

# JOSEPH CAMP

**FROM 7 AUGUST 2007 TO 14 JULY 2009: JAGATH JAYASURIYA WAS THE JOSEPH CAMP COMMANDER.**

Joseph Camp (also known as the Vanni Security Force Headquarters) has been a major hub for military and counter terrorism operations in the northern districts of Sri Lanka. At the peak of the civil war, both military and police operated from the base; this included the Military Intelligence Corps (MIC), and other military units, including the Sri Lankan Airforce, as well as police units such as the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID), responsible for counter-terrorism investigations and threats to internal security.

## ABDUCTION TEAMS

Joseph Camp was a hub for the notorious 'white vans' used by the Sri Lankan security forces to abduct suspects. One insider witness explains the procedure in 2009 in Joseph Camp in the Military Intelligence Corps which came under Jagath Jayasuriya's command:

When there were "white van" abductions ordered, at least a Sergeant was given the order to make the abduction and he would take four corporals and a number of us who worked with them. When I speak of white van abductions, indeed the vans were actually white. At Joseph Camp we had about four such vans. These vans did not have license plates and all the side and back windows were tinted. No one could see inside. All of our vans were Toyota Hiace models. When we were ordered to abduct a specific target we never wore uniforms. We always looked like ordinary civilians. The Military Intelligence Corps (MIC) officers always had pistols on their belts under their shirts that they wore outside their trousers."

ITJP WITNESS 67

## TORTURE CHAMBERS

Joseph Camp's torture chambers were purpose built and contained various objects such as metal bars and poles used for beatings, barrels of water used for water torture, and pulleys and other apparatus from which victims were suspended. Several victims have sketched their holding cells and interrogation rooms.

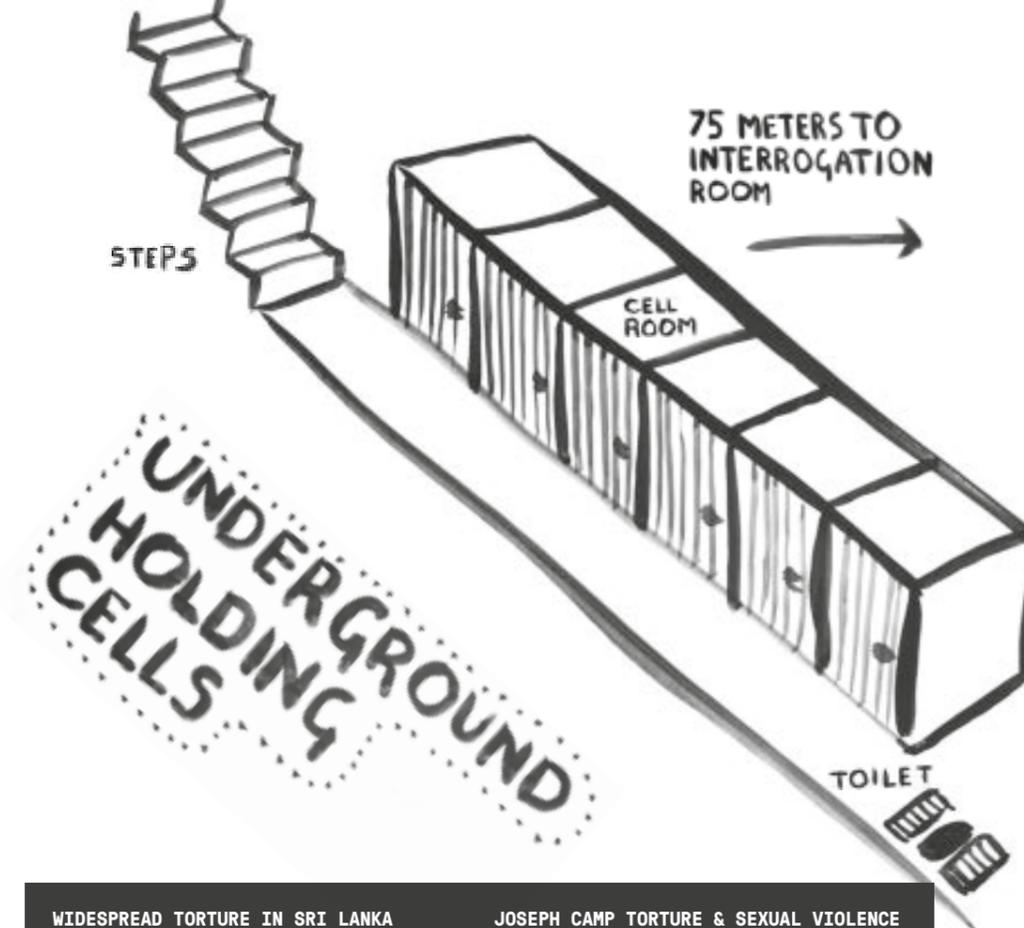
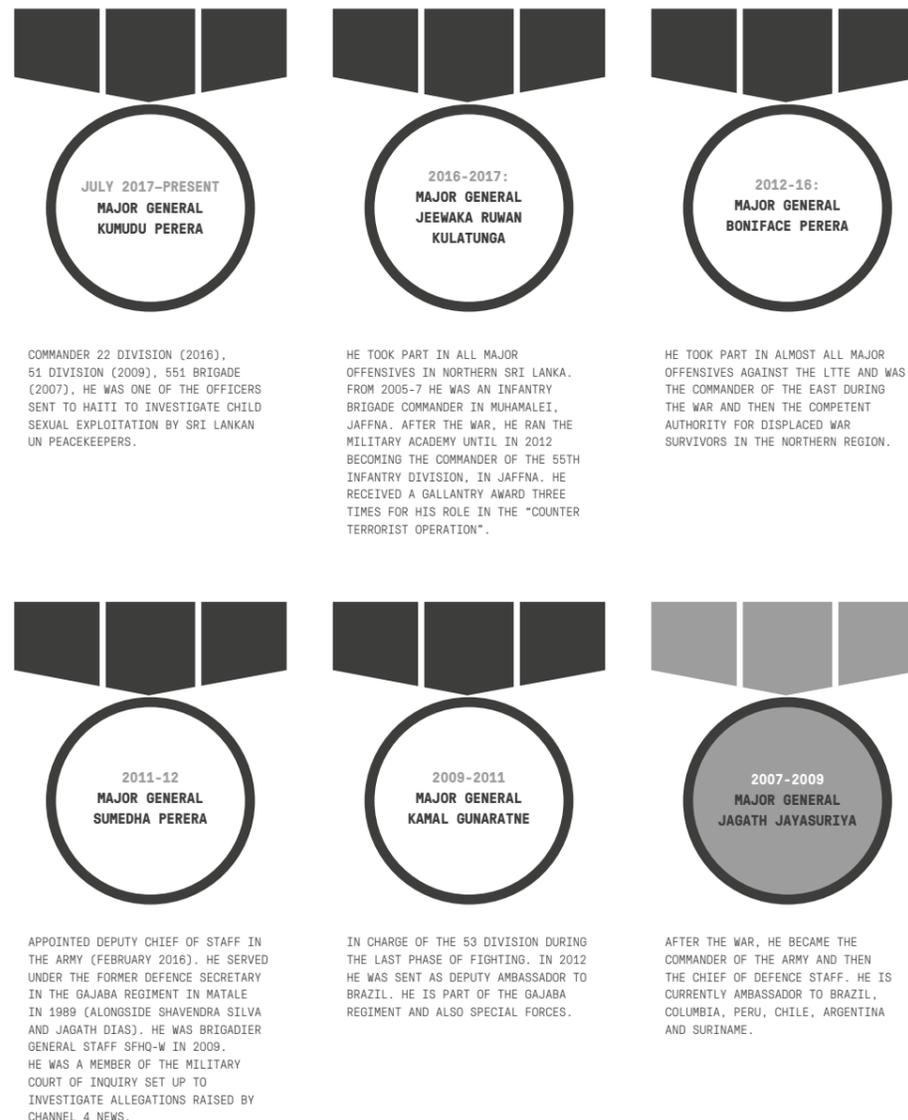
**THIS YOUNG MAN, NOW IN THE UK, DESCRIBES WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM IN JOSEPH CAMP:**

"They (...) pushed me inside and face down onto a table with four legs also sticking up. I was only wearing shorts. They removed my shorts and tied each leg and arm to the four legs sticking up from the tabletop. One soldier brought a pipe in one hand and a string of barbed wire in the other and he said if I did not accept I was the person they alleged, they would make me confess. Two people spread my buttocks and I felt he inserted the pipe, it was extremely painful, I was crying and one guy pulled my head up and asked again if I was that person, I shook my head and said ho, no, no'. Then I felt he pulled it out and I was in severe pain and fainted. (...) I could feel something was being turned inside my anus but I did not know what it was I only realized afterwards. When I regained consciousness I was lying on the floor in a room, there was blood everywhere on the floor, I could not move. The next day I could move a bit and I felt around my anus; some pieces of flesh were coming out, as if from a broiler chicken."

ITJP WITNESS 200



## JOSEPH CAMP COMMANDERS:



## WIDESPREAD TORTURE IN SRI LANKA

The UN's 2015 investigation found that there was "widespread, systematic and particularly brutal" use of torture by Government security forces at the end of the war and after the war. It concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that torture was committed on a widespread scale and could amount to war crimes and/or crimes against humanity<sup>1</sup>.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS PART OF A POLICY

The UN found that rape and sexual violence by security forces personnel was widespread against both male and female detainees<sup>2</sup>. It concluded that the incidents of sexual violence were part of a deliberate policy to inflict torture<sup>3</sup>. The UN also noted the particular cruelty and brutality involved in the cases they documented from Sri Lanka, which was one of their most shocking findings.

## JOSEPH CAMP TORTURE & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The UN's 2015 report includes accounts of the torture and sexual abuse of many victims in Joseph Camp during and after the war. For example it says:

"One of the most barbaric methods of sexual torture described in a number of different testimonies involved the insertion of barbed wire through a pipe inserted into the anus. The pipe was pulled out first and then the barbed wire, causing "unbearable pain and bleeding".



**INTERNATIONAL  
TRUTH  
AND JUSTICE  
PROJECT**

# TORTURE UNDER JAGATH JAYASURIYA'S COMMAND

14 VICTIMS HAVE GIVEN DETAILED TESTIMONY ABOUT BEING DETAINED AND TORTURED IN JOSEPH CAMP DURING THE PERIOD JAGATH JAYASURIYA WAS IN COMMAND OF THE SITE.

“The worst torture I experienced in all my detentions was in Joseph Camp.”

ITJP WITNESS 85.

“On the first day, I was beaten with a thick plastic pipe. Due to the beating the pipe broke into pieces.”

ITJP WITNESS 182

“In the interrogation room, they had all the objects of torture in the room before the detainee was brought in. This included, barbed wire that was put in a hollow pipe that would be inserted into an anus, hammers, and pliers to pull out finger and toenails. ”

ITJP WITNESS 67

“I remember that they tied me to the iron table face up and pulled a petrol bag over my head and tightened it, I couldn't breathe and passed out. ”

ITJP WITNESS 18

“The torturers put on gloves and opened a plastic can with the chemical in and took a baton and soaked it in the chemical and then used it to beat me. It caused a

terrible burning pain.”

ITJP WITNESS 109 (attempted suicide in 2015)

“The men who tortured me were joyful, singing, talking among themselves, smoking and seemed to have no heart but rather enjoyed the torture... One of the men came back to the interrogation room after they had left me there, he was drunk and he wanted oral sex...”

ITJP WITNESS 222

“After breaking my nose they gave me some food and put urine in the food and forced me to eat it. When I refused, they inserted a thin metal rod into my penis.”

ITJP WITNESS 99

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE:

“...Places of detention where sexual violence occurred included official gazetted detention centres and detention centres not officially recognized, such as those inside military bases – for example Joseph Camp, the Security Forces HQ in Vavuniya commanded by Major General Jagath Jayasuriya...<sup>4</sup>.”

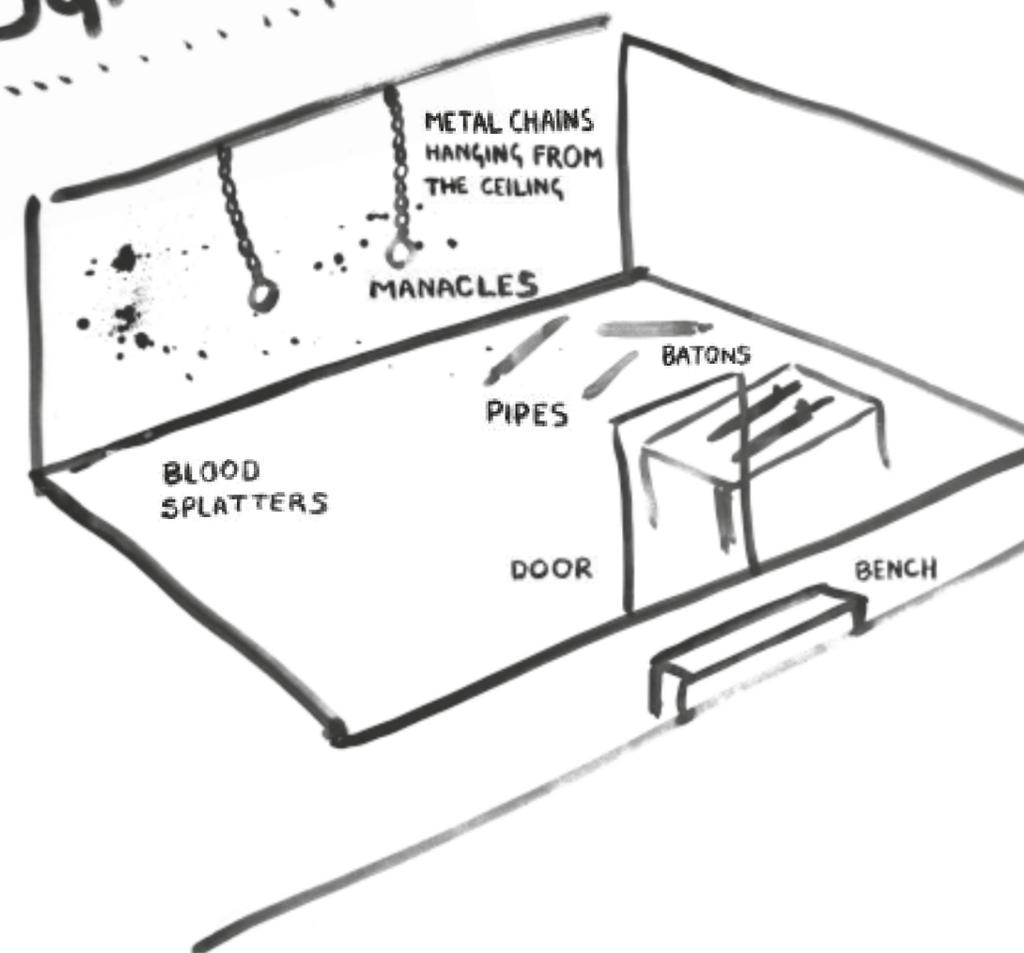


## IMPACT ON SURVIVORS

THIS IS AN EXTRACT FROM A MEDICO LEGAL REPORT WRITTEN BY A BRITISH DOCTOR DESCRIBING THE IMPACT OF THE TORTURE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN JOSEPH CAMP ON A YOUNG TAMIL MAN:

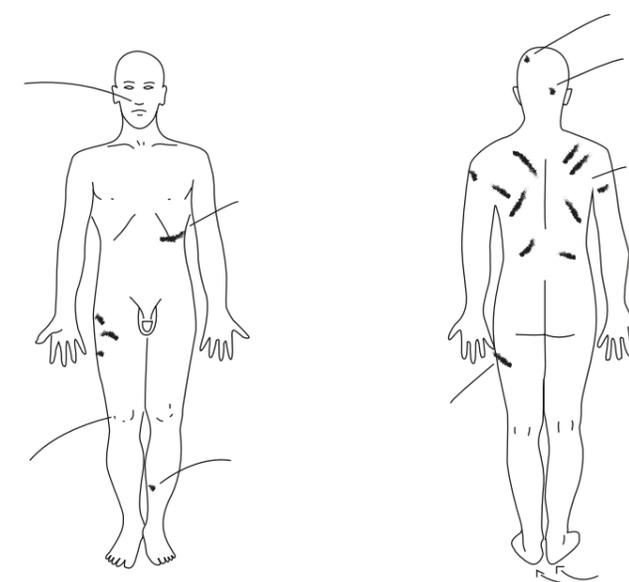
- His appetite is poor - he is unable to eat much without feeling like vomiting [he held his head in his hands at this point].
- His mood is low. He feels depressed. If he thinks about his life and the future he thinks there's no point. -He's had enough.
- He feels tired and weak all the time.
- He mostly stays indoors. He never goes out by himself because the family he's staying with are worried he will have a seizure.
- Memories of his detention and the sexual abuse come into his head all the time.
- He feels angry. He still remembers the man's face, the man who instigated his rape. If he thinks of those incidents, immediately that man's face comes before him.
- Generally he feels safe in the UK. But certain things make him upset because they remind him of his past. When he saw the tall, armed police at the airport he felt very scared... Certain noises, such as a door being slammed or loud footsteps coming up the stairs, upset him, his heart goes faster and he feels agitated and afraid. Loud voices, or if the TV is on loud, give him a headache. He can't watch anything violent on TV because it brings back memories of what happened to him in Sri Lanka.

# INTERROGATION ROOM



- His concentration is poor. He doesn't read because he has no motivation. But also he can't concentrate and take in what he's reading. The same thing with TV, he can only watch TV for a few minutes at a time before his mind is elsewhere.
  - His mind is full of memories of his past all the time. Images of his detention and the sexual abuse come into his head constantly. He wants to forget all this but the very memories he wants to forget keep coming up again and gain. [At this point he paused as if distracted by his memories].
- [I asked him whether he every thought of death or suicide]. What troubles him very much is that before he never heard of men raping men. He is very disturbed by what happened to him. He cannot accept it. If it were not for his parents he would definitely commit suicide.

## SCAR MAP OF JOSEPH CAMP SURVIVOR TORTURED IN 2009 WHEN JAGATH JAYSURIYA WAS IN COMMAND



“During the final phase of the armed conflict, the SFHQ-Vanni was headed by the then Major General Jagath Jayasuriya...<sup>5</sup>”



<sup>1</sup> OISL, para. 1130

<sup>2</sup> OISL, para. 1131

<sup>3</sup> OISL para. 591

<sup>4</sup> OISL, para. 589 and paras. 546, 553

<sup>5</sup> OISL, para 115