

'White Van' enforced-disappearance pattern

The documented post-2006 'white van' abduction pattern, anchored in UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and Amnesty International findings.

From the mid-2000s onwards a distinctive abduction pattern — unmarked white vans, plain-clothes operatives, no warrant, no acknowledgement of custody — was documented by the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the OISL. The pattern targeted journalists, lawyers, activists and Tamil civilians during the final phase of the armed conflict and into the post-2009 period. The Office on Missing Persons (OMP), established under the OMP Act of 2016, continues to handle cases attributed to this pattern.

§1 What was documented

The OISL 2015 report and successive OHCHR reports document a sustained pattern of abductions by state and state-affiliated actors between 2006 and at least 2014, characterised by unmarked vehicles, absence of warrants, denial of custody, and incommunicado detention. The Lasantha Wickrematunge killing (2009) and the Eknaligoda enforced disappearance (2010) are the named exemplar cases admitted to the public record by UN treaty-body determinations.

§2 Where it sits

The 'white van' pattern is the connective tissue between the documented post-2009 final-stages violations and the open OMP caseload. It is read here as a pattern, not as a TLTE-voiced count — figures belong to OMP, PEARL, ITJP and the WGEID.

Sources

- [ohchr-oisl-2015](#)
- [amnesty-old-ghosts-2021](#)
- [pearl-disappearances](#)
- [omp-srilanka](#)

What this is not

- This page does not name disappeared persons or their families.
- This page does not name alleged perpetrators beyond those already in UN treaty-body determinations.
- This page does not aggregate disappearance counts in TLTE voice.