

- the government continue to elaborate and implement without delay the policy to improve security, to enable the displaced and dispersed Tamil populations of the country to return to their homeland, thereby facilitating their reintegration and reinstallation; and
- the government establish a national institution to find ways and means for national reconciliation by functioning as a forum for a discussion on crucial issues facing Sri Lankan society, with the full participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society in this process.

Torture, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/1998/38, para. 176; E/CN.4/1998/38/Add.1, paras. 393–395) Allegations were transmitted to the government related to the repeated rape of two sisters at their home in Mayilampaveli Colony, Batticaloa district, by four soldiers from the Mayilampaveli army camp who were said to have forced their way into the home, noting that complaints were made to the local police at Eravut and the Joint Operations Commander. Other allegations were transmitted concerning harassment of a woman by officers of the Central Camp police station after she had made a complaint that the officers had stolen timber from her residence in 11th Colony village, noting that persons believed to be police officers allegedly entered the woman's home, raped her and then threw a grenade at her genitals, which resulted in her death, further noting that an inquiry reportedly ordered by the President was said to be under way by the Criminal Investigation Department.

Violence against women, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/1998/54, Section I.A)

The report notes that women in Sri Lanka are increasingly taking up the role of combatants and participating on the front lines of the conflict. The Special Rapporteur (SR) summarized one case of a woman in Jaffna who disappeared, as did three members of her family who went looking for her. When her body was discovered, evidence was found that she had been gang raped and then murdered. The SR noted that eleven members of the security forces were arrested, two of whom were released after turning state's witness. At the time the report was prepared, the prosecution was in the process of presenting its evidence before a trial at bar.

The report notes that abuses by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) have also been documented with information indicating that women civilians have been among those who have been murdered and mutilated in attacks on Sinhala border villages in the east of the country and in bombings of crowded areas in the north-east and in Colombo.

Referring to preventive detention, the SR stated that it is frequently used in Sri Lanka and justified through laws such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act — which can be used as a mechanism of "protection" for the general public — in order to try to prevent a crime that the police have grounds to believe is being planned or is likely to

occur. The SR stated that often such laws allow for at least temporary clandestine detentions and it is within the context of incommunicado detentions that the majority of state violations of human rights occur.

OTHER THEMATIC REPORTS

Children affected by armed conflict, Special Representative:

(A/53/482, paras. 43, 61–70)

The Special Representative (SRep) visited Sri Lanka from 3 to 9 May 1998 to witness and assess the multiple ways in which children are affected by the ongoing armed conflict. Discussions with the government and the LTTE leadership resulted in specific commitments. The report notes that the LTTE leadership further agreed on the need to develop a framework to monitor implementation of the commitments. The commitments are: provision and distribution of humanitarian supplies — the government to review the list of restricted items and examine procedures to expedite the approval and distribution of necessary supplies, the LTTE leadership not to interfere with the flow of humanitarian supplies destined for affected populations and to accept a framework to monitor this commitment; free movement of displaced populations — the government to expedite procedures for the issue of permits for movement in affected areas, the LTTE leadership not to impede the movement of displaced populations who want to return to areas now under government control and not to impede the return to their homes of Muslim populations displaced by previous outbreaks of hostilities; recruitment and participation of children in hostilities — the LTTE leadership not to use children under 18 years of age in combat and not to recruit children less than 17 years old, the government to maintain its policy of not recruiting children under the age of 18 years; observing the Convention on the Rights of the Child — the LTTE agreed to have its cadres receive information and instruction on the Convention; and targeting of civilian populations and sites — the LTTE leadership acknowledged this to be an important and legitimate concern and undertook to review its strategies and tactics in this regard. The report notes that neither the government nor the LTTE would make a commitment to refrain from using landmines.



SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Date of admission to UN: 24 October 1945. [Syria withdrew in 1958 to unite with Egypt as the United Arab Republic and resumed its independence and separate membership in the UN in 1961.]

TREATIES: RATIFICATIONS AND RESERVATIONS

Land and People: Syria has not submitted a core document for use by the treaty bodies.