

NEWS

Tamil women and children raped, tortured by soldiers

FEMALE children, detainees and arrestees have all been subject to rape and torture by the Sri Lankan armed forces, reports from the island said.

Six Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers were taken into custody in late February for allegedly molesting a nine-year-old Tamil girl at Kiraan, Valaichennai in the eastern Batticaloa district. The victim identified one of the perpetrators during an identification parade held in Batticaloa Magistrate Court.

The girl "was returning home in the company of two of her friends when soldiers bathing near a well chased after her and raped her. The girl was admitted to a hospital and the medical reports confirmed that she had been sexually abused. It is also reported that the girl who is still being treated at the hospital is being questioned constantly by commando officers," an AHRC report said.

Her parents had lodged a complaint at Eravur Police three days after their nine year old daughter was allegedly raped by soldiers on February 14. She was identified in some reports as being a grade five student of Siththandi Digili Vellei School in Madakalapu.

Army Media Spokesman Major Prasad Samarasinghe confirmed to the media that the girls' mother has been filed a complaint in police regarding the crime.

Asian Human Rights Commission (AHR) reported that the soldiers of the Digiliwatiya camp had threatened the protesting villagers, and the body of one protester was recovered in a pond near the SLA camp after the protests.

According to reports, a group of soldiers went to house to house and threat villagers who protested against the crime. Commodore soldiers are questioning the girl frequently victim, reports said.

Separately, torture of female detainees in special camps of the Sri Lankan Army in Vavuniya continues to the extent of making many of the detainees insane, reports from Vavuniya said.

The torture is mainly carried out by female SLA soldiers, according to information provided by reliable civil society sources, who claim they have hard evidence to prove it if there is any credible international investigation.

Meanwhile, a large number of female detainees were recently moved to an isolated zone within Cheddiukulam internment area with severe restrictions for even relatives to see them.

The detainees are kept in seclusion, allowed to keep only two sets of clothes to change, and are being continuously intimidated that they would be sent to the dreaded Boosa camp in Galle in southern Sri Lanka, reports said.

Those who are transferred to



Tamil women and young girls are being subjected to torture and rape, regardless of whether they are held in the camps, where 100,000 civilians remain, or if they have been 'released' to return to their homes across the north and east. This is not counting the situation of the women held as LTTE ex-combatants, about whom nothing is known, as they remain in camps with no ICRC access.

Boosa are kept in pigeonholes and have become physically emaciated within a short span of time, eyewitnesses told TamilNet.

As inter-marriages among former LTTE members was a common phenomenon, the isolation and torture of female detainees is a classic demonstration of SLA terrorism in getting information and in subjugating the ones who fled the island.

When the issue of rape by SLA soldiers was raised by US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Sri Lanka's Defense Ministry website carried a refutation, saying "such sadistic allegations are far from the existing realities: far from the truth," and added that "there was no basis whatsoever even to suggest Sri Lankan forces had involved in such gross violence during its three-year humanitarian campaign."

British weekly, The Observer, in December 2009 said that "Tamil women interned after escaping the horrors of the civil war in Sri Lanka were sexually abused by their guards who traded sex for food," reporting on an interview with Vany Kumar, a British medic who was released from internment in September from the camps run by Sri Lanka military.

"Systematic rape of Tamil women in custody and in areas

under control of Security forces, and sexual abuse of LTTE women cadres caught during combat, had occurred from as early as September 1996 when Krishanthi Kumarasamy, a 17-year old highschooler, was murdered after being stopped and raped at an SLA sentry point at Kaithadi, Jaffna. Horrendous videos showing Sri Lankan soldiers abusing women cadres stripped naked have routinely surfaced," said an activist for a Washington-based pressure group.

The link between maintaining international peace and security, and preventing and responding to sexual violence used as a tactic of war to target civilians was first laid out in last year's United Nation's Security Council resolution 1325.

United Nations charged 114 Sri Lankan soldiers who were on peace-keeping missions to Haiti in March 2008 with sexual exploitation and abuse against children.

After an investigation into pending charges against Sri Lankan troops in Haiti, the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services concluded that "acts of sexual exploitation and abuse [against children] were frequent and occurred usually at night, and at virtually every location where the [Sri Lankan] contingent personnel were deployed."



Denmark silences detractors of Tamil referendum

TamilNet

4,147 out of an estimated 6,000 to 6,500 eligible Eelam Tamil voters in Denmark participated in the referendum conducted by a third party professional institute on Sunday February 28 and 98.2 percent of them voted yes for the formation of independent and sovereign Tamil Eelam in the contiguous north and east of the island of Sri Lanka.

Denmark is the eighth country in the West where Eelam Tamils have overwhelmingly demonstrated their aspiration for independence through a series of referenda conducted among the diaspora.

Even though the population of Eelam Tamils in Denmark is relatively small, since their number is known with fair accuracy, the turnout and poll results are very significant in silencing detracting campaign against the very democratic process of Tamil referendum, diaspora circles said.

According to official statistics, 7,147 people of the origin of the island of Sri Lanka and over 18 years old, live in Denmark.

Between 500 and 700 of them are estimated to be Sinhalese who mostly live in the capital Copenhagen. Some Danish Tamils have migrated to other European countries in recent times.

Making allowances, eligible Eelam Tamil voters over 18 living across Denmark is estimated to be numbering between 6,000 and 6,500.

The participation of 63 to 69 percent of them in the referendum and 98 percent of them aspiring Tamil Eelam is a verifiable mandate, diaspora sources said.

TNS Gallup, a third party professional institute, specialised in sociological and public opinion research services, functioned as Election Managers in working out the voting system and monitoring.

The polling agency conducted the ballot deploying electronic devices and confidential registration to avoid any duplication, dispelling all doubts on the credibility of the democratic exercise.

After electronic registration each voter was given with a password by the third party presiding officer to vote yes, no or blank on the question displayed electronically. The polling agency said 98.2 percent voted yes, 0.5 percent voted no and 1.3 percent voted blank.

Taking the official figure 7,147 for all people from the island of Sri Lanka as the base for calculations, TNS Gallup put the turnout at 58 percent.

Initial poll analysis released by the polling agency showed that out of 33 centres across Denmark, the turnout in one centre at Skanderborg was 95 percent, in 13 centres it was over 70 percent, in 13 centres it was between 50 and 69 percent, 6 centres registered 30 to 49 percent and Copenhagen the Capital registered only 16 percent. According to Danish Tamil circles, the turnout pattern is related to the demographic distribution of Tamils and Sinhalese in Denmark.

Eelam Tamils have mandated independent and sovereign Tamil Eelam in the general elections in the island of Sri Lanka in 1977, when it was the election question put to them through the Vaddukkoaddai Resolution of 1976 by all Tamil political parties of that time.

Referenda seeking re-mandate is now being conducted in the diaspora since last May and Eelam Tamils in Norway, France, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, UK and Denmark have so far re-mandated independence.

Eelam Tamils in the island are disenfranchised from expressing such a political aspiration by the constitution of Sri Lanka.

The re-mandate in the diaspora arises from the necessity to voice on behalf of the people brutally silenced and face genocide in the island, to lay the bearings for democratic political organization and to quell the 'vicious campaign' and assumption that aspiration for independence is only an LTTE agenda and Tamils no longer subscribe to it, said diaspora Tamil circles.