



For Immediate Release
February 20, 2015

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Sri Lanka's Witness Protection Law Step Forward for Accountability

The Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) welcomes news that Sri Lanka [has adopted a witness protection law](#). The announcement comes days after the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights agreed to temporarily delay until September a U.N. report on human rights abuses in Sri Lanka during and immediately following its 26-year civil war.

CJA's Mytili Bala said: "A witness protection law will hopefully help to deter the harassment and intimidation families have faced previously in trying to report crimes and disappearances. It is one of the many necessary steps that the new government is taking and should continue to take to redress past human rights violations. The big question is whether this law will indeed protect witnesses who provide evidence to the U.N. given intimidation that has occurred even in the past weeks."

Two weeks ago, CJA received a report that participants in two workshops in northern Sri Lanka — a healing program for families of missing and disappeared and another workshop on violence against women — were followed and harassed by intelligence officers.

CJA outlined steps the new government of Sri Lanka should take to bring justice, reconciliation and accountability in the country, including a witness protection law, [in a letter](#) to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Nisha Biswal during her visit to Sri Lanka three weeks ago.

The United Nations estimated in a 2011 report that about 40,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the final weeks of the war that ended in 2009.

About the Center for Justice and Accountability

CJA is a San Francisco-based human rights organization dedicated to deterring torture and other severe human rights abuses around the world and advancing the rights of survivors to seek truth, justice and redress. CJA uses litigation to hold perpetrators individually accountable for human rights abuses, develop human rights law, and advance the rule of law in countries transitioning from periods of abuse. www.cja.org

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