

ITJP launches website listing 280 names of enforced disappearance comprising 29 children that took place on the same day in Sri Lanka

In view of the upcoming 9th year commemoration for the people who lost their lives in Mullivaikal during the final phase of the war, a press conference was organized by Ananthi Sasitharan, Northern Provincial Council Member in collaboration with International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) and in solidarity with CHRD. The press conference which was held on Tuesday 15th 2018 at the Women's and Children's Affairs office of the said Provincial Council Member. The Press Conference was held to announce the launch of New ITJP website which lists 280 names of enforced disappearance in Sri Lanka on the same day. It is important to note that 29 children, many under the age of five were part of the list. The website is launched to coincide with the 9th year commemoration on May 18th.

In the press conference family members of the disappeared including Ananthi Sasitharan presented their stories. Thereafter, Yasmin Sooka, Executive Director of ITJP spoke via Skype and briefed about their website launch.

The Press Release of ITJP stated that Sri Lanka's Office of Missing Persons is duty bound to question war-time military leaders over hundreds of cases of enforced disappearance that took place on the final day of the civil war in 2009 if it wants to recover the truth about these cases. "This is the largest single group of enforced disappearance in Sri Lanka's history – hundreds of people disappearing at the same time and place with multiple eyewitnesses both inside and outside the country," said the International Truth and Justice Project's Executive Director, Ms. Yasmin Sooka.

She further added that "we have written to the Office of Missing Persons saying this is the first case they should investigate if they are serious about criminal accountability for enforced disappearance.

Ms. Yasmin Sooka stated that the following demands were presented to the OMP by the ITJP:

1. The OMP should investigate if they are serious about criminal accountability for enforced disappearance. They can start by questioning Major General Shavendra Silva and General Jagath Jayasuriya, whom eyewitnesses say personally observed the surrenders and those security forces in whose custody they were placed.

2. We urge anyone with information or photos to contact us by email in English or Tamil,” said the ITJP’s Executive Director Yasmin Sooka, “this is by no means a complete list or a perfect one but it is a start and what it reveals is that the extent of the crime is much larger than previously known.”

3. “Sri Lankan civil society needs with one voice to demand to know the plight of these children. Nine long years have gone by and their grandmothers and mothers should not be left alone to stand on the roadside demanding the truth while exposed to intimidation and threats from the security forces,” said Ms. Sooka.

4. On the final days of the war the Sri Lankan Army made loud speaker announcements urging Tamils to surrender, promising them an amnesty

5. As the UN Report 6 states, it is not relevant whether some of those who disappeared were LTTE fighters or not, because they had already passed into the custody of the armed forces and were hors de combat.