

INTERNATIONAL  
TRUTH  
AND JUSTICE  
PROJECT

**Press Release: Sri Lanka sends official in charge of torture units CID and TID to UN Committee on Torture.**

15<sup>th</sup> November 2016

*Johannesburg:* The police official in charge of Sri Lanka's most notorious torture site at the end of the civil war is expected to be part of the Sri Lankan Government's [delegation](#) defending the country's record on torture at the United Nations' *Committee Against Torture* today.

Mr. Sisira Mendis was the Deputy Inspector General of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the police from March 2008 to June 2009 at the height of the war in Sri Lanka, when he was also responsible for the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID). He ran what's widely referred to as "the fourth floor" – a term which Sri Lankans use as a shorthand for describing torture. A UN report last year named Mr Mendis and described interrogation rooms used for torture in CID headquarters as being equipped with "metal bars and poles used for beatings, barrels of water used for waterboarding, pulleys and apparatus"<sup>1</sup> all used as torture instruments.

*"That the Government of Sri Lanka could send an official who is responsible for torture perpetrated by units accountable to him, as its representative to a UN meeting on torture is an absolute affront to the victims and also to the international community,"* said ITJP's executive director, Yasmin Sooka.

The 2015 UN report concluded that torture and sexual violence by Government security forces at the end of the war was widespread and part of a "deliberate policy" and found reasonable grounds to believe this could amount to war crimes and / or crimes against humanity. As the commander in charge of two police units at the climax of the war, Mr Mendis must have known that torture was being widely practiced by his officers – in several cases actually in the police headquarters building where he sat - and yet he failed to do anything to prevent, investigate or punish those responsible.

W ITJPSL.COM  
E ITJPSL@GMAIL.COM

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:  
YASMIN SOOKA

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<sup>1</sup> UN report (OISL) A/HRC/30/CRP.2 OISL, Para 553.

*“Mr Mendis can only dare to show his face in Switzerland because he is afforded immunity from prosecution by virtue of attending a UN meeting – in this case ironically a meeting on torture,”* said Ms. Sooka.



For the last 17 months Mr. Mendis has been director of the Centre for National Intelligence in Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Defence. There is no indication that he has done anything in this role to address either the past policy of torture and sexual violence or stop the continued practice of torture and sexual violence<sup>2</sup>. ITJP has documented 36 cases of ongoing abduction and torture by police, army and military intelligence officers under the Sirisena government. The Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission also says it has received 628 complaints of torture by the security forces under the new government.

For more information see ITJP’s Report on Mr Mendis.

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<sup>2</sup> For more see [www.itjpsl.com](http://www.itjpsl.com) .

