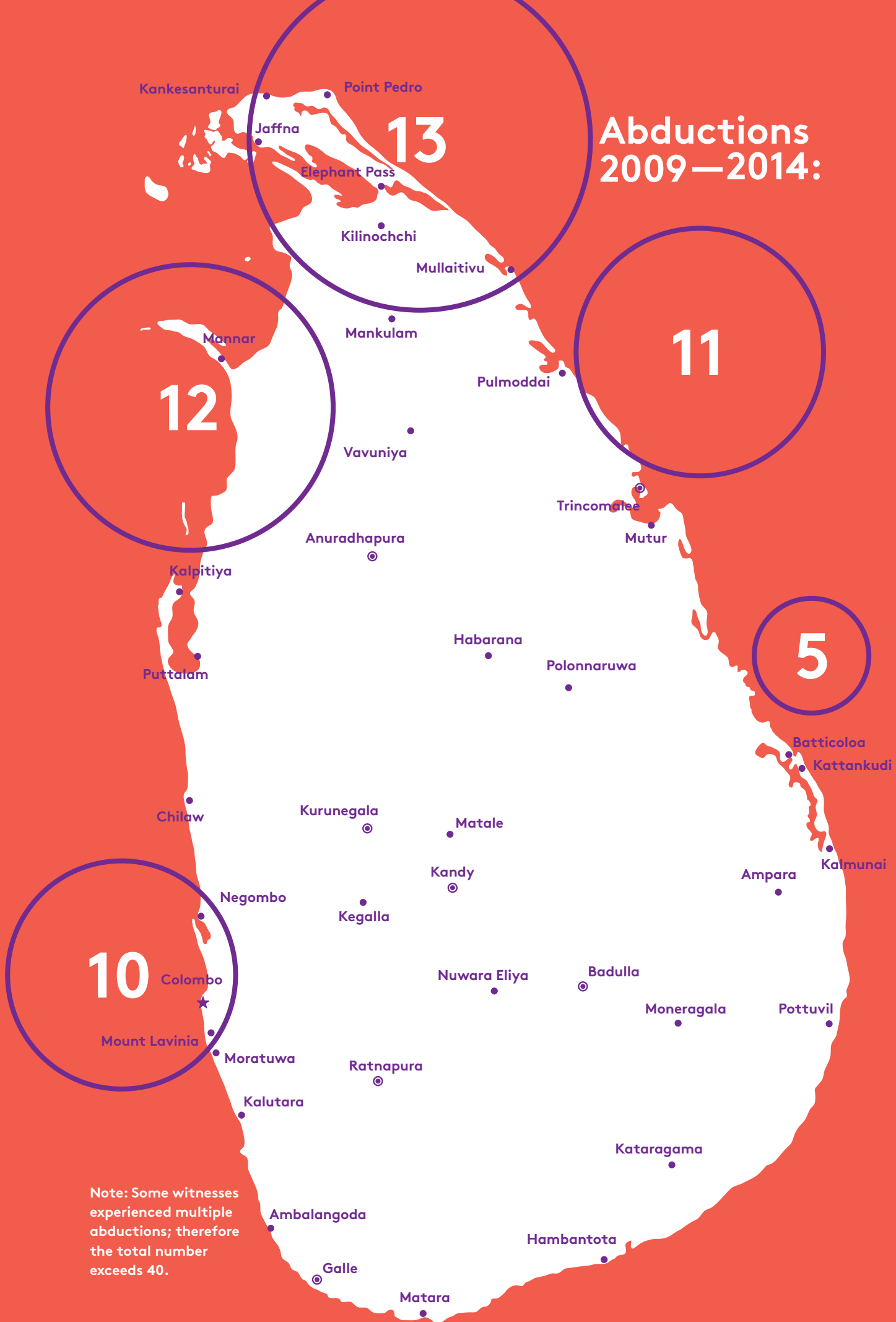
Foreword from Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu:

The evidence presented in this report gives the lie to the Sri Lankan government's propaganda that it is reconciling with its former enemies. It shows how anyone remotely connected with the losing side in the civil war is being hunted down, tortured and raped, five years after the guns fell silent. Shockingly, more than half of the abductions in the report took place as recently as 2013-2014. The testimony collected here comes from 40 witnesses, almost all of whose families could afford to pay a bribe for their release; one wonders what happened to those whose relatives could not afford to pay and to those without relatives. The sheer viciousness and brutality of the sexual violence is staggering; as is the racist verbal abuse by the torturers and rapists in the Sri Lankan security forces. Thirty-five of these witnesses were forced to sign confessions in Sinhala; a language they do not understand. In some cases people were forced to turn informer as well as to betray innocent bystanders in order to survive and left to bear the subsequent terrible burden of guilt.

I find it horrifying that almost half the witnesses interviewed for this report attempted to kill themselves after reaching safety outside Sri Lanka. This indicates the Sri Lankan government has achieved its aim in destroying these souls, who are unlikely to regain happiness and peace in their lives. My deepest hope is that the cycle of revenge will be broken. In order for this to happen, the international community must intervene. It is imperative to pierce the skein of impunity that surrounds Sri Lanka – an island where the war is clearly not yet over.



Abductions 2009—2014:



Note: Some witnesses experienced multiple abductions; therefore the total number exceeds 40.

The horrific tactics used in Sri Lanka's continuing war against ethnic Tamils are laid bare in a new report that collects disturbing testimony from 40 victims to support one of the most compelling legal cases to date for holding the island's authorities to account for crimes against humanity.

The report, "An Unfinished War: Torture and Sexual Violence in Sri Lanka, May 2009-March 2014" has been produced by human rights lawyer Yasmin Sooka, the UK Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) and the International Truth & Justice Project, Sri Lanka.

It details appalling evidence showing that, five years after claiming victory in its 26-year territorial conflict with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) separatists, Sri Lanka's military is still waging a campaign of persecution using abduction, arbitrary detention, torture, rape and sexual violence.

Sworn statements along with medical and psychiatric examinations have been gathered from dozens of Tamil men and women who sought refuge in the UK after being subjected to abuses in Sri Lanka. Almost all incidents they described took place after the war, some of it as recently as February 2014.

Their credible accounts, documented by nine independent lawyers from Western and Asian countries, establish a prima facie case to answer for post-war crimes against humanity involving torture, rape and sexual violence by the Sri Lankan military.

They also give lie to the Sinhalese-majority government's claim it is seeking reconciliation with its Tamil former enemies. Instead they show it is using draconian anti-terror laws and so-called "rehabilitation camps" to hunt and torture anyone remotely connected to the losing side.

"The cases of torture, rape and sexual violence described in this report are just a small sample of those crimes likely to have been committed against Tamils," said Yasmin Sooka. "The international community must act now otherwise such atrocities will continue to define post-conflict Sri Lanka."

The report collected accounts from abuse survivors including several who were abducted after returning to Sri Lanka as failed asylum seekers. Many describe being bundled into notorious white vans used by security agents to spirit people away and terrorise the Tamil community.

They reported being blindfolded and thrown into darkened cells where they were repeatedly interrogated or subjected to torture and sexual attacks so extreme they were left bleeding.

One young mother told how she was abducted in a white van, beaten with electric cables and suffocated to the point of unconsciousness using a plastic bag containing petrol. Later she said she was sexually assaulted and, after passing out again, raped.

Another woman was subjected to forced vaginal and anal penetration, as well as being violated using a baton. She was forced to have oral sex simultaneously while being raped and endured seven gang rape sessions interspersed with severe beatings.

One male victim described being anally and orally raped by a captor. "He was very violent," he said. "I was angry and would try to fight him. I begged him not to. He said that the Tamil people's mouths were only good for oral sex."

In most cases, these testimonies have only come to light because relatives bribed their way out of detention and off the island. Many more may not have been able to afford their freedom.

But those who escaped still bear the physical and psychological scars, as well as the risk of being stigmatised within their own community. Of the 40 people interviewed, 19 said they had attempted suicide after leaving Sri Lanka.

Responding to the report, Archbishop Desmond Tutu said he found it "horrifying" that almost half of the witnesses had tried to kill themselves. "This indicates the Sri Lankan government has achieved its aim in destroying these souls, who are unlikely to regain happiness and peace in their lives," he said.

Chairwoman of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales, Kirsty Brimelow QC, said:

"The lawyers themselves were often quite shaken at hearing the detail of the atrocities described to them. Sri Lanka needs to acknowledge the level of sexual violence happening in its country and it would be wrong for the international community to look the other way."

The report's authors say its evidence must urgently be referred to an International Criminal Court or an international tribunal. They call on the United Nations Secretary General to establish an international inquiry to investigate and prosecute violations by Sri Lankan security force members.

They also urge the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Rapporteur on Torture to arrange a visit to Sri Lanka and initiate a special inquiry into rape and sexual violence.

Furthermore, they call on the UN to suspend Sri Lankan police and military involvement in international peace-keeping operations pending an independent inquiry into allegations of abuse and recommend all nations and world bodies review their relationship with Sri Lanka.

"This report has immediate implications for asylum policy, donor funding and the international community as a whole," added Yasmin Sooka. "Every witness who spoke to our investigators said they were recounting their ordeal in the hope of bringing an end to these crimes."

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Torture: (Total Cases = 40)



Beaten with pipes



Cigarette burns



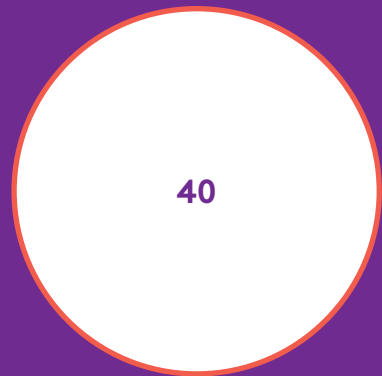
Petrol/chillies in bag



Water torture



Hung upside down



Beaten



Torture using chillies



Rehabilitation cases



Branded hot objects

Sexual abuse: (Total Cases = 40)



Vaginal/Anal Rape of women



Anal Rape of Men



Forced oral Sex



Other sexual torture



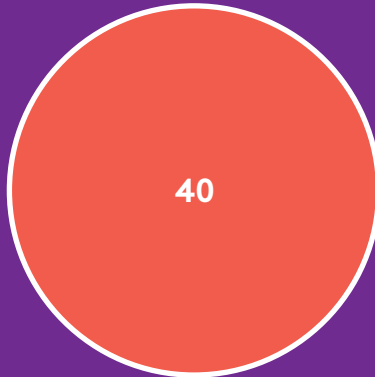
Gang rape



Suffer multiple incidents of sexual abuse



Rendered unconscious

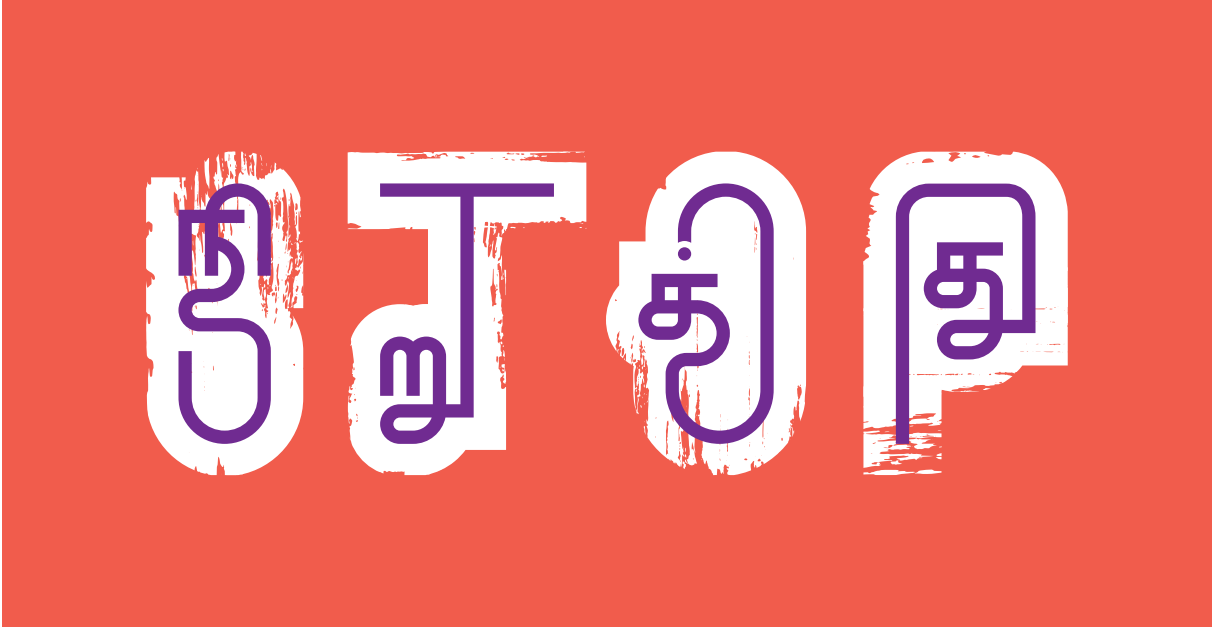


Multiple torture types



Suicide attempts

Logos (for print only, please contact PR agency for screen friendly versions)



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