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Innocent Journalist, Victim of War Crimes in Sri Lanka

The Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations (AFTA), the umbrella body of the peak Tamil associations in the States and Territories of Australia and New Zealand, would like to bring to the attention of the International Media that the distressing execution video footage, screened by British **Channel 4 News** in the first week of December that reveals further evidence on war crimes committed by Sri Lankan Security forces in May 2009. The video shows a number of incidents where soldiers in uniform shooting in the head people blind folded and with hands tied. The video also shows the dead bodies of several men and women. These incidents are described as "cold-blooded killing" by a war crimes expert. The British Channel 4 report can be seen at <http://www.channel4.com/news/sri-lanka-video-is-astonishing-evidence>

The Channel 4 claims now that after extensive investigations it can reveal that one of the victims was a high profile member of the Tamil Tigers' press and communications wing. <http://www.channel4.com/news/sri-lanka-war-crimes-video-womans-body-identified> This woman victim shown in the video has been identified by a close colleague and friend of her, speaking to **Channel 4 News**, as the Tamil journalist, Isaipriya. According to **Channel 4** Isaipriya's former colleague has told that Isaipriya was part of the Tamil Tigers and she has identified her body for them. She has also revealed that "Isaipriya joined the LTTE. Because of her physical condition, she was deployed to the media unit. She was in the production team. She did some acting. She was a TV presenter. She was a dancer. She never carried a gun and her physical condition did not permit her to go to the battlefield. She always had either a camera, a pen or a notepad."

Leading war crimes lawyer Julian Knowles from Matrix Chambers in Briton, told **Channel 4 News** the video was "astonishing evidence" of a type he had only seen "a handful of times" showing the mass killing of civilians or unarmed combatants, a serious war crime.

This astonishing evidence has emerged at a time when the UN Secretary General appointed 3 members panel, to advise him on the issue of accountability with regard to alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during the final stages of the conflict in Sri Lanka, is receiving submissions from the public. Repeated calls made by Human Rights Watch, (<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/12/08/sri-lanka-army-unit-linked-executions>), Amnesty International (http://www.amnesty.ca/resource_centre/news/view.php?load=arcview&article=5764&c=Rsource+Centre+News) and the International Crisis Group to the Sri Lankan government to allow an Independent International Investigation to be carried out have been rejected by the Sri Lankan authorities, denying that no war crimes have been committed during the final phase of the war.

Journalists were being killed with impunity in Sri Lanka, even before the final phase of the war has been common. Out of the 24 Journalists reported by Committee to protect Journalists (CPJ) killed in Sri Lanka since 1992 (18 motive confirmed and 6 motive unconfirmed) 20 are Tamils <http://www.cpj.org/killed/asia/sri-lanka/>. Now Isaipriya's name will be added to this long list.

AFTA appeals to the International Media to highlight this matter at this important time, when the UN Panel is trying to make a decision as to how to proceed with the accountability process in Sri Lanka, and call on our governments, especially the Australian and New Zealand governments, to request the UN to carry out an Independent International Investigation.