

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 37/05/00

\* This is a limited action - please restrict appeals to 15 per section \*

UA 43/00

Fear of Torture/"Disappearance"

22 February 2000

SRI LANKA

Mahendrarajah Gajamukan, age 19

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A young Tamil man, Mahendrarajah Gajamukan, was taken from his home on 30 January by men believed to be members of an armed group allied to the Sri Lankan armed forces. Amnesty International is concerned that he may be at risk of torture.

Six armed men, in camouflage uniforms and with their faces covered, came to Mahendrarajah Gajamukan's home in Rambaikulam, Vavuniya, at 11pm. Witnesses say the men asked Mahendrarajah Gajamukan in Tamil for his name and his identity card. They took him away in the back of an Isuzu truck with a covered numberplate. The men are believed to have been members of the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), an armed Tamil group fighting alongside the Sri Lankan security forces.

Relatives asked leaders of armed Tamil groups in the area, including PLOTE, about Mahendrarajah Gajamukan's arrest and "disappearance", but they denied all knowledge. The police and army have also denied arresting him.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

PLOTE is one of several armed Tamil groups fighting alongside the security forces in the north and east of Sri Lanka, against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who advocate a separate Tamil State, "Eelam", in those areas.

Amnesty International has recently received reports about a number of people who have been taken prisoner by the PLOTE in Vavuniya. The organization has repeatedly expressed concern that members of PLOTE are holding prisoners in unauthorized places of detention. Among several people held in custody by the PLOTE in Vavuniya in 1999 at least two had been severely tortured while held at unauthorized places of detention (see UA 29/99, ASA 37/06/99, and follow up, ASA 37/07/99).

In late March 1999, army personnel raided several illegal camps run by PLOTE and other armed Tamil groups in Vavuniya, but reportedly failed to find any prisoners. As far as Amnesty International is aware, the authorities have taken no further action against the use of unauthorized places of detention.

On 2 September 1999 PLOTE's deputy leader and military commander, Manickathan, and some other senior PLOTE leaders, were killed when a bomb exploded at PLOTE headquarters at Lucky House camp at Rambaikulam, Vavuniya. The killings exacerbated internal feuding between the political and military wings of the PLOTE in Vavuniya.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Mahendrarajah Gajamukan, who was taken away by armed men, believed to be members of the PLOTE on 30 January 2000, and has not been seen since;

- urging that the government provide immediate information about his whereabouts;
- urging that if Mahendrarajah Gajamukan is held in an unauthorized place of detention he be transferred to a regular place of detention or released;
- urging that those responsible for his arrest and "disappearance" be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

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**

The Hon (General) Anuruddha Ratwatte  
Deputy Minister of Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
15/5 Baladaksha Mawatha  
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka  
**Telegrams: Deputy Defence Minister, Colombo, Sri Lanka**  
**Faxes: + 94 1 54 15 29 / 68 77 68**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

R K Chandrananda de Silva  
Secretary  
Ministry of Defence  
No 15/5 Baladaksha Mawatha  
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka  
**Telegrams: Secretary Defence Ministry, Colombo, Sri Lanka**  
**Faxes: + 94 1 54 15 29**  
**Salutation: Dear Secretary**

Lt-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 3 April 2000.