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Sri Lanka's Ex-army Chief Sarath Fonseka Ready to Testify Against Successor Jagath Jayasuriya

An international rights group this week had filed war crimes charged against Jayasuriya in Brazil and Columbia.

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In this June 14, 2012, file photo, former Sri Lankan Army chief Sarath Fonseka speaks to the media during a news conference in Colombo. (Photo: Reuters)



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Colombo: Sarath Fonseka, the former Sri Lankan Army chief who vanquished the LTTE, on Friday said that he was prepared to testify in a court against his successor Jagath Jayasuriya in the war crimes investigation.

"When I was the Commander I did receive certain complaints of crimes committed by Jayasuriya's brigade mostly to do with crimes perpetrated on those detained during the war," Fonseka told reporters in Colombo.

Fonseka was also accused by human rights groups of being involved in war crimes during the final stages of the nearly three-decades-long civil war that ended in 2009.

"I did not put Jayasuriya in-charge of a fighting brigade. His job was to defend the Army's bunker lines and to be in-charge of supplies to fighting brigades in the battle front. I have details of crimes committed by his brigade," the former army chief said.

Fonseka said he was on the verge of ordering an inquiry against Jayasuriya before he ceased to be the Army chief. An international rights group this week had filed war crimes charged against Jayasuriya in Brazil and Columbia. He was serving in Brazil as the Sri Lankan Ambassador and returned to Colombo this week at the end of his tenure.

Fonseka, now a government minister, said it was important for Lanka to maintain the good name of its security forces. "We must investigate crimes committed by a handful of individuals in order to clear the Army of war crimes charges," he said.

His comments stand in contrast to those of his Cabinet colleague and government spokesman Rajitha Senarathne. He said charges against Jayasuriya was of a very general nature and the Lankan troops did not commit any crime during the war.

Tamil minority and international rights groups claim that

i Lanka's Ex-army Chief Fonseka Ready to Testify Against Success...

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Lankan military had killed a large number of civilians and bombed hospital during the civil war.

Sri Lanka had denied committing war crimes in response to consecutive UN Human Rights Council resolutions which sought accountability for rights abuses during the final phase of the conflict.

Fonseka had a fallout with former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, under whom he had served, following which he was charged in a number of cases, ranging from corruption to engaging in politics in uniform.

He was also sentenced to 30 months in jail after having mounted a failed bid to unseat Rajapaksa in his January 2010 re-election.

Fonseka, who was nearly assassinated by a LTTE suicide bomber in 2006, was pardoned by Maithripala Sirisena days after he assumed office as the new president last year. All ranks and medals denied to Fonseka by the Rajapaksa regime along with his pension were restored.

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