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Sri Lanka: Presidential Commission of Inquiry fails citizens

Amnesty International has demanded that reports into cases of human rights abuses, investigated by the Sri Lankan government's Commission of Inquiry, be made public immediately.

The Presidential Commission of Inquiry, established to look into serious violations of human rights committed since 2006, was disbanded on Sunday. The Commission of Inquiry was unable to complete its mandate as no extensions were granted. Of the 16 cases referred, only seven were investigated with reports on five finalized. Not a single one resulted in any justice.

"Families of the victims and survivors need answers," said Yolanda Foster, Amnesty International's Sri Lanka expert. "These people still have not received any justice from the Sri Lankan government, either through the judicial system or through this Presidential COI."

Amnesty International issued a report last week documenting the failure of several Commissions of Inquiry that were supposed to address serious human rights violations.

On 16 June, a former High Court Judge Mahanama Thilakaratne, expressed his concern about the lack of independent police investigations into some cases investigated by the Commission of Inquiry.

"The failure of this Commission of Inquiry highlights the fact the Sri Lankan government lacks the resources and the will to provide real accountability for human rights violations," said Yolanda Foster. "It proves a real need for an international, independent mechanism to investigate the allegations of war crimes and grave human rights violations committed by both sides during the last phase of the military operations against the Tamil Tigers."

Background

Amnesty International's report into Sri Lanka's Commissions of Inquiry: "Twenty Years of Make-Believe: Sri Lanka's Commissions of Inquiry" can be found at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA37/005/2009/en/c41db308-7612-4ca7-946d-03ad209aa900/asa370052009eng.pdf>,