

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

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**Death threats**

**3 July 1992**

**SRI LANKA:**

**Kalyananda Tiranagama, human rights lawyer**

**Mohan Seneviratne, human rights lawyer**

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Amnesty International is concerned at reports that two human rights lawyers, Kalyananda Tiranagama and Mohan Seneviratne, have received repeated death threats since 29 June 1992. These have continued despite steps taken by police authorities to provide security for the lawyers.

Around midnight on 29 June 1992, four armed men dressed in black came to the office of Lawyers for Human Rights and Development on the third floor of a house along Cotta Road, Borella, Colombo and asked for the two lawyers. They threatened the clerk at the office, who told them the lawyers were not in the office. They said they would return. The next evening, a group of men came to the office and rang the doorbell on three occasions between 12pm and 2.30am. The lawyers, who were present at the time, did not open the door but on the second occasion noticed a Pajero jeep parked close to the office. Such vehicles are often used by the security forces.

On 1 July, complaints were made to the Inspector General of Police, the Attorney General and the Chief Justice. The police recorded statements from the lawyers and made arrangements to provide a police officer to guard the office from 10pm till 6am. On 1 July around 9pm, approximately half an hour after the police officers who took down the statement left the office, a Pajero jeep without numberplates was seen parked opposite the office. The police were called but it had left by the time they reached the office. The next day, around 8.45pm, the clerk saw an armed man standing on the balcony of the office. The police were immediately informed and reached the office within five minutes, but again, the man had left by that time.

On the morning of 3 July around 11.10, the clerk was stopped by a man dressed in civilian clothes on his way to the post office. This man, who apparently insinuated that he was the same person as the one who had climbed onto the balcony the previous night, told him not to be afraid as they did not mean to harm him personally but that he should leave the office within a week as he was a hindrance to them. He also told the clerk to inform Kalyananda Tiranagama and Mohan Seneviratne to stop appearing in fundamental rights applications (that is, petitions to the Supreme Court alleging that a person's fundamental human rights have been violated).

In addition to these visits, staff at Lawyers for Human Rights and Development have received telephone calls from people who claim to be relatives of political prisoners requesting legal aid. However, the telephone number on which the calls arrive is a new number which has not been made public yet.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In recent years, lawyers appearing on behalf of victims of human rights violations or taking up the defence of political prisoners have been threatened and sometimes

killed in apparent attempts to intimidate them or prevent them from appearing in court. These threats and killings of lawyers as well as witnesses and victims represent a direct threat to the rule of law and deprive victims of human rights violations access to legal remedy, thereby enabling security forces personnel to act with impunity.

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Lawyers for Human Rights and Development, of which Kalyananda Tiranagama is the General Secretary, is an organization which has been very active in filing fundamental rights and *habeas corpus* petitions on behalf of victims of human rights violations and their relatives over the last few years.

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

- expressing grave concern at the threats issued against Kalyananda Tiranagama and Mohan Seneviratne, two human rights lawyers;
- acknowledging steps taken by the police to investigate the threats and provide security to the lawyers;
- asking the government to guarantee the physical safety of all lawyers involved in human rights work;
- urging that all necessary steps are taken to immediately halt these threats, identify those responsible and bring them to justice.

**APPEALS TO**

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

**Salutation: Dear President**

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

2. The Hon D B Wijetunga  
Prime Minister and Minister of State  
for Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
Republic Square  
Colombo 2, Sri Lanka

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

**Telegrams: Prime Minister, Colombo, Sri Lanka**  
**Telexes: 22229 MINDEF CE**  
**Faxes: + 94 1 44 6091**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Ernest Perera  
Inspector General of Police  
Sri Lanka Police Headquarters  
New Secretariat

Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Lawyers for Human Rights and Development  
225 1/1 Cotta Road  
Colombo 8, Sri Lanka

and 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 14 August 1992.