

INTERNATIONAL
TRUTH
AND JUSTICE
PROJECT

Press release: Prosecute don't promote alleged war criminals

26 May 2017

Johannesburg: President Maithripala Sirisena should start prosecuting alleged war criminals not promoting them, said the International Truth and Justice Project on the release of the first of its dossiers on alleged perpetrators. The ITJP's document implicates the former Chief of Army Staff, Jagath Dias, in attacks on civilians and hospitals in the final phase of the civil war in 2008-9.

A [report](#) just published by Associated Press found Jagath Dias was put in charge of investigating alleged rape by Sri Lankan UN peacekeepers in Haiti but never even interviewed the complainant or medical staff who examined her and exonerated his soldiers.

"Putting Jagath Dias in charge of investigations into allegations of rape by Sri Lankan peacekeepers given his own alleged involvement in war crimes is an insult to Haitian victims," said the ITJP's Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka. *"Jagath Dias should himself be investigated. The UN must stop deploying Sri Lankan peacekeepers until such time as there is an independent investigation of past violations in Haiti - it's not responsible to have alleged war criminals exonerate alleged rapists. Surely the people of Haiti deserve better, not to mention the people of Sri Lanka."*

The ITJP dossier describes multiple targeted attacks on civilians or civilian sites that Jagath Dias's 57 Division allegedly participated in; if proven in a court of law these would amount to war crimes.

According to a [UN Investigation](#), the Vallipunam makeshift hospital in the "No Fire Zone" suffered 15 direct hits in January 2009 and there were 50 more artillery impact sites within a one-kilometre radius. This was despite the 57 Division and other units being specifically informed of the coordinates of the hospital, which was clearly marked

W ITJPSL.COM
E ITJPSL@GMAIL.COM

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
YASMIN SOOKA

and visible to the military's drones. The hospital, where hundreds of injured civilians sheltered, was attacked with wide-area impact weapons such as multi-barrelled rocket launchers and cluster munitions, making the slaughter foreseeable.

"This scale of these repeated attacks on hospitals packed with injured people is frankly barbaric," said Ms. Sooka, "We have overwhelming evidence to indict those in command but eight years on absolutely nothing has been done. Instead, international inaction has shown other regimes they too can get away with mass atrocities if they copy the tactics of the Sri Lankan military".

One of the most heavily hit medical sites was the Puthukkudiyiruppu (PTK) Hospital whose location was well known to the Government. UN examination of satellite imagery showed in a fortnight at the end of January 2009 at least 30 hospital buildings were either severely damaged or destroyed. Also in PTK, a private medical establishment, the Dr. Ponnampalam hospital, packed with hundreds of injured civilians, was destroyed in early February 2009 by two successive bombs dropped by supersonic jets, just after drones had flown overhead. The hospital was clearly marked with red crosses and white flags.

"Instead of delivering accountability for alleged war crimes, all the new Sri Lankan Government has done is promote alleged perpetrators like Jagath Dias⁴," said the ITJP's Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka, "it was not the Rajapaksas who made him Chief of Army Staff - it was President Sirisena".

The ITJP dossier calls on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the international community to ensure (a) that the hybrid Special Court for Sri Lanka is established speedily and (b) that it is preceded by an independent international investigation to establish the facts with particular regard to establishing criminal accountability.

ends

████████████████████
INTERNATIONAL ██████████
██████ **TRUTH** ██████████
████████████████████ **AND JUSTICE**
████████████████████ **PROJECT** ██████████
████████████████████