

URGENT ACTION

CONCERN GROWS FOR SRI LANKAN ACTIVISTS

New information concerning the disappearance of Sri Lankan political activists Lalith Kumara Weeraraju and Kugan Muruganandan indicates that they may be held in official custody. Despite several complaints lodged with local authorities, no credible action has been taken to investigate their disappearance.

Lalith Kumara Weeraraju and Kugan Muruganandan were last seen leaving Kugan Muruganandan's residence in Avarangal, Jaffna, northern Sri Lanka, at around 5:00pm on 9 December. They were preparing a press conference to be held the following day, aimed at publicizing a protest highlighting human rights violations. Family members report they later received an anonymous phone call saying that Lalith Kumara Weeraraju had been killed.

On 14 December, Kugan Muruganandan's wife visited Atchchuveli Police Station to collect a copy of a complaint she had lodged regarding his disappearance. She saw the same motorbike on which he and Lalith Kumara Weeraraju had last been seen, with license no NP GT 7852, inside the police station grounds. Police officers at the station told her that it had been found by the Kopai Police on 13 December, parked near a Hindu temple in Kopai. On 15 December, Sri Lankan Cabinet Spokesperson, Minister Keheliya Rambukwella stated to media that "Mr Weeraraju and Mr Muruganandan have not been disappeared, they are there," viewed by some as an acknowledgement that the two men are currently being held in official custody.

Following the disappearance, a local parliamentarian lodged a missing persons complaint with Jaffna Police, who denied they were holding the two men in their custody. The same parliamentarian also submitted a written complaint to the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and the National Human Rights Commission. However, despite these concerns being raised, no credible action has been taken to investigate the disappearance.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Calling on the Sri Lankan authorities to order an immediate and impartial investigation to establish the whereabouts of Lalith Kumara Weeraraju and Kugan Muruganandan, and officially confirm whether or not they are being held in official custody;
- Calling on the Sri Lankan authorities to ensure that if Lalith Kumara Weeraraju and Kugan Muruganandan are in official custody, that their safety and well-being are guaranteed. They should be given immediate access to lawyers and family members, and should be produced before a magistrate and either charged with a recognizably criminal offence or released.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 JANUARY 2012 TO:

His Excellency the President

Mahinda Rajapaksa
 Presidential Secretariat
 Colombo 1, Sri Lanka
 Fax: +94 11 244 6657
 Email: lalith@icta.lk
 Salutation: Your Excellency

Inspector General of Police

N K Illangakoon
 New Secretariat Colombo 1
 Sri Lanka
 Fax: +94 11 244 0440
 Email: igp@police.lk
 Salutation: Dear Inspector General

Defence Secretary

Gotabhaya Rajapaksa
 Ministry Of Defence and Urban
 Development
 15/5, Baladaksha Mawatha,
 Colombo 03, Sri Lanka
 Fax: +94 11 254 1529
 Email: secdef@slt.net.lk
 Salutation: Dear Defence Secretary

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 358/11. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA37/018/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Harassment, intimidation and attacks against human rights defenders and others who expose abuses in Sri Lanka are common. Many victims of human rights abuses feel an increased sense of insecurity as there is a lack of credible domestic mechanisms for filing and investigating complaints.

Name: Lalith Kumara Weeraraju and Kugan Muruganandan

Gender m/f: Both male

Further information on UA: 358/11 Index: ASA 37/019/2011 Issue Date: 20 December 2011