



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR PREVENTION AND PROSECUTION OF GENOCIDE

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Press Release: Sri Lanka protects alleged war criminal Major General Shavendra Silva by promoting him as Commander of the Army and jeopardizes the hope for justice, peace and reconciliation in the Island.

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London: In support of the Press Release by the International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP), International Centre for Prevention and Prosecution of Genocide (ICPPG) are also extremely concerned with Sri Lanka's appointment of Major General Shavendra Silva as Commander of the Sri Lankan Army.

It is very unsettling to see that a decision has been made to appoint a Notorious Alleged War Criminal in such an important position for the country. The ITJP has published a 137-page document on the Major General. Various Human Rights organisations, including ICPPG, have consistently complained against Major General Shavendra Silva and his alleged involvement in war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The appointment of someone with such a background is extremely shocking and causes great distress to the people.

“Successive governments of Sri Lanka have committed genocide against the Tamils since 1948. Governments of Sri Lanka have continuously protected the war criminals and have publicly expressed their non-cooperation if an independent investigation was commenced. ICPPG has consistently called for an International Independent Investigation. The Government of Sri Lanka has consistently thwarted such calls and ensured mechanisms against independent investigation. The appointment of Major General Shavendra Silva as Commander of the Army is “one such protective mechanism” said Miss Ambihai Seevaratnam, a Director, International Consultant and the UK Country Coordinator for the ICPPG.

ICPPG, ITJP and other human rights organisations have documented continuing white van abductions, torture and sexual harassment. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights established the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL), based in Geneva. The final report of the OISL commission published in September 2015 and subsequent speeches confirm the serious violations, abuses of human rights and war crimes committed since the end of the war by the Sri Lankan authorities. In November 2017, the Associated Press (AP) published a report, based on the victim testimonies, exposing the on-going systematic torture under the new government in Sri Lanka which caused huge controversy.

Ten years since the end of the war Tamils continue to live in fear of the armed forces. They are still in search for their missing relatives. Many are still to build their shattered livelihoods. Bringing someone with such a horrendous background into this important position enhances the fears of the people.

Having many questions in mind about the safety of the people and with evidence to show Major General's true character, the question to be asked is, should such a person be given this high authority position for Sri Lanka?

ICPPG urge that the international community ask for the withdrawal of this appointment. The US Ambassador to Sri Lanka has protested at this appointment. The ICPPG asks that other Governments share in this protest so that the appointment of this alleged war criminal is rescinded. The ICPPG asks that the United Nations do not use the Sri Lankan Army to supply soldiers for peace-keeping until the Army ceases to be commanded by an alleged war criminal.