

PRIORITY

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 341/91 "Disappearance"/Unacknowledged detention 15 October 1991

**SRI LANKA: Sinnarajah RAJENDRARAJAH
 Murugupillai THIYAGARAJAH
 Kanagasingham JEYARAJAH
 Kanapathipillai MARKANDU**

According to reliable sources, the above four persons from the Muttur area, south of Trincomalee, "disappeared" after arrest by the security forces in late August and early September 1991. Sinnarajah Rajendrarajah, Murugupillai Thiyagarajah and Kanagasingham Jeyarajah were arrested on 28 August 1991.

Sinnarajah Rajendrarajah (aged 26) from Chenaiyoor 6, Muttur was arrested at Ilakanthai by army personnel. However, when relatives made inquiries with the Commanding Officer (CO) of the army in the area, they were told that no such person had been taken into custody. Relatives subsequently approached the local citizens' committee and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) but, to date, his whereabouts remain unknown.

Murugupillai Thiyagarajah, who also lives in Chenaiyoor 6, Muttur was arrested by the army at Ilakanthai, while travelling to Sampoor. Despite appeals to several local authorities and the ICRC, his whereabouts remain unknown.

Kanagasingham Jeyarajah, a 28-year-old from the same locality "disappeared" after being arrested by the army on 28 August 1991.

Kanapathipillai Markandu, a 56-year-old businessman was arrested on 16 September 1991 by army personnel. Relatives made inquiries at the Kaddaiparichchan Army Camp but officials there denied his arrest. A complaint was lodged at Muttur police station and with the local Government Agent, the CO of the army and the ICRC but, to date, his whereabouts remain unknown.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the outbreak of the fighting between the Sri Lankan security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in June 1990, over 3,000 Tamil people are reported to have "disappeared" in the custody of government forces in the east. According to the latest reports from the area, Trincomalee, a major town on the east coast, is presently controlled by the police but in the villages surrounding the town sporadic fighting between the army and the LTTE continues. The army is reported to regularly round up large numbers of villagers for screening as potential LTTE suspects, particularly in the aftermath of attacks by the LTTE. It is during these round-ups that "disappearances" often take place.

The Sri Lanka government has recently established two bodies in an apparent attempt to stem the tide of human rights violations. In January 1991, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Involuntary Removal of Persons was set up to investigate "disappearances" reported to have taken place between 11 January 1991 and 11 January 1992. The Human Rights Task Force established in July 1991 is mandated, among other things, to keep a central register of

all people in detention and to monitor the welfare of detainees. Amnesty International has urged the government to ensure that people in the northeast have full access to these bodies.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern about the reported arrest and subsequent "disappearance" of Sinnarajah Rajendrarajah, Murugupillai Thiyagarajah, Kanagasingham Jeyarajah and Kanapathipillai Markandu;

- urging that an immediate investigation be conducted into their "disappearance" to determine their place of detention;

- seeking assurances that if they are in custody, they are being humanely treated and granted immediate and regular access to relatives and lawyers.

APPEALS TO

1) His Excellency President R Premadasa **Dear President**
 Presidential Secretariat
 Republic Square
 Colombo 1
 Sri Lanka

Telegrams: President Premadasa, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22650 PRESEC CE
Faxes: + 94 1 54 6657

2) The Hon D.B. Wijetunga **Dear Minister**
 Prime Minister
 and Minister of State for Defence
 Office of the Prime Minister
 58 Sir Ernest de Silva Mawatha
 Colombo 7
 Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Minister Defence, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22229 MINDEF CE
Faxes: + 94 1 54 6091

3) Lieutenant General Hamilton Wanasinghe
 Commander in Chief of the Army
 Flower Road **Dear Lieutenant**
 Colombo 7, Sri Lanka **General**

Telegrams: Commander-in-Chief Wanasinghe, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22496 AYCMDC SL

4) Justice J F A Soza **Dear Justice Soza**
 Human Rights Task Force
 75, Norris Canal Road
 Colombo 10

Sri Lanka

5) Justice H A G de Silva **Dear Justice de Silva**
Chairperson
Presidential Commission of Inquiry
 into Involuntary Removal of Persons
Room No. 2-115, Bandaranaike Memorial International
 Conference Hall
Buddhaloka Mawatha
Colombo 7
Sri Lanka

COPIES 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 27 November 1991.