



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

### **Written statement\* submitted by the Association des étudiants tamouls de France, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 February 2017]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE. 17-02880(E)



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## **Systematic Sexual Abuse against Eelam Tamil Women by the Sri Lankan State\***

Eelam Tamil women are being subjected to a wide range of sexual abuses as part of a systematic campaign of extermination against their nation by the Sri Lankan state. This report analyses pattern of sexual violence since end of the armed conflict in May 2009 to demonstrate need for international action to halt the tamil extermination.

Eelam Tamil nation with their historic homeland to the north and east of the island now considered as part of Sri Lanka have been subjected to a systematic campaign of genocide by the neighbouring Sinhala nation since British colonial power departed in 1948.

### **Armed Conflict**

From 1978 to 2009 Eelam Tamils waged a campaign of armed resistance to Sinhala military occupation of their homeland. Sri Lanka crushed Tamil resistance in May 2009. During the final phase of the armed conflict, from September 2008 to May 2009, UN, ICRC and other international representatives were barred from the Tamil region by the GoSL. Within that time, again, a whole host of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including rape as weapon of war, are alleged to have occurred, according to UN reports. More than 147, 000 Tamil civilians were killed or disappeared during the eight months.

### **Intent to Exterminate**

Eelam Tamil women across the Tamil homeland, irrespective of age or any other strata, have been subjected to sexual abuse. Ex members of the LTTE are subjected to additional abuse. These are not crimes committed by a few depraved soldiers acting in isolation. The pattern of sexual abuse points to a systematic campaign aimed at preventing births within a national group.

### **Genocidal acts of sex abuse against Eelam Tamil women since 2009**

Despite the advancement in education, Eelam Tamil society remains conservative in its social outlook and bound by ancient gender roles. Protecting the naked body (not exposing to anyone) and virginity for her husband is seen as the most primary duty of a female.

### **Humiliation**

Intimate, inappropriate and sexually suggestive questioning and forced exposure of females brought up in a strict patriarchal society causes irreparable mental harm. Such acts taking place in public, often in view of family members further adds to the torture of humiliation.

### **Mutilations**

Mutilation of body as a consequence of torture during routine questioning of suspects is common in the island. Both men and women across the Tamil homeland can be found with various genital mutilations as a result of torture. Eelam Tamil women, however, are also targeted for disfigurement with aim of preventing normal life.

During late 2011 the phenomenon of 'grease devils' was unleashed in the Tamil homeland. These were men, acting alone, covered in grease, who would appear at night time in military controlled villages. They targeted homes without adult males. The activities of the 'grease devils' were limited to sexual attacks and random slicing of Tamil women's breasts. The homes were rarely robbed. On occasions when the householder raised alarm and villagers chased the attackers the 'devils' fled into military camps.

Many women injured in the final months of the armed conflict were admitted to military controlled hospitals out of bounds for media or any other independent persons. Direct orders were issued by the Sri Lankan military administration carry out unnecessary operations leading to permanent disfigurement. In many cases, women in particular, needing immediate surgery were denied medical access until their condition deteriorated to the point at which body parts had to be removed.

**Rapes**

Several video footages from the final days of the armed conflict and its immediate aftermath show that women who were captured were subjected to gross sexual abuse, mass raped and then shot dead. Much of it was captured on video by Sri Lankan soldiers.

Rape of women in military occupied areas, especially in their own homes in front of family members, is regular. In January 2013, for example, there were two cases of a four year old infant girl raped and dumped near a military checkpoint and a 27 year-old mentally unwell Tamil woman raped and dumped in a well near a military camp.

**Forced Birth Control**

Despite sparse population density across the Tamil homeland, relative to rest of island, and the slow population growth in the region, many Eelam Tamil women are coerced into permanent birth control measures at hospitals under strict orders from GoSL authorities. Women giving birth to their first or second child have been forced to accept permanent birth control operations.

**Sexual abuse against female ex-cadres of the LTTE**

The LTTE, while primarily waging a campaign for right to secession from the modern Sri Lanka state, also led a social revolution within the Eelam Tamil society. Women were involved in every sphere of LTTE's activities. They were at the highest level of its civil administration as well as on the front line, ranked equally among their male counterparts.

Since 2009 ex LTTE cadres have been subjected to abuse in addition to those carried out against all Eelam Tamil women. From the minute of cross over from LTTE administered areas, they were interned in special camps away from civilian settlements for several years, are only released to 'host' families, are called for regular interrogation and are forbidden from interacting with any other ex LTTE cadres.

**Impregnation**

Several ex LTTE cadres were systematically raped while interned in special camps. The abuse was not part of a campaign to 'extract' any information: victims were not questioned. Many were not murdered post abuse. Most victims were released from the camps during late stage of their pregnancy.

In Jaffna district there has been an increase in the number of babies born post 2009 and abandoned in the streets. These are babies conceived after May 2009. Heavily pregnant ex LTTE women committing suicide and being admitted to the hospital after attempting abortion at home are also reported.

**Separation**

Ex female cadres are either kept interned in special camps or are in de-facto isolation in the homes of 'hosts'. The hosts are registered families, often close relatives of the individual, who have agreed to take charge of the released ex-cadre and promise to ensure that they report back for routine interrogation and are kept in isolation from males.

In 2012, in the name of implementing 'constructive recommendations' of the Sri Lankan President's LLRC, dozens of women, most of them ex-LTTE cadres, were forcefully recruited into the SLA and condemned isolation. Many were later admitted to hospital with psychological trauma. State media reported the new recruits were possessed by demons.

**Sterilization**

Majority of married ex-LTTE cadres were sterilized against their will enmass at the Vavuniya Hospital and at secret detention facilities soon after their surrender to the Sri Lankan military in 2009. Post 2009 unsuspecting Tamil civilians have been forced and coerced into sterilisation without their consent.

Children of women who gave birth immediately after their surrender were taken away without consent.

**Social Problems Post-Armed Conflict**

Wide range of challenges, are expected in any immediate post armed conflict situation. With breakdown in existing justice mechanisms and the large loss of life, mainly of men of working age, a number of socio-economic problems are expected. A mainly female population without basic livelihood dominated by a victorious male army of occupation has historically created an environment for extensive sexual abuse.

### **Criminal Acts of Individuals**

Individuals from the Sri Lankan military and other official organs have been accused of rape and other sexual abuse of war widows, orphan girls and other vulnerable women of the Eelam Tamil nation.

Millions of properties were destroyed during the armed conflict. There are more than 85 000 widows and several thousands of orphaned girls in the Tamil homeland. Several hundreds have been psychologically affected by the trauma of the war. There are many state officials taking advantage of the socio-economic hardships to exploit women and coerce them into prostitution.

### **State Facilitates Individual Criminal Acts**

Every single individual accused of a sex crime in the Tamil homeland since May 2009 has been a Sinhala soldier or individual associated with the occupying forces. Not a single person has been found guilty in any rape case in the entire north and east of the island in more than three and a half years.

### **Recommendations to the International Community**

Recognise the obvious pattern of sexual abuse against Eelam Tamil women as being carried out with genocidal intent.

Take immediate measures to end continued militarisation of the Tamil homeland, which is exacerbating sexual violence, and force withdrawal of the large number of Sri Lankan forces already occupying the Tamil homeland.

Ensure all Tamils held in internment camps and special secret camps are allowed immediate access to international agencies and are released to lead normal lives at the earliest.

Initiate an independent international investigation into the genocide of Eelam Tamils on the island to bring perpetrators of the crime of genocide to justice.

Conduct a UN sponsored referendum to ascertain the political aspiration of Eelam Tamils, both in the homeland and the diaspora, with a free and sovereign state of Tamil Eelam as an explicit option, as it is the democratic mean to bring about a lasting solution to the conflict on the island.

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\*Swiss Council of Eelam Tamils (SCET), NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.