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EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 109/93 Unacknowledged Arrests/Fear of "Disappearance" 13 April 1993

SRI LANKA: Velupillai Jayakumar) Arrested: 17 February 1993
 Kandiah Murugamoorthy)
 Visvanathan Rajakumar)
 Ponnuthurai Samithamby)
 Nagamany Thangavadivel)
 Nagamany Sivamoorthy)
 Nagamany Panchadcharam)
 Mylipody Umaranjan)
 Kanthakutty Chitravel)
 Samithambi Yogarajah)
 Kandapody Puvanasingham)
 Kandapody Palan)
 Chellappa Udayakumar)
 Chelliah Balakrishnam)
 Nagamany Punniamoorthy)
 Nagamany Mahendran)

 Kannapathipillai Selvarajah) Arrested: 27 December 1992
 Muthukutty Pushparajah)

Sixteen people have "disappeared" after being arrested by the army on 17 February 1993. According to reports, the sixteen men, whose names are given in the first list above, were harvesting paddy at Vannathi Aru, Batticaloa District, when they were detained by soldiers from Rukam army camp. The local Peace Committee in Batticaloa town has appealed to the authorities on their behalf, but has received no news of their whereabouts.

Amnesty International has little information about the individual prisoners, but understands they were working as labourers at the time of their arrest.

Two further people reportedly "disappeared" after being arrested by the army at Marapalam, their home village on the Batticaloa - Badulla road, on 27 December 1992. They are Kanapathipillai Selvarajah and Muthukutty Pushparajah. Amnesty International understands that the Batticaloa Peace Committee has appealed to the authorities on their behalf, but that there has been no information about their whereabouts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The number of "disappearances" reported from eastern Sri Lanka has reduced significantly in the past year. The army does not necessarily acknowledge arrests at first, but whereas previously unacknowledged arrests often proved

to be long-term "disappearances", more often now the prisoner is eventually traced in custody.

During the harvest season Amnesty International has received reports in previous years also of groups of people being detained while working in the fields, some of whom have "disappeared". For example, in 1992 14 young men were detained in the Kiran area of Batticaloa District in late January/early February, three of whom have still not been traced. The military attempts to control the cultivation of paddy in the region in order to prevent the crop falling into the hands of the Liberation Tigers

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of Tamil Eelam, the armed separatist group which is fighting government forces in the northeast of the country.

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

- expressing concern at the unacknowledged detention by the army of sixteen people harvesting paddy at Vannathi Aru, Batticaloa District, on 17 February 1993;

- urging that a full, impartial investigation be held to establish their whereabouts and fate;

- seeking assurances that if they are in custody, they are being humanely treated and that they have regular access to relatives and a lawyer;

- asking for information about the whereabouts of Kanapathipillai Selvarajah and Muthukutty Pushparajah, who were reportedly arrested by the army at Marapalam on 27 December 1992, and whose whereabouts apparently remain unknown.

APPEALS TO

1) President Ranasinghe Premadasa
Presidential Secretariat
Republic Square
Colombo 1
Sri Lanka

Telegrams: President Premadasa Colombo, SriLanka

Telexes: 22650 PRESEC CE

Faxes: + 94 1 446657

Salutation: Dear President

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

Salutation: Dear Justice Soza

3) Justice H A G de Silva
Chairperson

Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Involuntary Removal of Persons
Room No 2-115, BMICH
Bauddhaloka Mawatha
Colombo 7
Sri Lanka

Salutation: Dear Justice de Silva

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: diplomatic representatives of Sri Lanka accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 May 1993.