

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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PLEASE SEND UP TO TEN APPEALS PER SECTION

UA 35/91 Unacknowledged Detention/"Disappearance" 1 February 1991

SRI LANKA : H D Sunil Jayawardene
 H D Anil Susantha
 R M Nimal Ratnayake

Amnesty International has recently received reports about three people who "disappeared" in two separate incidents in southern Sri Lanka during early January.

H D Sunil Jayawardene, aged 20, and H D Anil Susantha, aged 18, two brothers from Indulgodakanda, Kurunegala District, "disappeared" following their arrest at about 8.30pm on 6 January by a group of people dressed in black shorts and vests who identified themselves as police. Inquiries made with the police did not produce any information about their whereabouts.

R M Nimal Ratnayake from Utuhorampella, Minuwangoda, Gampaha District, "disappeared" after he was arrested by a group of twelve people dressed in civilian clothes around 7.30pm on 7 January. When his relatives made inquiries at Minuwangoda police station, the police said they were not aware of any arrests having been carried out. The next day, the same group apparently came back to his home and threatened his relatives. Appeals have been sent to the Minister of State for Defence and other authorities but so far no information about his whereabouts has been provided.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reports of arbitrary arrests and "disappearances" in southern Sri Lanka have continued in the last few months, albeit at a lower level than between 1988 and early 1990. People have commonly "disappeared" after being detained by groups of armed men in civilian clothes, who in many cases are believed to be connected with the security forces or ruling party politicians. The victims include people who the security forces apparently believe had some connection with the violent opposition Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, People's Liberation Front). Others had been released from detention or from rehabilitation camps shortly before they were rearrested and "disappeared". The possible reasons for the detentions of the three people named above are not known to Amnesty International.

On 11 January, the government announced the establishment of a three-member Commission of Inquiry into new cases of "disappearances", the exact terms of reference of which Amnesty International has not yet been able to obtain. However, it is clear that this commission will only look into cases of "disappearances" which occur after 11 January 1991 and that it is not empowered to investigate reports of thousands of people who "disappeared" after arrest by security forces personnel in the period 1983-1990.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:
(up to TEN appeals per section)**

- expressing concern about the reported detentions and subsequent "disappearance" of the three people named above, giving details of the name of the victim and the place, date, time and agent of arrest;
- urging that an immediate investigation be conducted into each of these "disappearances" to determine their place of detention;
- seeking assurances that if they are in custody, they are being humanely treated and that they will be granted immediate and regular access to lawyers and relatives;
- urging that full, publicly available records be maintained of all persons taken into detention and that effective steps are taken to ensure the safety of detainees.

APPEALS TO:

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

Telegrams: President Premadasa, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22650 PRESEC CE
Faxes: + 94 1 54 6657

The Hon Ranjan Wijeratne
Minister of Plantation Industries and Minister of State for
Defence
Ministry of Defence
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Minister Defence, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22229 MINDEF CE
Faxes: + 94 1 54 6091

Ernest Perera
Inspector General of Police
Sri Lanka Police Headquarters
New Secretariat
Colombia 1, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Police Inspector General, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Bradman Weerakoon
Presidential Adviser on International Relations Presidential
Secretariat
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

COPIES 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 15 March 1991.