

INTERNATIONAL
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PROJECT

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Press Release: Civil case filed in the US against Sri Lankan presidential hopeful Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Johannesburg: The ITJP and the US law firm [Hausfeld](#) have filed a civil damages case in California against former Sri Lankan defence secretary, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, on behalf of a Tamil torture survivor. Roy Samathanam made the complaint in the Central District of California against Mr. Rajapaksa, who is a dual US Sri Lankan citizen.

Notice was formally served on Mr. Rajapaksa on Sunday night at a Trader Joe's parking lot in Pasadena. This was after the ITJP and Hausfeld hired private investigators to track down the whereabouts of Mr Rajapaksa who is currently on holiday in California. Notice was also served at the same time in a separate case filed by another organisation on behalf of assassinated journalist Lasantha Wickrematunga.

Roy Samathanam, who is a Canadian national, was detained in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo in September 2007 by the Terrorism Investigation Division of the Sri Lanka police, who reported directly to Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Roy Samathanam was physically and psychologically tortured and forced to sign a false confession before being released in August 2010 on a plea deal and payment of a fine. In 2016, Mr. Samathanam won a UN human rights committee case but Sri Lanka has failed to abide by the compensation ruling.

"Mr Rajapaksa has to give up his US citizenship to be able to stand in presidential elections so this was probably the last chance for a long time to begin to hold him accountable," said ITJP's executive director Yasmin Sooka. "We hope other survivors of torture will join the suit and make this a class action".

For more information call Frances Harrison on 00447946488089.

W ITJPSL.COM
E ITJPSL@GMAIL.COM

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
YASMIN SOOKA

