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WATCH

“We Will Teach You a Lesson”

Sexual Violence against Tamils by Sri Lankan Security Forces

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Government security forces in Sri Lanka have used rape and other forms of sexual violence to torture suspected members or supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This practice has continued even after the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009.

“*We Will Teach You a Lesson*” documents 75 cases of alleged rape and sexual violence of people in the custody of the military and police from 2006 to 2012. The victims were all subjected to a broad range of torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings, hanging by the arms, partial asphyxiation, and cigarette burns. None of the victims had access to legal counsel, family members, or doctors while detained. Most said they signed confessions hoping the abuse would stop, but the torture, including rape, often continued after they signed.

Most of the rape victims spoke to Human Rights Watch outside of Sri Lanka, and corroborated their accounts with medical and legal reports. Because Human Rights Watch was not able to openly conduct research in Sri Lanka or interview people still in custody, these cases likely represent only a tiny fraction of custodial rape in political cases. They suggest that the use of sexual violence was not just a local occurrence or actions of rogue security force personnel, but a widespread practice that was known or should have been known by higher-level officials,

Human Rights Watch calls for impartial investigations into all allegations of rape and other sexual violence by Sri Lankan security forces. The government should ensure prosecutions of those responsible for these crimes, including persons with command responsibility, in proceedings that meet international fair trial standards.



A survivor of sexual abuse at the hands of Sri Lankan authorities while in detention.

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