

## **Executive Summary**

This latest report from the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) documents the final chapter of Sri Lanka's 26-year war. Drawing on individual eyewitness accounts, it chronicles the relentless violence experienced by survivors of the conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam between September 2008 and May 2009, when the Sri Lankan government ultimately crushed the LTTE leadership and declared victory. What these survivors' stories make clear is that for both parties, the key to military dominance lay not in brilliant strategies, but in an utter disregard for the lives of civilians and combatants alike, driven by their leaders' single-minded pursuit of personal power.

Both sides treated truth as an enemy. Outsiders who could bear witness to these events were kept out or silenced; dissent on either side was crushed; the poor and powerless were treated as cannon fodder and in the case of Tamil civilians, ultimately locked up to prevent them from revealing what they had experienced. As the report notes, Sri Lanka's "war against truth has grave implications for the future of democracy."

But this report is more than a catalogue of war-time atrocities; it provides an analysis of the social and political underpinnings of the conflict that made atrocities possible, and that have historically shielded the people who committed such crimes from justice.

This report is a call to Sri Lankans of all communities to examine their history and take control of their present; to acknowledge the degeneration of the country and its democratic institutions, to demand justice for the crimes that have been committed in the name of fighting terrorism or securing Eelam, and to declare "never again."

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