

INTERNATIONAL
TRUTH
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PROJECT

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Press Release: No vetting for Sri Lanka's New Major Generals.

Johannesburg: On the eleventh anniversary of the end of the war in Sri Lanka, the President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, intentionally promoted officers¹ to the rank of Major General who should have been vetted and screened out of any official position, in accordance to Sri Lanka's commitments under UN resolution 30/1 to security sector reform.

"The choice of these individuals is a highly politicised one which again sends a message to Sri Lankans and the international community that even lip service to reconciliation is off the agenda. This is yet another insult to victims and reeks of brazen impunity," said the ITJP's Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka.

The most striking promotion is of Andige Priyanka Indunil Fernando who was found guilty in absentia by a UK court of public order offences, while a Sri Lankan diplomat. He was convicted of making threatening throat slitting gestures at Tamil protestors outside the Sri Lankan High Commission building in 2018. Since returning to Sri Lanka he has been repeatedly promoted and hailed as a hero despite his criminal actions.

"The message to army officers - and diplomats - is if you go around the world insulting and threatening the Tamil diaspora you will be rewarded," said Ms. Sooka. *"It is also an acute show of disrespect for the judicial system in the UK".*

¹ <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2020/05/19/president-promotes-177-officers-of-the-sri-lanka-army-to-respective-next-rank/>

Those promoted to Brigadier are not mentioned here but they are:

1. Brigadier S.N Samarawickrama
2. Brigadier H.M.N.B Herath
Lt Col, HMNB Herath SLLI, 31/05/2006, 04/10/2008.
8SR Lieutenant Colonel HMNB Herath. 19.02.2010, 07.05.2012
3. Brigadier N.G.S Thilakarathne
4. Brigadier K.N Perera

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YASMIN SOOKA

Another resounding blow for accountability is the promotion of former special forces commander, Harendra Parakrama Ranasinghe. He was identified in a video as one of the soldiers accepting the surrender of a female Tamil TV presenter known as Isaipriya in May 2009, whom a UN Inquiry found was shortly afterwards executed whilst in army custody. Ranasinghe to date has never been questioned about what happened though he's clearly visible in the video with Isaipriya, whose semi-naked corpse was also seen in trophy photographs.

"One has to ask what it means to Isaipriya's surviving family - driven into exile - to see a material witness to their daughter's execution promoted to Major General," said Ms. Sooka.

Channa D. Weerasuriya was 512 Brigade commander in Jaffna at a time when the unit, and other units, were allegedly involved in the detention and torture of Tamil suspects, some of whom the ITJP has interviewed.

The promotions come against a backdrop of increased militarisation and civilian jobs being given to retired and serving officers close to the President. A war commemoration event involving the armed forces was permitted to go ahead in Colombo this week despite concerns about Covid-19 but security forces used the virus as an excuse to prevent such memorialisation by Tamils in the north-east².

"What we are seeing is the "normalisation" of military influence in the civilian sphere," said Ms. Sooka, *"informal networks are becoming formalised under President Rajapaksa with the result that impunity is further entrenched".*

The Five Major Generals

1. Major General Andige Priyanka Indunil Fernando

Gemunu Watch, Staff Number: O/60847.

Promoted after the war in 2009³.

2014: Commander 511 Brigade⁴.

Priyanka Fernando was found guilty of a public order offence by a UK court after making throat slitting gestures at Tamil Protestors which he is appealing.

He was also active in frontline combat in the 2009 war⁵.

Current Secretary of Defence, Kamal Gunaratne, said he commanded Brigadier Fernando in the 2009 war⁶. In March 2019, well aware of the controversy over the throat slitting gesture, Kamal Gunaratne repeated

² <https://theleader.lk/news/3052-mullivaikkal-emotions-celebrated-over-quarantine-bans-video>

³ <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2009/08/17/news28.asp>

⁴ <https://reconciliationandrightssrilanka.wordpress.com/tag/houses/>

⁵ ITJP Dossier on API Fernando - https://itjpsl.com/assets/press/brigadier_api_fernando_final.pdf

⁶ Translation: "This is an officer whom I know very well...he is an officer who used to work under me for a while. When I was serving as the commander of the air mobile brigade, one of its units was 5th Gemunu Watch. Priyanka Fernando was the second in command of that unit. At the time the air mobile brigade was stationed in Muhamalai. Muhamalai was the most dangerous place in Sri Lanka at the time. The air mobile brigade was there as an auxiliary force... Priyanka Fernando served as a major at the time."

<http://www.divaina.com/sunday/index.php/visheshanga1/2297-2018-02-09-13-22-12> - heading "This is blood boiling. It should not be mixed up with diplomacy. I would have done the same if I was there".

the gesture himself on camera, indicating his support for Brigadier Fernando by saying the whole incident made his blood boil⁷.

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2. Major General Harendra Parakrama Ranasinghe

Special Forces, Staff Number: 0/60846,

Promoted after the war in 2009⁸.

571 Bde. commander in 2009: 17 Dec. 2008- 6 Aug. 2009⁹. (See ITJP Dossier on Jagath Dias and 57 Division).

There is a video of the prominent Tamil TV broadcaster and singer known as Isaipriya surrendering unarmed at the lagoon edge in May 2009; photographs have also been published showing her corpse. The 2015 UN investigation concluded that Isaipriya was executed after surrendering to the Sri Lankan Army. Witness testimony¹⁰ has identified Lt Col Harendra Ranasinghe of the Special Forces in the video¹¹ as one of the people accepting the surrender of Isaipriya; though there's no indication he was responsible for her execution but he would likely know who was.

He went on to become the defence attache in Washington in 2014- 2015¹².

3. Major General T. Jagath¹³ Kodithuwakku

SLLI – Sri Lankan Light Infantry, Staff Number: 0/60845,

Promoted after the war in 2009¹⁴

10 SLLI: 2 Sep. 2006-30 Nov. 2008¹⁵ – under 581/571 Bde. which is 58 and 57 Division respectively.

Present at Madhu church¹⁶ offensive in 2008. (see ITJP Dossier on Jagath Dias and 57 Division).

8 Dec. 2008-10: SLLI Centre Commander¹⁷.

2017 – 512 BDE commanding officer¹⁸.

2019: Military Liaison Officer of the MoD.¹⁹

2019: 66 Division Commander²⁰.

2019: at the cluster munition meeting in Geneva representing the Government – this is where Sri Lanka claimed it had no cluster munitions victims from the war, which is contradicted by the testimony of survivors (see ITJP report)²¹.

⁷ Video 2'29" - 3'28" – throat slitting gesture - https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=9&v=wB3sXNm-PDU&feature=emb_logo

You would all remember that officer making a frightful (mimes) gesture and leaving the place. A day after the incident the 'Divaina' newspaper editor – a classmate of mine, Mr Anura Solomons – called me and asked, "Kamal mate, what have you got to say about this?" My pat answer was, friends, "this is what you call blood boils". So, at that point, Anura Solomons said that he is sending his deputy editor to my home to get an interview about it. After that, the next Sunday there was a whole page of my analysis about it. So, friends, this is what blood boils really is. The best example for that is, the emotion you and I would have when the national flag is being trampled. 31 March 2019

⁸ <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2009/08/17/news28.asp>

⁹ <https://alt.army.lk/sfkillinochchi/571-brigade>

¹⁰ ITJP Dossier on Kamal Gunaratne, <https://itjpsl.com/assets/press/Kamal-Gunaratne-dossier-final-optimized.pdf> Page 37.

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUB6n6icWd4> and on file.

¹² <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/227828.pdf>

¹³ It was on September 06, 2007 that Lt. Colonel Senerath Bandara, who was the Colonel GS of the 57 Division, took over the command of the 572 Brigade which was heading towards the Thampanai village along the Madhu road.

The Brigade comprised 10 SLLI under Lt. Colonel Jagath Kodithuwakku, 7 SLLI under Lt. Colonel Ranjith Abeyratne and 7 SR under the command of Lt. Colonel. Palitha Fernando.

<http://archives.sundayobserver.lk/2009/10/25/sec03.asp>

¹⁴ <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2009/08/17/news28.asp>

¹⁵ <https://alt.army.lk/lightinfantry/10slli>

<http://archives.sundayobserver.lk/2009/11/08/sec03.asp>

¹⁶ <http://archives.sundayobserver.lk/2009/08/09/fea05.asp>

¹⁷ <https://alt.army.lk/lightinfantry/former-centre-commandants>

¹⁸ <https://www.army.lk/news/army-distributes-accessories-uniforms-school-students>

¹⁹ http://www.defence.lk/Article/view_article/488

²⁰ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=473504946332403&story_fbid=1160407764308781

²¹ The delegation of Sri Lanka to the MSP included Deputy Permanent Representative Dayani Mendis, Military Liaison Officer of the Ministry of Defence Brigadier Jagath Kodithuwakku and officers of the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN in Geneva.

For more on cluster munition victims see <https://itjpsl.com/reports/cluster-munitions>

4. Major General Channa D Weerasuriya²²

Sri Lanka Light Infantry, Staff Number: 0/60877,

Date of Birth: 15 July 1968.

15 Feb. 2007-12 Dec. 2008: 4SLLI ²³ (631 Bde.). In 2009, 4SLLI was in frontline combat²⁴.

Promoted 2009²⁵ after the war, Brigadier in 2013²⁶.

April 2020: 22 Division Commander²⁷.

From 2008 on, according to his official biography: "As a Brigade Commander, he commanded 512²⁸, 523, 663 Infantry Brigades and Air Mobile Brigade²⁹". [512, 513³⁰ & 515 Brigade Headquarters were under the 51 Division in the Security Forces Headquarters-Jaffna (SFHQ-J)³¹].

On 3 Nov 2011 a media report has Channa Weerasuriya handing out scholarships in Jaffna and described as 512 Brigade commander³².

512 Camp in Jaffna is notorious for torture. ITJP witness W15 was tortured there in early 2010 and again shortly after signing in at 512 Camp in 2011. ITJP witness W45 was based there after the war working for military intelligence identifying former cadres.

8 Aug. 2014: Commander, 542 Brigade³³.

2013-15 SLLI Centre Commander³⁴ based in Panagoda.

Nov. 2018: he conducted a study tour for foreign military students in Kilinochchi about 'Kilinochchi reconciliation process and resettlement'³⁵. He is Centre Commandant of the Regimental Centre Sri Lanka Light Infantry³⁶.

2018: Brigadier General Staff SFHQ – KLN.³⁷

22 April 2020: General Officer Commanding, 22 Infantry Division³⁸.

5. Major General Chandana³⁹ Udith⁴⁰ Marasinghe

Staff Number: 0/60753, Ordnance corps, SLAOC.

7 Jan. 2008 – 2 Nov.2009: Commanding officer Sri Lanka Army Ordnance Corps⁴¹, 3 SLAOC⁴². The corps' website says: "*The 3rd Ord. Regiment has*

²² Army Biography at <https://alt.army.lk/sfhqeast/goc-22div-profile>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/channa-weerasuriya-6a99b089/>

²³ <https://alt.army.lk/lightinfantry/4slli>

²⁴ <http://defencereal.blogspot.com/2009/01/>

²⁵ <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2009/08/17/news28.asp>

²⁶ <http://220.247.247.85:8081/bitstream/handle/123456789/21908/2016-10-28%28I-I%29E.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/SriLankaArmyDefendersoftheNation/posts/1161177397565151> <https://alt.army.lk/sfhqeast/22division>

²⁸ <http://cimicjaffna.lk/profile-of-sfhq-j>

²⁹ <https://alt.army.lk/sfhqeast/goc-22div-profile>

³⁰ 513 Camp in Jaffna is a site notorious for torture: See ITJP report, Page 56, footnote 1 https://www.tamilrefugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/files/stoptorture_report_v4_online.pdf regarding an army camp used for torture in Chavakachcheri.

Uduvil Army Camp: 513 Brigade was stationed here in 2013 according to their Facebook page³⁰.

This is an army camp in the Jaffna Peninsula known for torture – W96 had to report to Uduvil camp from 2010-13 and on nine separate occasions was tortured there and then finally abducted in 2013 and detained by military intelligence for 8 days and tortured and sexually violated.

³¹ <http://www.defseminar.lk/defseminar2012/news.php?id=112.php>

³² <https://www.onlanka.com/news/512-brigade-of-sl-army-offers-scholarships-to-ten-more-students-in-jaffna.html>

³³ [http://documents.gov.lk/files/gz/2016/10/2016-10-28\(I-I\)E.pdf](http://documents.gov.lk/files/gz/2016/10/2016-10-28(I-I)E.pdf)

³⁴ <https://alt.army.lk/lightinfantry/former-centre-commandants?>

³⁵ <https://alt.army.lk/sfkillinochchi/si/content/විදේශ-ශිෂ්‍ය%2%80%8Dය-නිලධාරීන්-ආරක්ෂා%2%80%8Dක-සේනා-මුලස්ථානය-කිලිනොච්චි-සංචාරය>

³⁶ <https://alt.army.lk/lightinfantry/content/colonel-cd-weerasuriya-appoints-new-center-commandant-slli>

³⁷ <https://www.army.lk/news/slma-cadets-under-training-tour-kilinochchi-jaffna>

³⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/SriLankaArmyDefendersoftheNation/posts/1161177397565151>

<https://alt.army.lk/sfhqeast/22division>

³⁹ <https://citls.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/May-Newsletter.pdf> p26

⁴⁰ <https://www.ismmsrilanka.com/img/ISMMeNewsletter-December2017.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://alt.army.lk/slaoc/si/si-3-slaoc>

⁴² <https://alt.army.lk/slaoc/3-slaoc>

*been tasked to provide Ordnance backing to the Eastern theatre of the country*⁴³. 3SLAOC appears to have been based in Welikanda⁴⁴.

Jun. 2010: in Haiti as a logistics officer⁴⁵ for UN Peacekeeping.

2014: Promoted to Brigadier (temp⁴⁶).

2019: Director SLA Ordnance Corps.

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⁴³ <https://alt.army.lk/slaoc/3-slaoc>

⁴⁴ "Accounting work done by the Forward Ordnance Depot (Ampara) ceased temporarily on 23 August 2006. Due to operational requirement, Forward Ordnance Depot (Batticaloa) was established at the paper factory (Valachchanei)." <https://alt.army.lk/slaoc/3-slaoc>

⁴⁵ SLAOC.

<https://panjiva.com/Sri-Lanka-Contigent/5364820>

⁴⁶ [http://documents.gov.lk/files/gz/2018/11/2018-11-30\(I-I\)E.pdf](http://documents.gov.lk/files/gz/2018/11/2018-11-30(I-I)E.pdf)

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