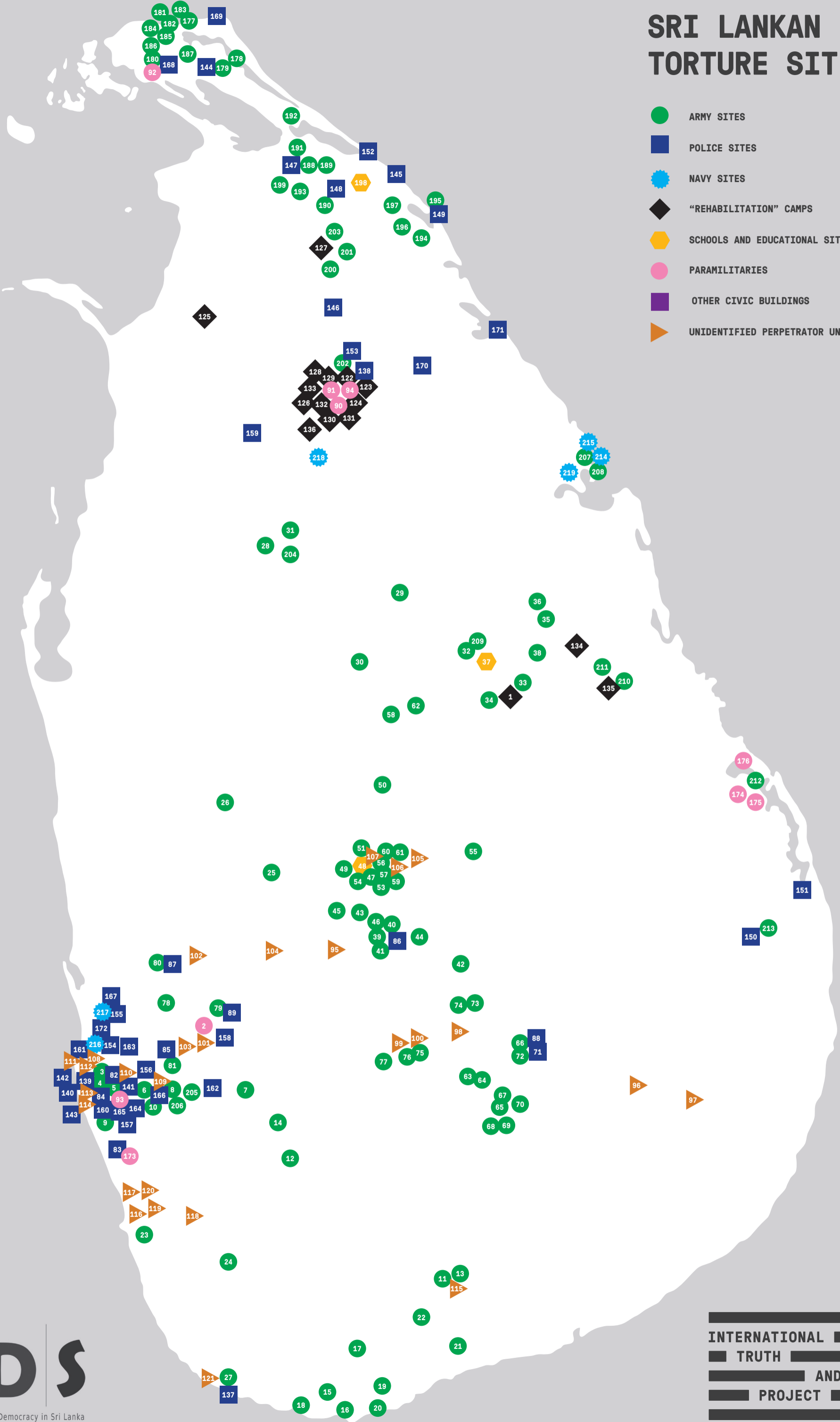


# SRI LANKAN TORTURE SITES

- ARMY SITES
- POLICE SITES
- ⊙ NAVY SITES
- ◆ "REHABILITATION" CAMPS
- ⬠ SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL SITES
- PARAMILITARIES
- OTHER CIVIC BUILDINGS
- ▶ UNIDENTIFIED PERPETRATOR UNIT





INTERNATIONAL  
TRUTH  
AND JUSTICE  
PROJECT



18 June 2020

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#### Joint Press Release: Sri Lanka Torture Map

**Johannesburg:** To mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on 26 June, two organisations have produced the first torture map of Sri Lanka. It plots 219 sites throughout the island allegedly used for torture of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims by the army, police, navy and paramilitaries over the last three decades.

The International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) and Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS) warn that their map does not depict the full extent of torture that has occurred in the island. Police stations used for torture during the first and second uprisings of the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or People's Liberation Front) were not included because there were simply too many. While the sites named from 2006-19 derive from the ITJP's evidence gathering project and are also by no means exhaustive.

Astonishingly among the buildings used for torture in the late eighties were the Law Faculty of Colombo University and the basement of the state run Lakeshouse newspaper building. Over the decades, a large number of Sri Lankan schools, colleges and training institutes have been used for torture, as well as factories, farms, cinemas, stadiums and even a golf course.

*"Many of these sites that were used by the armed forces for the most barbaric torture and killings of Sinhalese youth in 1987-9 have been erased from memory," said Bashana Abeywardane of JDS. "The collective moral conscience of a society is not simply shaped by the way people live, but also by the way people die and how they are remembered. When the living don't remember the dead, society is in dangerous denial and there's the risk of recurrence."*

In 1989, Colonel Gotabaya Rajapaksa was the military coordinating officer in charge of Matale District along with his Gajaba regiment lieutenants, Shavendra Silva (now Commander of the Army), Jagath Dias (former Chief of Army Staff) and Sumedha Perera (former deputy Chief of Army Staff and recently appointed a ministry secretary). A government commission of inquiry investigated tens of thousands of disappearances during the JVP period and compiled a list of alleged perpetrators, among which was the name "Rajapaksa G, OIC Matale Army Camp". The list was never published.

The same army officers were allegedly later complicit in grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in 2009 - Shavendra Silva and Jagath Dias - were key figures in the prosecution of the 2009 war ostensibly under the direct command and authority of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, bypassing existing military command structures. They worked alongside Kamal Gunaratne who was also involved in crushing the JVP in 1989 in Badulla District adjoining Matale.

*"Military officers who were involved in crushing the second JVP uprising, went on to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity against Tamils with total impunity,"* said the Executive Director of the ITJP, Yasmin Sooka. *"You can draw a direct line from 1989 to 2009 in terms of the violations and many of the characters involved,"* she added. *"There is no doubt that torture in Sri Lanka is State sponsored and is an important instrument of State policy in which the full authority and structures of the State are drawn in and fully utilized to implement the policy at all levels by the security forces"* said Ms. Sooka. *"To prevent further violence there must be a reckoning with the past and an acknowledgement of all victims and the dismantling of a culture of impunity in Sri Lanka."*

