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PROJECT

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**Press release: ITJP sends UN list of alleged perpetrators for vetting**

**London:** The ITJP has prepared a confidential list of more than fifty names of Sri Lankan paramilitary police from the Special Task Force, who should be barred from serving in UN peacekeeping missions. The individuals named are either alleged perpetrators or were involved in frontline combat in the final stages of the war when the UN says system crimes were committed by security force units, including the STF. The list is being shared with the UN Department of Peacekeeping and OHCHR in Geneva.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**  
YASMIN SOOKA

*“One STF officer who appears currently to be serving in a UN peacekeeping mission in Africa is alleged to have ordered summary executions of Tamils in the East of Sri Lanka in 2006-7,”* said ITJP’s Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka. *“This shows the UN is still clearly failing in its obligation when it comes to the vetting of Sri Lankans for peacekeeping.”*

The ITJP’s vetting list comprises:

- 24 names of STF personnel alleged to be complicit in or responsible for grave violations of human rights in Sri Lanka;
- 32 names of STF officers involved in frontline combat roles in the war in Sri Lanka who should therefore be barred from serving in UN peacekeeping.

In 2016, OHCHR in Geneva vetted Sri Lankan peacekeepers bound for Mali, screening out those who had served in frontline combat units in the final phase of the war.

*“Police commandos are now being sent abroad as UN peacekeepers and they should be subjected to the same stringent vetting criteria as the military”,* said the ITJP’s Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka.

*"We would be happy to assist with this process, subject to witness protection - we are the only group with a substantial database of evidence, including not only victim testimony, but also information from insider witnesses, photographs and names," added Ms. Sooka.*

On Monday the ITJP released a new report on the Special Task Force, based primarily on the testimony of Sinhalese insiders who worked for the unit in the past and on the testimony of former Tamil paramilitaries, who worked with them. One Sinhalese man, still traumatised, described his work in an STF "white van" abduction team in Colombo as *"like a horror film"*. Another interrogator active during the final years of the civil war in Colombo said of his victims: *"We would garrotte, strangle, stab or beat them to death"*.

The witnesses said all the victims they saw were eventually killed. There is also no indication that the STF abduction teams are still active under the current government though the ITJP has documented ongoing abduction, torture and sexual violence by other security forces units.

In the East of Sri Lanka, witnesses describe some STF officers ordering summary executions of prisoners, conducting false flag operations and condoning sexual violations. The STF also worked very closely with the Karuna breakaway LTTE group, supplying them with weapons and ammunition even though the UN has described abduction and child recruitment as fundamental to the Karuna's group's military strategy.

*"I can't understand how the STF slipped through the net if you look at the annex we compiled of human rights reports by our colleagues that name the STF again and again over three decades in connection with grave violations of human rights. And yet STF officers are being rewarded with peacekeeping jobs,"* said Ms. Sooka.

*ends*

### **Background Information about the ITJP**

*The ITJP's international investigators have been documenting violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law since 2013 and they now have the largest database of sworn testimony regarding the final war and its aftermath held outside Sri Lanka.*

*On 28 August 2017, the ITJP filed 4 war crimes cases, in Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Chile, against Sri Lanka's Ambassador in Latin America, Jagath Jayasuriya, for his role in the final phase of the civil war in 2009<sup>1</sup>. The ITJP's lawsuits alledge that General Jayasuriya bears individual criminal responsibility as the commander of units that committed repeated attacks on hospitals, acts of torture and sexual violence, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.*

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<sup>1</sup> A fifth case was rejected by Suriname and the Ambassador was not actually accredited to Argentina, contrary to what the Embassy and Foreign Ministry website claimed.

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