



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR PREVENTION AND PROSECUTION OF GENOCIDE

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PRESS RELEASE

- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

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Stop Deploying Sri Lankan Troops to Mali for UN Peacekeeping Mission

London: The International Centre for Prevention and Prosecution of Genocide (ICPPG) is horrified to learn that a Sri Lankan Army contingent of 243 military personnel will leave for Mali next Tuesday (Nov 12) for UN peacekeeping operations despite the fact that their commander Major General Shavendra Silva is subject to United States Leahy Law sanctions for his role as an alleged war criminal.

The ICPPG has taken immediate action and submitted a formal complaint to Jean Pierre Lacroix, who is currently serving the United Nations as the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and to Michelle Bachelet Jeria, who is the current United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, based in Geneva.

Major General Shavendra Silva commanded the 58 Division during the final phase of Sri Lanka's Civil War. He reported to General Jagath Jayasuriya, the Vanni Security Force Head Quarters (SFHQ) Commander. One report said Shavendra Silva in early 2009 had 22 battalions under his command as opposed to the usual 9 in a Division. He is currently the Colonel of the Gajaba Regiment and has remained loyal to the former Defence Secretary and President's brother, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, after the War. He was promoted to Adjutant General of the Sri Lankan Army in 2017 by the Sirisena Government. In 2019, he was appointed Army Chief of Staff¹.

Major General Shavendra Silva was in command during the repeated attacks on and capture of Kilinochchi. There are reasonable grounds to believe that Shavendra Silva ordered attacks with the deliberate intention to hit the civilian objects, such as the hospital and UN buildings, resulting in civilian casualties. The 58 Division was directly involved in the military operation in PTK led by Shavendra Silva. He knew about PTK Hospital's coordinates as they were communicated to the Government, and he had access to drones and UAVs that surveyed the area. There are reasonable grounds to believe that Major General Silva was fully aware that PTK Hospital was being bombarded and shelled as UN officials informed the Sri Lanka Army on multiple occasions that the hospital was coming under attack. Troops under the effective command of Shavendra Silva were involved in the military operations in Pokkanai, when indiscriminate and intentional attacks were directed against civilians, including at milk powder distribution points, which resulted in heavy civilian casualties, including the killing and injuring of women and children. The evidence published in the ITJP report confirms that Major General Shavendra Silva led the military operation against the hospital in Putumattalan and that troops under his command captured the hospital. The UN report states that the surrenders at the Wadduvakkal Bridge were to the 58 Division. An eyewitness interviewed by the ITJP confirms that Major General Shavendra Silva, who has said he was in overall command of the area, personally shook hands with LTTE political leaders who surrendered to him; their corpses were seen on the roadside some time later on the other side of the Wadduvakkal Bridge².

In September 2019, the UN spokesman Farhan Haq in New York announced that "We have expressed our concern to the government of Sri Lanka over the appointment of Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva to the

¹ http://www.itjpsl.com/assets/shavendra-Silva_-final-dossier.pdf

² <http://www.itjpsl.com/assets/press/29-Jan-2019-Shavendra-Silva-press-release.pdf>



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position of commander of the Sri Lanka Army despite well-documented, credible allegations of his involvement in serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. In light of this appointment, the U.N. Department of Peace Operations is therefore suspending future Sri Lankan army deployments except where suspension would expose UN operations to serious operational risk”³

The ICPPG expressed deep concerns over the deployment of the 243 Sri Lankan soldiers with frontline combat experience in Sri Lanka’s war in 2009 despite the announcement of the UN spokesman Farhan Haq in New York and the compelling evidence of war crimes committed under the command of Major General Shavendra Silva, published by the ITJP⁴.

The complaint raised the question “*We had understood the United Nations was taking a human rights compliant approach and therefore banning deployment from Sri Lanka once Shavendra became Army Chief; three months later we see these troops saluting the same alleged war criminal. Can you please explain to us how this is possible?*”

Furthermore, ICPPG noted the commander of this Mali contingent comes from the Vijayabahu Infantry Regiment which was instrumental in the mass atrocities in the final war and in particular present at the Nandikaadal lagoon in the final days of the war when summary execution and enforced disappearance were rife.

The ICPPG also raised the question whether the commander of this Mali contingent has actually been screened by the United Nations?

“It’s been more than 10 years since the war was brought to an end, but the Tamils are yet to receive justice and accountability for the War crimes committed by the Sri Lankan troops in Sri Lanka. We continue to receive credible evidence of systematic torture and rape committed by the Sri Lankan security forces against the Tamils in Sri Lanka. This situation is a terrible affront to the Tamil war victims they represent in Sri Lanka and around the world and that the United Nations are letting them down yet again ”, said Miss Ambihai Seevaratam, one of the Directors of the ICPPG.

“If the UN is seriously committed to ensuring that peacekeeping forces are fit for purpose, then DPKO-DFS and the troop contributing country (Sri Lanka in this case) need to ensure that the troops and senior personnel are properly vetted so as to prevent human rights violators from going on peacekeeping operations. We urge you to review the vetting procedure for Sri Lanka since the same issue comes up for the last four commanders sent to Mali” said Mr Geeth Kulasegaram, who is another Director of the ICPPG and Human Rights Activist.

In summary, ICPPG demands the UN to immediately stop the deployment of the 243 military personnel to Mali on Peace Mission and request to review the vetting procedure as the UN has a due diligence obligation.

The ICPPG also calls upon all the Tamil Diaspora Organisations and other Human Rights Organisations to unite and act urgently to prevent this from happening.

For Further Information;

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³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sri-lanka-un-peacekeepers/un-suspends-sri-lankan-troops-from-peace-keeping-over-army-chief-appointment-idUSKBN1WA2SL>

⁴ <http://www.itjpsl.com/assets/press/29-Jan-2019-Shavendra-Silva-press-release.pdf>



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About the ICPPG:

The formation of the International Centre for the Prevention and Prosecution of Genocide (ICPPG) in London was initiated by Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE). The ICPPG, however operates as an independent body, serving all people who have been affected by or threatened with genocide. Its immediate focus remains the genocide that occurred in Sri Lanka. The ICPPG remains as an International Non-Governmental Organisation and an Independent Legal Body and one of our primary objectives is to collect evidence against perpetrators of genocide and work towards justice, peace and reconciliation⁵.

We operate under the guidance of Professor Muthucumaraswamy Sornarajah LLB (Ceylon), LLM (Yale), LLM, PhD, LLD (London) is CJ Koh Professor at the Faculty of Law of the National University of Singapore. He is Visiting Professor at the Centre for Human Rights, London School of Economics. He was the Tunku Abdul Rahman Professor of International Law at the University of Malaya at Kuala Lumpur. He was Head of the Law School of the University of Tasmania, Australia. He studied law at the University of Ceylon, the London School of Economics, King's College, London and the Yale Law School.

We began assisting the Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) investigations on Sri Lanka by submitting testimonies and organising victim interviews in 2014. In its resolution [A/HRC/25/1](#) adopted in March 2014 on “Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka”, the UNHRC requested the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to “*undertake a comprehensive investigation into alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights and related crimes by both parties in Sri Lanka during the period covered by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), and to establish the facts and circumstances of such alleged violations and of the crimes perpetrated with a view to avoiding impunity and ensuring accountability, with assistance from relevant experts and special procedures mandate holders*”. The Council requested the High Commissioner to present an oral update at its twenty-seventh session and a comprehensive report on the investigations at its twenty-eighth session. In accordance with this mandate, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights established the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL), based in Geneva⁶. The final report of the OISL commission was published in September 2015 confirming the serious violations, abuses of human rights and war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan authorities⁷. In the basis of this report, we continue to work with international prosecutors with a view to bringing criminal and civil prosecutions.

⁵ <http://icppg.org/about/>

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/pages/oisl.aspx>

⁷ https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/.../A.HRC.30.CRP.2_E.docx