

INTERNATIONAL
TRUTH
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PROJECT

**Press release: ITJP Response to Sri Lanka's secretary of defence,
Kapila Waidyaratne.**

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Johannesburg
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
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Speaking in Vancouver at a UN peacekeeping conference, Sri Lankan defence secretary, Kapila Waidyaratne, told Associated Press¹ that reports in the media regarding 50 recent cases of ongoing torture and sexual abuse by the security forces were "baseless and unfounded". Mr Waidyaratne went on to say that Sri Lanka had investigated all the cases, adding: "The investigations that have been carried out have been concluded and closed".

In response the ITJP issues the following statement from its executive director, Yasmin Sooka:

"The Government of Sri Lanka should be challenged to make a full disclosure around the investigations they conducted into the cases they claim they have investigated and the outcome of their investigations. Furthermore, this information should be made public and made available to the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

It is not humanly possible to investigate 50 complex cases in less than a week - especially if you don't know who the complainants are. It is precisely this cavalier approach to the justice process that leads victims to reject any domestic processes in Sri Lanka, as it frankly cannot be trusted. In this particular case involving male sexual violence victims, only an independent international body with expertise in handling male sexual violence should investigate - certainly not the Sri Lankan Government, which has alleged

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2017/11/14/world/europe/ap-sri-lanka-torture.html>

perpetrators on its witness protection body² and where the perpetrators may end up investigating themselves.

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The Defence Secretary's statement raises the question of how Sri Lanka investigated the allegations of rape by its peacekeepers in Haiti³. The Sri Lankan Major General sent to investigate the 2013 allegation admitted (to AP⁴) that he didn't interview the complainant or medical staff who examined her but nevertheless he exonerated his soldier. Is this the sort of investigation Sri Lanka has just conducted into 50 cases in less than a week?

Regarding the child sexual exploitation between 2004-7, Sri Lanka allegedly failed to put any of the perpetrators in jail despite the fact the UN found prima facie evidence against 134 soldiers.

Before it sends more peacekeepers abroad, Sri Lanka should be asked some tough questions about all these "investigations" that routinely exonerate its security forces. If the United Nations wants to ensure that zero tolerance means something, its time to take up the rights of victims rather than allowing troop contributing countries to conduct bogus investigations".

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² <http://www.itjpsl.com/reports/witness-protection>

³ <http://www.itjpsl.com/assets/press/haiti-FINAL.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.apnews.com/96f9ff66b7b34d9f971edf0e92e2082c>

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