

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 37/18/00

UA 198/00

"Disappea

**SRI LANKA**Thambiah Wijayakumar (aged 24)

---

Thambiah Wijayakumar "disappeared" after being arrested by members of the Security Co-ordinating Unit (SCU), a police unit involved in interrogating suspected members of the armed opposition group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Amnesty International fears for his safety.

On 22 June, Thambiah Wijayakumar was reportedly taken away from the cinema in Veppankulam, where he works, by four officers of the SCU. The SCU and other security forces however denied he was in their custody when Thambiah's relatives made enquiries.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Many of the large number of "disappearances" reported in Sri Lanka since the mid 1980s relate to the fighting between the LTTE and government forces in the north and east of the country.

Thambiah Wijayakumar's case is the fifth "disappearance" reported this year. Amnesty International recorded 10 "disappearances" in 1999. The United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances visited Sri Lanka in October 1999 to evaluate progress in implementing recommendations made to the government following two visits in 1991 and 1992. It expressed concern that many of its earlier recommendations to prevent "disappearances" had not been implemented.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Thambiah Wijayakumar, who has not been seen since he was arrested by members of the Security Co-ordinating Unit in Vavuniya on 22 June 2000;
- urging the government to immediately provide information about his whereabouts and the reasons for his arrest;
- asking that if he is in detention he be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence, or immediately released;
- urging that in the meantime steps are taken to guarantee his safety and allow him access to his family and a doctor;
- urging that those responsible for his "disappearance" be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO (please note that the fax number for the President can be difficult to get through to):**

President

Her Excellency President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga  
Presidential Residence  
"Temple Trees"

Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

**Telegrams: President Kumaratunga, Colombo, Sri Lanka**

**Faxes: + 94 1 33 37 03**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Inspector General of Police

B L V de S Kodithuwakku

2

Police Headquarters  
New Secretariat  
Colombo 1  
Sri Lanka

**Telegrams: Inspector General Police, Sri Lanka**

**Faxes: + 94 1 43 89 15**

**Salutation: Dear Inspector General**

**COPIES 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 16 August 2000.