

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER MISSING IN SRI LANKA

Human rights defender Pattani Razeek has been missing since he was apparently abducted on 11 February in the town of Polonnaruwa, in Sri Lanka's North Central Province. He may be the victim of an enforced disappearance, and could be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. It is not clear what the authorities are doing to investigate his case.

Pattani Razeek, aged 55, is the head of the Community Trust Fund (CTF), a Sri Lankan NGO based in the town of Puttalam in North Western Province. He was returning from a visit with colleagues when their vehicle was intercepted by a white van. Pattani Razeek approached the men in the other vehicle, and exchanged greetings in Arabic. He returned to his CTF colleagues and said he would join the group in the white van, which according to him was headed for Valaichchenai, a town in Eastern Province. He assured his colleagues that he would meet up with them later. However, they did not see him again, and he never returned home.

On 16 February, Pattani Razeek's family obtained records of calls made to and from his mobile phone. The records revealed that a number of short calls were made from Pattani Razeek's phone on the evening of 11 February, the day he went missing. On 15 February, a call from the phone was made to a CTF driver, who did not answer. When the call was eventually returned, there was no answer. A text message sent on 15 February to a member of Pattani Razeek's family said that he was in Polonnaruwa and that he would be home soon. Since then, there has been no further communication.

His family lodged a complaint with the local police in Puttalam, and also reported his disappearance to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. However, colleagues say the Human Rights Commission failed to give his relatives a reference number which they could use to follow up on the case. Nobody from the Commission has subsequently contacted them. Although Pattani Razeek's disappearance was reported to the police, colleagues say that police have not been following up leads in the case.

The CTF works to protect human rights and promote equality. It also provides emergency assistance to civilians affected by Sri Lanka's internal conflict.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Sinhalese, Tamil, or your own language:

- calling on the Sri Lankan authorities to order an immediate and impartial investigation to establish the whereabouts of Pattani Razeek, who went missing on 11 February;
- urging the authorities to ensure that human rights defenders are able to continue their legitimate work without fear of harassment or intimidation.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 APRIL 2010 TO:

Chandra Ellawala
Secretary
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
118, Barnes Place
Colombo 07
Sri Lanka
Fax +94 2694924
Email: sec@hrcls.lk
Salutation: Dear Mrs. Ellawala

Mahinda Balasuriya
Inspector General of Police (IGP)
New Secretariat
Colombo 1
Sri Lanka
Fax. +94 11 2 440440
Email: igp@police.lk
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Sri Lanka accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2006 there have been numerous reports of people being subjected to enforced disappearance after being abducted by the security forces or armed groups. White vans have been used frequently in such abductions. Some victims have been held for ransom; others have been detained "for questioning" by the authorities and held incommunicado. Anyone held this way is in clear danger of torture and other ill treatment. Many people reported missing in Sri Lanka have never been located and are presumed dead. The vast majority of cases have not been adequately investigated or prosecuted.

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