

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

**AI Index: ASA 37/04/92
Distr: UA/SC**

Limited action: Please organize up to 20 appeals per section.

UA 94/92 "Disappearances"/Fear of extrajudicial execution 20 March 1992

SRI LANKA

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Kasubathy Wijayakumar
Kanapathipillai Chandrakumar
Nagalingam Sundarsan
Shanthalingam Komaleswaran
Mailvaganam Selvarajah
Manikkam Sivendren
Arumainathan Thavarajah
Murugapathy Pathmanathan
Viramuthu Thaya
Murugesapillai Rathinam
Periyathamby Nadarajah
Sinnathamby Sivanandarajah**

Amnesty International is concerned about the "disappearance" of the above 14 young men, aged between 14 and 30, after they were arrested by the army while harvesting crops in the Kiran area, Batticaloa district in late January - early February 1992.

Amnesty International has little information about the individual prisoners. It understands that they were among a group of approximately 25 people arrested in the period between 20 January and 13 February 1992 by the security forces during "Operation Green Belt" carried out in the Thoppigala - Kiran area. Some of them were cadres of the LTTE, others were villagers allegedly forced by the LTTE to assist in the harvesting. Eleven of the 25 were later unconditionally released but there is no news about the fate or whereabouts of the above 14. It is believed that they may have been taken to Valaichenai army camp.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The armed conflict between the security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which resumed in June 1990 continues throughout the northeast of Sri Lanka. In the Batticaloa district in the east of Sri Lanka, the fighting has been mainly restricted to rural areas. The LTTE has camps in the jungles, from where it occasionally launches attacks on the security forces. The security forces regularly carry out cordon-and-search operations in the villages. During these operations, young men suspected of being members or sympathizers of the LTTE are taken into custody for questioning. Some of them are released, others remain in detention or are unaccounted for. Amnesty International has also received information of harassment of the civilian population of the area by the LTTE, including abductions for ransom.

The period from January to February is harvest season in the east of Sri Lanka. In early 1992, some farmers in the Kiran area had reportedly approached the local army commander and asked for permission to reap the crops. The commander had reportedly stated he could not grant permission as he did

not want to risk the harvest falling into the hands of the LTTE. Amnesty International understands that LTTE cadres subsequently tried to reap the harvest for their own provisions and also forced local farmers to assist them. It is during the harvesting that the 14 above people were arrested and subsequently "disappeared".

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RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the "disappearance" of 14 young men arrested during harvesting in the Kiran area, northwest of Batticaloa town in late January - early February 1992;
- urging that a full and impartial investigation be conducted to establish the fate or whereabouts of the 14 prisoners;
- seeking assurances that if they are in custody, they be humanely treated and granted immediate and regular access to relatives and a lawyer.

APPEALS TO

1) His Excellency President R Premadasa
Presidential Secretariat
Republic Square
Colombo 1
Sri Lanka

Dear President

Telegrams: President Premadasa, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22650 PRESEC CE
Faxes: + 94 1 44 6657

2) Justice H A G de Silva
Chairperson
Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Involuntary Removal of Persons
Room No. 2-115, BMICH
Buddhaloka Mawatha
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

Dear Justice de Silva

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

Dear Justice Soza

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: diplomatic representatives of Sri Lanka in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 May 1992.