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[Sri Lanka's killing fields: the need for the International Health Protection Initiative](#)

Posted on June 16th, 2011 by [Rhona MacDonald](#)

“A hard-hitting investigation into the final weeks of the Sri Lankan civil war, featuring devastating video evidence of horrific war crimes”—the website description of the Channel 4 documentary, [Sri Lanka's killing fields](#), does not do justice to the horrific content. This [documentary](#) should be compulsory viewing for all doctors and those concerned with human rights abuses. As Jon Snow, the documentary presenter and champion said, although extremely disturbing, it is necessary to show this [authenticated footage](#) as evidence of international war crimes.

The [documentary](#) shows how the [Geneva Conventions](#) were repeatedly violated: a field hospital for injured Tamil civilians in the supposed no fly zone area (a strip of sand) was repeatedly targeted by Government shells. Each time the field hospital was bombed, the brave doctor and his untrained helpers set up again in another area, only for it to be bombed again: It seemed that government troops were using the co ordinates of the hospital (which had been provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross ([ICRC](#)) precisely to prevent troops from accidentally bombing it) to deliberately target injured patients. Eventually, after continuous bombing, there was nothing left—no equipment, no supplies, and no staff. All those who could had no option but to flee, leaving dying and injured patients behind.

The UN, who fled the scene at the start of the insurgency in the Tamil capital Killinochi, “for their own safety” are now investigating possible war crimes after the publication of its [own report](#). And the UK Prime Minister David Cameron, voiced support for the airing of the [documentary](#) and [told MPs](#) that the Sri Lanka government, “does need to be investigated” and, “lessons need to be learned.”

This shocking [documentary](#) is a stark example of why the [International Health Protection Initiative](#) is urgently needed. Please show your support for the protection of health care workers and facilities during armed conflict by [signing up](#) to the [resolution](#) now. Thank you

Rhona MacDonald is a freelance editor. Competing interest: RM is the co founder of the [International Health Protection Initiative](#)

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