

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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This is a limited action. Please organize up to FIVE appeals per section.

UA 243/93 Unacknowledged Arrests/Fear of "disappearance" 27 July 1993

SRI LANKA: Vinayagam Pillai Pathmarajah
Paakiya Rajah Sri Kandamoorthy (alias Krishnamoorthy)
Namasiviyam Sathwesweran
Kandacutty Kulandavel
Vellauthampillai Satheeskumar
V Nithyanthan
V Selvarajah
Samithamby Thurayarajah

Amnesty International has just received reports that the above eight people have "disappeared" after having been arrested by the army in Batticaloa District, eastern Sri Lanka. The organization fears that they may be being held in unacknowledged detention without access to their families or lawyers.

According to the information received by Amnesty International, Samithamby Thurayarajah was arrested on 25 June 1993 by army personnel at Morokottenchenai; Vellauthampillai Satheeskumar, V Nithyanthan and V Selvarajah were arrested together on 31 May 1993 near the Kiran Ferry by soldiers from the Kiran army camp; Kandacutty Kulandavel was arrested on 25 March 1993 at Morokottenchenai by soldiers from the Morokottenchenai army camp; Paakiya Rajah Sri Kandamoorthy (alias Krishnamoorthy) and Namasiviyam Sathwesweran were arrested on 18 and 20 March 1993 respectively by soldiers from the Kommathurai army camp; Vinayagam Pillai Pathmarajah was arrested on 18 January 1993 by soldiers from the Rukam army camp and was taken to the Kommathurai army camp. He was released into the hands of his family on 22 January but was re-arrested the same day.

The local Peace Committee in Batticaloa town has appealed to the authorities on behalf of all these eight men, but has received no information about their whereabouts. The Committee has also complained to the army Brigadier that people taken to the Kommathurai camp have been held in unacknowledged detention and have often "disappeared"; the Brigadier subsequently ordered that people arrested and taken to the Kommathurai camp should be transferred to the Batticaloa jail within 24 hours.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The number of "disappearances" reported from eastern Sri Lanka has reduced significantly in the past year. The army does not necessarily acknowledge arrests at first, but whereas previously unacknowledged arrests often proved to be long-term "disappearances", more often now the prisoner is eventually

traced in custody. The Sri Lanka army is continuing its operations for the control of territory in Batticaloa District where it is fighting the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

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

- expressing concern at the unacknowledged detention of the eight people whose details are given above;

- urging that a full, impartial investigation be held to establish their whereabouts and fate;

- seeking assurances that if they are in custody, they are being humanely treated and that they have regular access to relatives and a lawyer.

APPEALS TO

1) President Ranasinghe Premadasa
Presidential Secretariat
Republic Square
Colombo 1
Sri Lanka

Telegrams: President Premadasa, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Telexes: 22650 PRESEC CE

Faxes: + 94 1 446657

Salutation: Dear President

2) Justice J F A Soza
Chairman
Human Rights Task Force
75 Norris Canal Road
Colombo 10
Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Justice Soza, Human Rights Task Force, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka

Salutation: Dear Justice Soza

3) Justice H A G de Silva
Chairperson
Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Involuntary Removal of Persons
Room No 2-114, BMICH
Buddhaloka Mawatha
Colombo 7
Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Justice de Silva, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

Salutation: Dear Justice de Silva

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS 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 September 1993.