

Sri Lankan deportees allegedly tortured on return from the UK and other countries
All cases have supporting medical documentation

I. Cases in which asylum was previously denied in the UK

Case 1

PK, a 32-year-old Tamil man from Jaffna, was among 24 Tamils deported to Sri Lanka by the UK Border Agency on 16 June 2011. PK told Human Rights Watch he had been previously arrested by the Sri Lankan police and remanded in custody by the Colombo Magistrate court. While in detention he was seen by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on three occasions. PK had fled Sri Lanka in 2004 following the split of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) with its Eastern Commander, Colonel Karuna, and sought asylum in the UK in April 2005.

PK told Human Rights Watch that he and the other deportees were taken aside for questioning by officials who introduced themselves as CID (Criminal Investigation Department) soon after they arrived at Katunayake International Airport in Negombo, outside of Colombo. PK said the officials took all his details down and allowed him to leave the airport. PK said:

My aunt warned me not to go to Jaffna through Vanni as I did not have my national ID card. I stayed in Negombo with her. While I was in Negombo, the authorities went to my address in Jaffna, looking for me. However after about six months, I decided to go to Jaffna. On 10 December 2011 on my way, I was stopped at the Omanthai checkpoint [along the north-south A9 highway] by the authorities. They told me they were from the CID and asked to see my ID. I showed them the Emergency Travel document issued by the Sri Lankan embassy in London.

I was taken to the CID fourth floor in a van. On the way, the officials started accusing me of working for the LTTE in London. They punched and kicked me in the van. The officials kept me in a single cell. They began questioning me about LTTE supporters in London and started beating and torturing me. I was whipped with electric wires and suspended upside down and beaten with sand-filled plastic pipes. They tried to suffocate me with a petrol-infused plastic bag. They said, “You took part in anti-government demonstrations in the UK.” They accused me of raising money to fund the LTTE.

I was stripped naked during the interrogation. I was severely tortured during the time in detention. I could not bear the torture and told them I had participated in demonstrations against the Sri Lankan government in May 2009 in London. I signed a confession statement in Sinhala but I could not read this. The officials brought me photographs of LTTE suspects and I agreed to identify them.

PK told Human Rights Watch his second escape from Sri Lanka was organised after his uncle managed to bribe CID officials through a member of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP). PK left Sri Lanka on 1 January 2012 using an agent who first took him to Russia before arriving in Dover on 10 January, where he was detained by immigration authorities for a week. He is now in the UK and has applied for asylum.

Case 2

JS, a 51-year-old Tamil woman from eastern Sri Lanka, was returned to Sri Lanka by the UK in May 2009. On arrival at Katunayake International Airport, JS told Human Rights Watch she was detained for around nine hours and interrogated by CID officials. The next day, she said she was taken to an unknown place where she was beaten, sexually abused and made to identify others who were suspected of LTTE involvement. She was photographed and her fingerprints taken. JS said that,

I was transferred to the Batticaloa army camp where I was treated like a slave. I was made to clean and do all the chores and treated very badly. I was kept in this army detention for nearly five months.

JS managed to flee Sri Lanka with the help of an agent in April 2010 and arrived in the UK where she was granted asylum.

Case 3

YN was deported from the UK to Sri Lanka in December 2005 after he exhausted his asylum claims in the UK. YN told Human Rights Watch he made another attempt at escaping Sri Lanka on 1 April 2008 when he tried to transit to Canada through Malaysia and Germany. He said he was detained in Germany in December 2009 and after failed attempts at claiming asylum there he tried to make his way to Canada once again. He was detained in an unknown African country with his agent where he was detained for almost a year until he was deported to Sri Lanka in January 2010. YN told Human Rights Watch:

I was picked up by CID officials as soon as I cleared immigration at the Colombo international airport. I was taken to the fourth floor CID headquarters where I was detained for two or three days before being transferred to the Joseph [army] camp in Vavuniya.

I was kept handcuffed in a single cell in Colombo. For questioning, I was taken to another room. During questioning, I was beaten with batons and metal rods. The officials poured kerosene on the floor and threatened to set it alight. In another instance, they held a gun to my head and threatened to pull the trigger.

I was hung upside down and beaten with truncheons and hot metal rods. I was stripped naked in both detention sites. I was sexually abused on two or three occasions in Vavuniya. The perpetrators were uniformed army personnel.

YN told Human Rights Watch he did not sign a confession statement but managed to escape detention after his uncle bribed army personnel in Vavuniya. YN said that he was brought by a boat to India after which he was taken to France and arrived at the UK in March 2010 where he claimed asylum.

II. Cases in which asylum was previously denied in France and the person is now in the UK

Case 4

On 10 December 2010, SV, a 29-year-old poet and writer from Vavuniya, was deported from Dubai to Sri Lanka. He had gone to Dubai after having exhausted all his asylum claims in France. SV told Human Rights Watch all his details were recorded at the international airport on arrival in Colombo and he was photographed. SV said:

The officials introduced themselves as CID and told me they had to take me for questioning. I was taken to the fourth floor CID headquarters in Colombo. I did not know where I was being taken at the time. I was photographed once we reached the CID headquarters and then pushed up the stairs to a small dark room. The officials kept hitting me on the head as they pushed me up the stairs.

I was kept in detention for more than a month. During this time, I was questioned and beaten up every day. They asked me about my activities with the LTTE in France, they brought pictures of my participating in anti-war protests in France and accused me of betraying the government. They asked me for the names of others who had organised the protests in France.

I was locked in a dark room and my hands were tied in the position of a crucifix. I then was burnt all over my arms in this position. I was burnt with hot metal rods on my back and thighs. I was sometimes poked with the end of a hot poker and kicked on my head with metal toed boots. I was raped at least four or five times. Two men would come to my room together and one would hold me down. They would take turns.

SV told Human Rights Watch he was taken out to identify various people and inform the security forces about their involvement with the LTTE during his detention. He was released from detention on 8 January 2011 after his aunt bribed CID and military personnel using the services of an Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) member. SV arrived in the UK on 20 January 2011 and claimed asylum in March.

Case 5

On 15 April 2010, PP, a 31-year-old Tamil woman, was deported back to Colombo from an African country after her attempts to secure asylum in France failed. PP told Human Rights Watch that soon after she cleared immigration at Katunayake International Airport, she was taken aside by officials who introduced themselves as CID. PP said:

I was taken to the CID fourth floor and put in a cell. After some time, a group of officials in civilian clothes came and dragged me up the stairs to another floor. There I was beaten and questioned repeatedly. I was beaten with sand-filled pipes and batons. They asked me about my activities with the LTTE in France. They asked me for names of people who supported the LTTE in France.

I was raped repeatedly in custody by four to five men. I fainted so I can't remember how many times I was raped. They did it in turns. When I became conscious, I was bleeding heavily from my vagina, I was covered with wounds and injuries.

PP managed to escape from custody after her uncle arranged for one million rupees [£4,800] to be paid as a bribe to CID officials. PP told Human Rights Watch she was told by CID officials that her life would not be safe in Sri Lanka and she should leave the country. PP used the services of an agent and arrived in the UK on 28 August 2010, travelling through Singapore, Malaysia, Kenya and France, where she has claimed asylum.

Case 6

In March 2008, MN, 20, exhausted his asylum appeals in France. MN told Human Rights Watch that since he feared being deported, he used the services of an agent to take him to Canada from France via Sri Lanka on a fake passport. On 18 August 2008, MN was arrested by the Sri Lankan police during a search and seizure operation in Colombo. MN said he was detained for 10 days and released on the condition that he move back to Kilinochchi.

MN told Human Rights Watch he surrendered to the Sri Lankan army at Vallipuram on the Jaffna peninsula in March 2009 and was hospitalised due to his poor health. MN said:

Everybody knew that Tamil men and women were being taken away from IDP [internally displaced persons] camps and tortured and killed by the Sri Lankan forces so I stayed with my relatives in Vavuniya. On 1 March 2010, I was discovered and arrested by a joint team of army and police personnel. They took away my ID card and driving licence. I was blindfolded and my hands were tied together with ropes. Once we reached the camp, I was taken to a small room. It was dark and they kept my hands and legs tied. The next morning they started questioning me. They asked me about my activities with the LTTE. They asked me about my activities abroad.

I was hung upside down and beaten with sand-filled pipes. I was burnt with cigarette butts on my back and chest. My head was forced into a barrel of water and I was asphyxiated. I was suffocated with a petrol-infused, plastic bag. I was made to lie face down on the floor and my interrogators stood and crushed my hands with their heavy boots.

I agreed to sign two documents which were written in Sinhala. I was told these were confession statements. The officials also took my photographs and fingerprints.

MN told Human Rights Watch he managed to escape from detention on 12 March 2010 after his uncle managed to bribe the police. He left Sri Lanka for the second time on 17 March 2010 and was taken by an agent to India on a fishing boat. He made his way to France via Oman and arrived in the UK on 12 April 2010 where he has claimed asylum.

Case 7

GK, a 24-year-old Tamil man from Mullaithivu, left Sri Lanka in 2005 after he was detained and tortured by the police in Vavuniya on grounds of suspicion following Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar's assassination by the LTTE in August 2005. GK told Human Rights Watch he paid an agent to facilitate his move to Canada but was instructed by his agent to claim asylum in France when he arrived in September 2005. GK said his asylum claim was rejected and before he could be deported to Sri Lanka he left France with the help of an agent, hoping to reach Canada. GK said that he was detained in an unknown African country for 10 days and on 31 May 2006 he was deported back to Sri Lanka. GK said:

I was arrested by the CID as soon as I cleared immigration on arriving in Colombo international airport. The officials took my details in a small room and then took me outside to a white van. I was driven to the fourth floor of the CID headquarters where I was brutally tortured.

My interrogators were army personnel and included some officials in plain clothes. They asked me why I had left Sri Lanka. They questioned me about my role in Kadirgamar's assassination. They told me I had tried to go to Canada to work for the LTTE and accused me of jumping bail. They slapped and punched me throughout the questioning. I kept denying their charges. I told them I left the country because I was scared I would be killed. They burnt me with cigarettes and whipped me with heated metal wires. They hung me upside down and beat my head, my back and thighs with sand-filled pipes. They made me inhale petrol fumes covering my head with a polythene bag so that I nearly suffocated.

I was stripped naked during the interrogation. I was kicked and punched on my genitals. I was tortured more or less every day for two months. I could not bear the torture so I agreed to sign the confession statement, which was written in Sinhala.

GK told Human Rights Watch he was released from detention on 29 July 2006 after his uncle arranged to bribe CID officials through a Muslim agent. GK said he moved to the LTTE controlled areas of Vavuniya and lived there until 2008, when the LTTE stepped up its policies of forced recruitment. GK's uncle arranged another agent to take him out of the country on 21 October 2008. GK transited through Singapore, Malaysia, Russia, Germany and the Netherlands before he arrived in the UK in March 2009 and has claimed asylum.

Case 8

HJ, a 25-year-old Tamil man from northern Sri Lanka, left Sri Lanka in 2007 and claimed asylum in France. However, his claims were not successful and he returned to Sri Lanka in 2008. While in Colombo, HJ said he was arrested and detained by the Sri Lankan police in a roundup operation as he held a Kilinochchi identity card. HJ returned to Kilinochchi and claims he was forcibly conscripted by the LTTE. Following the LTTE's defeat in May 2009 he surrendered to the Sri Lankan army and was rearrested once more in March 2010. HJ told Human Rights Watch:

I was blindfolded and my hands and legs were tied together. I was beaten with sand-filled pipes on my back. I was burned with cigarette stubs on my back and chest. I was kicked with heavy-booted legs until I fell to the floor. I was hung upside down and beaten with sand-filled pipes on my back. I was stripped of all my clothes. My head was submerged into a basin of water several times. My face was covered with a petrol fumed carrier bag, I could hardly breathe. I was starved with very little food and water to eat and drink. I was forced to sign two documents written in Sinhala, confessing to their allegations, and my fingerprints were also taken.

HJ fled Sri Lanka in March 2010 using an agent to bribe authorities. He reached Oman and finally made his way to the UK, where he claimed asylum.

III. Cases in which asylum claims were previously denied in other countries and the person is now in the UK

Case 9

In September 2010, NG, 31, was deported back to Sri Lanka from an African nation (not specified to protect his identity) where he was intercepted as he attempted to reach Canada from Germany following his failed asylum appeal in Germany. NG said he was arrested by the Sri Lankan CID/TID (Terrorist Investigation Division) at the airport and taken to the CID headquarters in Colombo, where he was detained and tortured until he arranged his escape by bribing authorities on 20 November 2010. NG told Human Rights Watch:

I was beaten up and tortured. My head was banged against the wall. I was suspended upside down and burnt with cigarettes. I was handcuffed and shackled throughout and beaten with various objects. My interrogators accused me of being an LTTE agent and tried to suffocate me with a petrol-infused plastic bag.

NG managed to escape from detention in May 2011 and is currently undergoing psychiatric treatment in the UK where he has claimed asylum.

Case 10

In November 2008, BM, 46, claimed asylum in Belgium after fleeing Sri Lanka following his arrest on 3 November 2008. BM told Human Rights Watch he lost all his appeal rights and was asked to leave the country in February 2011. BM said on his father-in-law's advice he decided to make his way to Canada before he was deported from Belgium. Using the services

of an agent, BM travelled through various countries and was finally arrested and deported back to Sri Lanka from Benin on 3 October 2011. BM said:

As soon as I cleared the immigration, CID officials came to me and questioned me. They took down all my details and let me go. I went to Vavuniya where I started living with my family.

On 29 December 2011, I was picked up by a white van while waiting for a bus. The men who abducted me were in civilian clothes, but they took me to an army camp, which they said was Joseph camp. My ID card was confiscated. In the camp I was interrogated by army personnel. They said they had got all my details from “Papa,” who was the head of the sports wing of the LTTE, who had turned informer. They accused me of taking part in demonstrations against the government and fundraising for the LTTE.

The officials had information on my previous arrest and they said, “You managed to escape but this time you can’t.” I was tortured in various ways. I was hung upside down for over half an hour and beaten on my thighs and back with plastic pipes and batons. They tried to asphyxiate me in a barrel of dirty water. They whipped me with electric wires.

BM told Human Rights Watch he managed to leave detention after his father-in-law bribed army officials. He escaped on 14 January 2012 and using the services of an agent arrived in the UK on 6 February 2012.

Case 11

MK, a 33-year-old Tamil man from Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka, exhausted all asylum claims in Switzerland in April 2011. He subsequently made unsuccessful attempts to claim asylum in France and the UK, but finally returned to Sri Lanka voluntarily on 27 February 2012. MK told Human Rights Watch that as soon as he came out of the international airport, he was forced into a van and taken to a nearby building, where he was detained and tortured. He said:

I was accused of being an LTTE member and interrogated and tortured in several ways. They beat me mercilessly and questioned me about where the weapons were hidden. They asked me about whereabouts of other LTTE members. They took all my details, photographed and fingerprinted me.

MK is currently claiming asylum in the UK.

Case 12

PM, a 29-year-old Tamil man from the Vanni region who had been forcibly conscripted by the LTTE in early 2008, engaged the services of an agent to leave for Switzerland from Sri Lanka on 19 September 2010. PM told Human Rights Watch his asylum claims were

exhausted in Switzerland so he voluntarily returned to Sri Lanka on 15 February 2011. He said:

I moved back to the Vanni in March 2011 and registered myself for a driving licence. On 23 July 2011, a white van arrived at my house. A group of people in plain clothes came out of the van and said they had to take me away for enquiries. I was held face down in the van and was pushed out after the van stopped in half an hour. The officials took away my ID card and recorded my details. They took my fingerprints and started questioning me about my involvement with the LTTE. They said they had information on my activities in Switzerland.

I was slapped, punched and kicked. I was beaten with iron rods, batons and pipes. My head was submerged into a barrel of water and I was asphyxiated. I was hung upside down and thrashed with metal rods and batons across my back and thighs. My interrogators threatened to execute me if I did not tell them the truth. I begged them to spare my life. I signed a confession document in Sinhala. I don't know what I confessed to.

PM told Human Rights Watch someone approached him in the detention centre and offered to organise his release on payment of a bribe. PM said he was released from detention on 13 August 2011 and made his way out of Sri Lanka that week and reached the UK where he has claimed asylum.

Case 13

KJ, a 36-year-old Tamil man from Jaffna, said he fled Sri Lanka with the help of an agent in May 2009. He was taken to India and France before being taken to an African country en route to Canada. KJ was deported to Sri Lanka from an African country on November 8, 2010. He told Human Rights Watch:

I was arrested by Sri Lankan authorities on 16 December 2010. They were not in uniform but they questioned me about my activities abroad and about my links with the LTTE. I was badly tortured. My interrogators slapped, punched and kicked me. They burnt me with cigarettes butts and heated iron rods. They covered my head with a petrol bag sprayed with petrol. I was repeatedly beaten with poles, wires and plastic pipes filled with sand. I was suspended upside down and made to inhale chilli smoke.

KJ said he managed to escape for the second time on 24 April 2011, after his uncle arranged to bribe authorities. He is now in the UK and has applied for asylum.