



## **Sri Lanka – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 13 January 2012**

### **Reports on existence in forest area etc of female only detention / torture camps during Tamil - Sri Lankan conflict (where internees were routinely tortured, raped etc in "torture camps" by EPDP / Sri Lankan military)**

A *UN Committee Against Torture* report, in a section headed "Internally displaced persons" (paragraph 20), states:

"The Committee notes that near the end of the armed conflict in 2009 over 280,000 people fled from the northern LTTE-controlled areas to government-controlled territory in Vavuniya, Mannar, Jaffna and Trincomalee districts, where the vast majority of them entered closed military-run internment camps. While noting the information provided by the State party regarding the substantial efforts undertaken to respond to the influx of displaced persons, the Committee remains concerned at the situation of IDPs in the country, especially those who remain in 'welfare centres'. According to the State party, IDPs were initially provided with 'a secure environment and cared for while they were screened to identify terrorist cadre[s] who had infiltrated the civilian population that was rescued at the conclusion of the armed conflict'. The Committee, however, remains concerned about consistent allegations of torture and ill-treatment during questioning of camp residents by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the Terrorist Investigation Department." (UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) (8 December 2011) *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention - Sri Lanka*, p.9)

An article published on the pro-Tamil news website *TamilNet* states:

"Torture of female detainees in special camps of the Sri Lankan Army in Vavuniyaa continues to the extent of making many of the detainees insane, reports reaching from Vavuniyaa said. The torture is mainly carried out by female soldiers of the SLA, according to information provided by reliable civil society sources, which claim that they have hard evidence to prove it if there is any credible international investigation. Meanwhile, a large number of female detainees are recently moved to an isolated zone within Cheddiuku'lam internment area with severe restrictions for even relatives to see them." (TamilNet (2 March 2010) *SLA systematically terrorises female detainees*)

See also *Tamilnet* article which states:

"Terrorism Investigation Department (TID) arrested 54 women detainees from Pampaimadu and Cheddiku'lam Sri Lanka Army (SLA) detention camps 18 February and took them to Boosa prison 19 February, according to information sent to Jaffna Human Rights Commission (HRC) by Boosa prison authorities. Recently 49 women from the same camps in Vavuniyaa were arrested by TID and taken to Boosa prison for additional interrogation, sources in Vavuniyaa said. Twelve women from Jaffna, 16 from Ki'linochchi, 9 from Mullaitheevu, 7 from Mannaar, 5 from Trincomalee, 2 from Vavuniyaa and 3 from Ampaa'rai were taken to Boosa prison on 19 February. The arrested women are not allowed to meet their family members. The arrests of young women have caused fear and anxiety among the detainees." (TamilNet (24

February 2010) *54 women detainees taken to Boosa prison from detention camps in Vavuniyaa*)

An article published by *YU Free Press*, a monthly newspaper produced by volunteer graduate and undergraduate students at York University, states:

“Women who are being held in female-only camps are at greater risk of being raped. One woman who was held in such a camp reported that women were taken outside of the camp, one by one, to be questioned about their connections to the LTTE. During these interviews, the women are assaulted, humiliated and subjected to sexual violence. In July an aid worker who works in one of the camps provided evidence that government officials were running a prostitution racket out of one of the concentration camps. Last month, a 53 year old woman was taken into custody without a warrant. She was threatened, harassed and then forcibly stripped. She was released without any charges ever being pressed. Women held in the concentration camps have limited or no mobility at all. While everyone held in the camps is heavily guarded by the military personnel who patrol the camps, women are at added risk of being sexually assaulted. Bodily care becomes impossible. Women hardly bathe. Their options are to bathe in public spaces where they are visible to everyone in the camp or to bathe in a secluded area where they are harassed by military and put at risk of sexual violence.” (YU Free Press (13 January 2010) *Sexual Violence and Sri Lankan State Sovereignty*)

A footnote in a report from the *International Crisis Group* states:

“On 6 May 2009, the UK’s Channel 4 aired a video reporting: ‘Yesterday, aid workers found the bodies of at least three women dead at a bathing area in the camp called zone 2. It’s not clear how they died. But the incident has caused the UN to ask for the soldiers guarding the bathing area to be replaced by 20 female police officers, and for civilians, not the police and army, to investigate claims of sexual abuse in the camps’. On 21 May 2009, the UK’s SkyNews aired a video quoting a woman who asked not to be identified: ‘I believe that there is sexual assault and harassment in the camps. I believe these children and the young ones are going to get disappeared, but we don’t know what is happening to them. Because there is no information, there is no transparency. We just don’t know what is happening’. There was also an allegation in July 2009 that Tamil women in a remote detention camp in Pulmoddai were being forced into prostitution. Amanda Hodge, “Tamil refugees forced into sex rackets”, *The Australian*, 2 July 2009.” (International Crisis Group (20 December 2011) *Sri Lanka: Women’s Insecurity In The North And East*, p.14)

In a section headed “Rape and sexual assaults by the security forces” this report states:

“There is credible evidence of several alleged incidents of sexual violence involving the security forces at the end of the war, in addition to the video footage aired by Channel 4 as discussed above. For example, an eyewitness recounted an incident in which multiple civilian women were raped by soldiers around February 2009. She described how a group of civilians were crossing over to government-held territory deep in the jungle. She also described how, when they were met by the security forces, the men were separated from the women, several of the women were raped and some of them were killed. Another eyewitness recounted an incident in which a soldier came into a civilian tent in the IDP camps near Vavuniya and raped a woman. The witness saw the victim and the perpetrator in the immediate aftermath. The

incident was reported to government and military officials, but nothing was done.”  
(ibid, p.26)

This section of the report also states:

“While other allegations of sexual violence in the final months of the war and in the IDP camps have been less specific – in part because access was so limited, and the UN generally did not share allegations publicly – there is also indirect evidence. Some of the most disturbing concerns dozens of mostly unmarried pregnant women and recent mothers who had been in the camps and were separated from the population of IDPs and suspected cadres to give birth to, and usually adopt out, their babies. While the precise circumstances of the pregnancies are unknown, multiple people familiar with these women confirmed that the fathers of several of the babies were soldiers, while others were Tamil men. Within both categories, many of the young mothers had described coercive circumstances or more overt violence.” (ibid, p.26)

An article from *The Australian* states:

“Conditions for about 300,000 refugees forcibly detained in camps across Sri Lanka remain dire, with reports of a prostitution racket run by officials in a remote camp. Aid workers told *The Australian* yesterday officials at the internally displaced people's camp in Pulmoddai, a remote northeast region, are running the prostitution ring using women kept in the camp. The Australian understands the allegations are the subject of a joint investigation between the Sri Lankan government and an aid organisation. ‘It's been brought to the attention of senior government officials but no one seems to be doing anything about it,’ said an aid worker, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal. ‘It's hard to know whether it's coercive or not, but there is an average of three families living to a tent and it can be extremely difficult trying to get privacy. You can imagine the military coming in and asking for something in return for more space or more favours.’” (The Australian (2 July 2009) *Tamil refugees forced into sex rackets*)

An article from the *Sri Lanka Guardian* states:

“And there are first-hand witnesses among the 300,000 surviving Tamil civilians who would vouch for the fact that the government security forces wilfully bombed and sprayed noxious gases on civilians asked to converge in safe zones. That no-go areas such as hospitals and schools were carpet bombed. That women taken to detention camps were systematically raped by sex-starved soldiers. A definite victim of rape this writer met in Oxford early this year is a 19 year old girl of low IQ who was consistently raped by several soldiers for 18 months and as a result she gave birth to a baby girl. This writer saw the scars of cigarette burns on her private parts and the evidence she gave to the psychiatrist, her vacuous and blank expression, her apathy towards her own baby and last but not least her frightening scream when she saw a bell boy in uniform and running for her dear life from the hospital lift is proof soldiers acted worse than animals towards Tamil women in detention camps.” (Sri Lanka Guardian (17 September 2011) *Clutching the last straw*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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