

'More than 1 lakh widows in Sri Lanka face sexual threats'

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Over 1 lakh widows in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka live in the constant fear of sexual harassment, said a group of human rights activists, who have returned after visiting the island nation, on Monday.



Representative image

Chennai: The seven-member group, under the banner of 'Eezha Tamizhar Vazhvirimai Kootamaippu', had visited four districts in the northern province and two districts in the eastern province between October 11 and 14.

Addressing media persons here after their return, the activists claimed to have interviewed more than 300 people, which includes a large number of women and senior officials of the Sri Lankan government. Charging the Sri Lankan government of involving in a 'structural genocide' of the Tamil people, Henri Tiphagne, a noted activist, said: "The Lankan government has launched a planned attack on the Tamil community by destroying their identities. Tamils living in Sri Lanka are under the constant threat of harassment and have lost their livelihood."

Around 97,000 widows in the northern province and over 37,000 widows in the eastern province live in the constant fear of sexual harassment. Every woman felt that they were safe before 2009 when LTTE was present.

Now, they are gripped with fear, said Tiphagne, who was part of the visiting group.

He said that the situation was worse in Jaffna due to the presence of security forces and normalcy was completely out of place in the province.

“For every 10 kilometers in Jaffna, there are six Army camps apart from camps set up by the Navy, Special Task Forces and Air Force. People could not be seen outside their houses either in the morning or in the evenings after their work due to the heavy military presence,” said Tiphagne.

He further said that in the Jaffna University the number of Tamil students had decreased drastically. “More than 70 per cent students pursuing the management course at the University are Sinhalese,” the activist noted.

Stating that drug peddling was rampant in both the provinces, Professor Ramu Manivannan said: “The drugs are targeted at Tamil youth to destroy them culturally. While people cannot take a book inside the area, drugs are freely distributed to the youngsters with the aid of the Sri Lankan government and military.”

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