

PUBLIC

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"Disappearance"

18 January 2000

SRI LANKA

Nadarajah Navakrishnan Murali, aged 27

The young Tamil man named above is believed to have been arrested by the army on 15 December 1999. Since then he has "disappeared". Amnesty International has received unconfirmed reports that he is in the custody of the Directorate of Military Intelligence in the capital, Colombo.

Nadarajah Navakrishnan Murali was working in a telecommunication centre in the Wellawatte area of Colombo. He is believed to have been arrested at around 9.30pm when he went out to buy food. No witnesses have yet come forward but people in the area confirm that an army vehicle was there at the time.

His relatives have made inquiries at local police stations, and have made complaints with the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and the Committee to Inquire into Undue Arrest and Harassment, without success.

Nadarajah Navakrishnan Murali, originally from Valvettiturai, Jaffna district, was reportedly deported from Poland in May 1999, and took a room in a lodge in Wellawatte. He worked as a tutor during the day, and at the telecommunication centre at night.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Thousands of Tamils living in Colombo have reportedly been arrested recently, in the run-up to presidential elections on 21 December, and after bomb attacks in Colombo believed to have been carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the main armed opposition group fighting for an independent Tamil state in the north and east of the country. Young Tamils from Jaffna are at particular risk of arrest on suspicion of cooperation with, or membership of, the LTTE.

Nadarajah Navakrishnan Murali is the first person reported to have "disappeared" in Colombo since 1995, when the bodies of 31 people abducted in the city were later found in nearby lakes and rivers. An official investigation found evidence that the victims had been held prisoner, tortured and then strangled or drowned by members of the Special Task Force, a special police unit. Cases against some of the alleged perpetrators are pending in the courts but little progress has been reported.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Nadarajah Navakrishnan Murali, who has not been seen since he was reportedly arrested by the army on 15 December 1999 at Wellawatte, Colombo;
- urging the government to immediately provide information about his whereabouts and why he was arrested;
- urging that if he is in detention he be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence, or immediately released, and that in the meantime steps are taken to guarantee his safety and to allow him access to his family and legal counsel;
- urging that those responsible for his "disappearance" be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President

Her Excellency President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga
Presidential Residence
"Temple Trees"
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: President Kumaratunga, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Faxes: + 94 1 33 37 03

Salutation: Your Excellency

Army Commander

Lieutenant-General Sri Lal Weerasooriya
Army Commander
Army Headquarters
Flagstaff Street
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Army Commander, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Salutation: Dear Army Commander

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Sri Lanka accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 February 2000.