

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
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## **Sri Lanka: International inquiry needed to address alleged war crimes**

Amnesty International has declined an invitation to appear before Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and calls again for an international inquiry into the evidence of war crimes and other abuses during the civil war.

In a joint letter released today, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group announced that they would not appear before the Commission, saying it did not meet international standards for independent and impartial inquiries.

"Amnesty International would welcome the opportunity to appear before a credible commission of inquiry aimed at securing accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka", said Madhu Malhotra, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Asia-Pacific. "We believe effective domestic inquiries are essential to human rights protection and accountability. But the LLRC falls far short of what is required". Like its predecessors, the LLRC exists against a backdrop of continuing government failure to address accountability and continuing human rights abuses. Amnesty International documented Sri Lanka's long history of impunity and the failed Presidential Commission of Inquiry in its 2009 report *Twenty Years of Make-believe; Sri Lanka's Commissions of Inquiry*.

"The LLRC's mandate, its composition, its procedures, and the human rights environment in which it is operating all conspire to make a safe and satisfactory outcome for victims of human rights violations and their families extremely unlikely", said Madhu Malhotra. "Amnesty International is particularly concerned about the lack of any provisions for witness protection and the fact that former officials who have publicly defended the Sri Lankan government against allegations of war crimes serve on the commission". Amnesty International has received numerous credible reports from witnesses that both the government security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) committed serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law during the armed conflict, particularly in the final months of the war. Some of their testimony was included in Amnesty International's 2009 briefing *"Unlock the Camps; Safety and Dignity For The Displaced Now"*. But the LLRC's mandate does not require it to investigate these allegations, which include summary executions, torture, attacks on civilians and civilian objects, and other war crimes.

"The hundreds of civilians who sought to testify before the LLRC in Killinochchi in September did so without guarantees of protection or any real hope of justice. Their willingness to come forward shows the need of Sri Lanka's war survivors for news about what happened to missing relatives and for justice", said Madhu Malhotra. "If the Sri Lankan government is serious about accountability and reconciliation, it must be serious about truth and justice for these people. Any credible commission must be given adequate scope and resources to allow for individuals to receive a fair hearing and sufficient authority to ensure redress. It must also treat all witnesses in a safe and humane fashion."

Amnesty International remains committed to contribute to any genuine effort in Sri Lanka to find a just way forward from the decades of civil war and human rights abuses.

Associated links:

Joint Letter to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA37/015/2010/en>

Twenty Years of Make Believe, Sri Lanka's Commissions of Inquiry

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA37/005/2009/en>

Unlock the Camps

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA37/016/2009/en>