

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 407/93 (ASA 37/25/93, 18 November 1993) and follow-up (ASA 37/08/94, 21 January 1994) - Unacknowledged detentions / Fear for safety

**SRI LANKA: Government soldiers detained by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)**

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In a letter of 15 March 1993 from the International Secretariat of the LTTE in London, United Kingdom, a member of the Central Committee confirmed that 16 government soldiers were taken prisoner by the LTTE during the battle between government forces and the LTTE at Pooneryn in November 1993 and that their names will be provided to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

In the letter, the LTTE spokesperson also gave assurances that members of the security forces taken by the LTTE will be treated humanely and refers to a visit to "more than 50 Sri Lankan prisoners" by an ICRC delegation on 23 January 1994. This group of prisoners consisted of 31 policemen taken prisoner in June 1990, three soldiers taken during the battle at Janakapura in July 1993 and the 16 soldiers captured during the battle at Pooneryn in November 1993.

The letter also refers to the release of Ranjith Gunasekera, one of the government soldiers captured at Pooneryn and two policemen who had been held since June 1990. The spokesperson affirms that the soldier was handed over to the ICRC in January 1994 on the order of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran as his injuries needed specialist surgical treatment. He also claims that the two policemen who were released on 24 February 1994 were released as a goodwill gesture towards the government of Sri Lanka.

In an interview with the two released policemen published in *The Daily News*, Colombo of 26 February 1994 it is claimed that they had been held at the same detention camp as 30 other policemen, 26 army personnel and three fishermen. This seems to indicate that at least 56 members of the security forces were kept prisoner by the LTTE at the time but only 50 were visited by the ICRC delegation on 23 January. Amnesty International is concerned about this discrepancy in the number of prisoners held and fears that it is possible that not all members of the security forces taken prisoner during battles between the LTTE and the security forces have been given regular access to the ICRC.

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

- welcoming the acknowledgement by the LTTE that it was holding 50 security forces personnel in January 1994, including 16 soldiers taken prisoner at Pooneryn in November 1993;
- welcoming the recent release of three such prisoners as specified above;
- seeking clarification about the total number of such prisoners held by the LTTE;
- expressing the hope that the LTTE will continue to grant the ICRC regular access to every member of the security forces taken prisoner.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Lawrence Thilaker  
Tamil Coordinating Committee  
341 Rue des Pyrenees

75020 Paris, France

**Telegrams: Mr Thilaker, TCC, 341 Rue des Pyrenees, Paris, France**

**Faxes: + 33 1 43 58 11 91**

**Salutation: Dear Mr Thilaker**

2) LTTE International Secretariat

United Tamil Organization

211 Katherine Road

London E8 1BU, United Kingdom

**Telegrams: LTTE, UTO, 211 Katherine Road, London, UK**

**Faxes: + 44 81 470 8593**

**Salutation: Dear Sir or Madam**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:** LTTE offices in your own countries, if any.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 May 1994.