

11 March 2002

Further information on UA 48/02 (ASA 37/005/2002, 14 February 2002) - Fear for Safety/Child soldiers

SRI LANKADuncy Mary (f), aged 15; Sudharshini Tharmalingam (f), aged 12; Gunasekaram Kananayagam (m), aged 16; Kathiresan Ruban (m), aged 16; Ravindran Sanjiv (m), aged 13; Anantharasa Gunaseelan (m), aged 14; Baba Thambirasa (m), aged 12; Mahendran Kapilan (m), aged 16; Mathuraiveeran Selvarasa (m), aged 15; Thiyagarajah Suthaharan (m), aged 12; Selvaraji Suthahar (m), aged 13; Vellaisamy John (m), aged 13; Selvarasa Vishaharan (m), aged 15

new names: Selvarajah Selvalogani (f), aged 16; Rasalingam Selvarajah (m), aged 15; Ranjan Ravikumar (m), aged 12; Nahandram Nagulendran (m), aged 14; Samikandu Sivasothy (m), aged 14; Thangarasa Kangatharan (m), aged 15; Sellaiya Logeswaran (m), aged 15; Ganeshalingam Jeevakanthan (m), aged 16; Balasingam Sasikumar (m), aged 16; Sivapalan Sivaneshan (m), aged 15; Raveendran Sanjiv (m), aged 13; Viraputharan Gavanashan (m), aged 16; Anantharajah Keenseelan (m), aged 13; five others, names not known

At least another 18 children have reportedly been recruited as soldiers by the armed political group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in Vavuniya district.

Since Amnesty International appealed to the leadership of the LTTE in mid-February, the group is known to have started investigations into the alleged recruitment of children. Parents of several of the children recruited in and around Vavuniya town were reportedly called to an LTTE office in the area and questioned about how their children were allegedly recruited. None of the children have yet returned home, and during the meeting the LTTE leaders apparently denied that these children had been recruited. Similarly, a team of LTTE members have reportedly arrived in Batticaloa district to investigate reports that the LTTE have recruited children as combatants and committed other human rights abuses in the area.

Rasalingam Selvarajah and Ranjan Ravikumar, both students from Kalmadu, were last seen on 1 March when they attended a *Pongu Tamil* (Tamil awakening) program held in Vavuniya town.

Samikandu Sivasothy, who was living at the Poonthotam camp for internally displaced people, did not return home after he went to play at the local playground on 26 February. Another student living at the camp, Selvarajah Selvalogani, was last seen on 28 February.

Sellaiya Logeswaran and Thangarasa Kangatharan, both students from Tharanikulam, Sasthreekulankulam, were last seen on 25 February. They are suspected to have been recruited by the LTTE with two others whose names are not known.

Ganeshalingam Jeevakanthan, from Thonikal, who was working at a communication center in Vavuniya town, was last seen on 16 February. He did not return home from work that day.

Balasingam Sasikumar, Sivapalan Sivaneshan, Raveendran Sanjiv, Viraputharan Gavanashan and Anantharajah Keenseelan were last seen on 2 January when they went to the camp of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) (Premachandran faction). According to eyewitnesses, at around 6pm they were taken through the jungle in the direction of areas under the control of the LTTE. Nahandram Nagulendram, a student at the Tamil *maha vidyalam* (school) in Vavuniya town, was allegedly similarly recruited by members of the EPRLF (Premachandran faction) on 24 February, together with three others whose names are not known to Amnesty International.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The recruitment of child soldiers is among many violations of children's rights reported from Sri Lanka in the course of the armed conflict between the government and the LTTE.

A permanent ceasefire came into force on 23 February 2002, when both sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Since then the LTTE have continued to recruit children, although fewer children are reported to have been recruited from Batticaloa and Vavuniya districts. Amnesty International has also learned that a few children have been allowed to return to their homes.

According to Clause 2.1 of the Memorandum of Understanding, both sides will have to "in accordance with international law abstain from hostile acts against the civilian population, including such acts as torture, intimidation, abduction, extortion and harassment". It is not known at this stage whether the recruitment of children will be considered by the monitoring committee to be a breach of the agreement.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern about the recruitment of children as young as 12 by the LTTE (include details of some specific cases);
- acknowledging that the LTTE has started investigating these reports of recruitment of children;
- urging that these children are returned in safety to their families or communities at the earliest opportunity;
- urging the LTTE leadership to clarify in a public statement its current recruitment policy, so that children, parents and civil society in the north and east of Sri Lanka are fully informed;
- urging them to make clear in this statement where and how complaints regarding recruitment of children can be lodged, and whether or not complaints can be lodged with the teams that will be monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire agreement.

APPEALS TO:

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 341 Rue de Pyrenees
 75020 Paris, France
Fax: + 33 1 43 58 11 91
Salutation: Dear Dr Balasingam

World Tamil Movement
 64 Eaton Avenue
 Toronto,
 Ontario

M4J 2Z5,
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Salutation: Dear Sir or Madam

Tamil Co-ordinating Committee Norway
Det tamilske_Samordningsutvalget
Pb. 1699 Vika
0110 Oslo, Norway

Fax: + 47 22 38 10 40

Email: teedor@online.no

Salutation: Dear Sir or Madam

COPIES TO: Tamil community groups in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 April 2002.