

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP IN SRI LANKA ACCUSES GOVERNMENT AND REBELS OF MORE THAN 1,000 EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

AdvocacyNet

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Colombo, Sri Lanka: Government and rebel forces have murdered more than 1,000 civilians in Sri Lanka since November 2005, according to the Home for Human Rights (HHR) a leading human rights organization.

Among the victims were 51 children who died when the Sri Lankan Air Force bombed their temporary school in the northern town of Mullaitivu on August 14. The dead have also included members of parliament, journalists, priests, students and aid workers, from the Tamil and Sinhalese communities.

Details of the killings have been sent to Philip Alston, the UN's Special Rapporteur on Summary Executions, and Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. HHR has also called on the UN Human Rights Council to launch an investigation.

According to HHR, a partner of the Advocacy Project (AP), the killings began after Mahinda Rajapakse was elected president in November last year and have accelerated following the collapse of the peace agreement. More than 200,000 internally displaced Tamils have relocated to Jaffna during the recent violence, says HHR. Food transports have been blocked, causing mass starvation.

The names, dates and details of each death have been posted on HHR's new website. They include a four-month-old baby, five Tamil students who were falsely accused of launching a grenade attack against security forces, a family of four who were tortured and then killed, and a priest who had witnessed a massacre in a church.

In the letter to UN High Commissioner Arbour, HHR accuses the government of using paramilitary groups to eliminate rebels, civilians and children. "Many of the killings are directed at civilians who refused to pay the exorbitant ransom demanded by the paramilitary groups," the letter reads.

But HHR also charges rebels groups, including the Tamil Tigers, with violations. The letter to Philip Alston accuses rebels of killing civilians and targeting intelligence and high-ranking officers in the army.

HHR now hopes that the dossier will be taken up by the UN Human Rights Council, which is currently meeting in Geneva. Sri Lanka is one of the 47 governments that sit on the Council and voted to adopt a new international convention on disappearances during the Council's first session in June. NGOs had hoped that the creation of the new Council would result in greater respect for human rights and have vowed to monitor the record of Council members.

Over the past two years, the Advocacy Project has helped HHR advocate for Tamils in the eastern region of Batticaloa who were left destitute by the 2004 Tsunami. The project has trained 70 women in sewing, and HHR reports that several are now earning an income from sewing. But the resurgence of fighting has made it difficult to reach some of the villages.

Greg Holyfield, who interned for AP with HHR this summer, helped to evaluate the project before he left Sri Lanka and returned to his university (Clinton School, University of Arkansas).

- Read a copy of the [letter to Philip Alston](#).
- See [details and names of those killed](#).
- Read [Greg's blogs](#).