

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

SRI LANKA

**Professor Ratnajeewan Hoole (m), aged 53, Vice Chancellor, Jaffna University
His family**

A group believed to be a front organisation for the armed opposition group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has threatened to kill an academic who has links to an anti-LTTE group. Amnesty International believes his life is in grave danger.

People claiming to represent a group called the People's Uprising Force (*Makkal Eluchip Pada*) telephoned Professor Ratnajeewan Hoole's home, in the town of Peradeniya, several times on 11 March, warning that if he stepped onto the campus of Jaffna University, where he had just been appointed Vice Chancellor (VC), he would return home "headless in a box". The following day the leader of the Jaffna University Students' Union (*Yaal Palkalaikalaha Maanavar Ondriyam*) has threatened to assault him if he steps onto the campus.

In February a group from the Students' Union sent a letter to the President of the University Council, which was also published in Tamil newspapers the same day, demanding that "only someone loyal to the Tamil people should be appointed to the post of VC" and that "one against the Tamil race ought not to be appointed". Soon after Professor Hoole's appointment posters appeared on the university campus, alleging that he was anti-Hindu (he is a Christian), which would imply that he is also anti-Tamil.

On 12 March a website said to be operated by the LTTE, nitharsanam.com, posted a photo of Professor Hoole captioned "Who is this fool" together with an article entitled "Army Spy Appointed VC". The article referred to Professor Hoole's alleged involvement in the 1990 publication of a book called *The Broken Palmyra* which was highly critical of the LTTE's suppression of alternative voices within the Tamil community. The article alleged that a shipment of the book, printed in the USA, had been found to contain weapons intended for a group critical of the LTTE, which the publishers categorically deny.

On 18 March the website published a second article entitled "Who is this fool Part 2", which among other things accused Professor Hoole of being connected to the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) (UTHR-J), one of few civil society groups documenting abuses by the LTTE. Professor Hoole's brother, Rajan Hoole, is a leading UTHR-J activist, but the professor himself has never been involved in writing the organisation's reports.

On 22 March Professor Hoole's daughter Anbini received an anonymous call with a threat to "kill her younger brother and chop him into pieces" if their father were to take up the Vice Chancellor post at the university. The family received further threatening calls from the People's Uprising Force.

In a letter dated 21 March 2006 Professor Hoole raised his concerns about threats against him and his family with the Norwegian Embassy in Colombo and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), a body comprising five Nordic countries established to monitor the ceasefire.

Professor Hoole has since received messages through MPs of the LTTE-affiliated Tamil National Alliance, and others claiming to be from the LTTE, that he must resign from the post of Vice Chancellor.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The government and the LTTE entered into a ceasefire agreement, known as the CFA, in February 2002. They held a series of peace negotiations, with the Norwegian government acting as facilitator. These broke

down in April 2003 when the LTTE pulled out of the talks. Human rights abuses have been reported regularly since the CFA was signed, but they escalated dramatically following a split in the LTTE in February 2004, with politically motivated killings, torture and the recruitment of children as soldiers being reported from the east and more recently the north of the country. Each side accuses the other of breaching the ceasefire agreement by killing their opponents. The government accuses the LTTE and its front organizations of landmine and grenade attacks on its security forces, and the LTTE accuses the government of supporting paramilitary groups who attack them. In particular they accuse the government of supporting the breakaway faction of the LTTE, headed by Colonel Karuna, which is now operating mainly in the east of the country, and is also believed to have attacked LTTE targets.

The government and the LTTE met to discuss the implementation of the CFA in Geneva on 22 and 23 February. Both sides agreed to uphold the agreements made in the CFA, including the disarming of paramilitary groups. However, since then the LTTE leadership has accused the government of reneging on its promise to disarm paramilitary groups, such as the Karuna faction, and has threatened to pull out of a new round of talks, scheduled to take place in Geneva on 19 April. Over 20 people have been killed in landmine attacks blamed on the LTTE since 8 April.

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

- expressing grave concern about death threats issued to Professor Hoole and his family;
- asking the LTTE leadership to guarantee that they will not attack Professor Hoole;
- asking the LTTE to state publicly state that they will adhere to international humanitarian law, which prohibits the targeting of civilians.

APPEALS TO:

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
Peace Secretariat, A9 Road, Kilinochchi, Vanni, Sri Lanka

Fax: +94 21 2283959
+94 21 222 3959

Email: mail@ltteps.org

Salutation: Dear Secretary General

LTTE representative organisation

World Tamil Movement, 39 Cosentino Drive, Scarborough ON M1P 3A3, Canada

Fax: +416 355 0636

Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission
PO Box 1930, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

Fax: +11 2 573 814
+11 2 573 721

Email: do@slmm.lk

and 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 24 May 2006.