

PUBLIC

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"Disappea

**SRI LANKA**Ariyathas Vijayakumar, aged 22  
Shanmugasundaram Suyanthan, aged 20

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Ariyathas Vijayakumar and Shanmugasundaram Suyanthan were arrested by members of the Sri Lanka army in separate incidents on 15 August in the Vavuniya area. Their whereabouts are unknown and Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

Ariyathas Vijayakumar, a married farmer from Soosaiappar Lane, Veppankulam, had gone with another person to a neighbouring village to collect money in payment for rice paddy. They were stopped at Kulumaddu junction by two men dressed in army uniform. Ariyathas Vijayakumar was taken into custody and his current whereabouts remain unknown.

Shanmugasundaram Suyanthan, a student from Varikuttiyoor, was arrested while on his way to Kurumankadu to attend a computer course. Witnesses said he was taken away blindfolded by soldiers on motorbikes. Neighbours reported that three days later about ten soldiers arriving on motorbikes ransacked the family home.

Relatives of both men have reported their "disappearance" to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. The army has denied their arrest.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

These incidents, the ninth and tenth "disappearances" reported to Amnesty International this year, have taken place in a setting of intensified armed conflict between government troops and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who are fighting for an independent state in the north and east of the country. One week before the "disappearance" of Ariyathas Vijayakumar and Shanmugasundaram Suyanthan, the LTTE ambushed an army patrol vehicle near Vavuniya, killing at least six soldiers.

The United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances visited Sri Lanka in October 1999 to see what progress the government had made in implementing recommendations made by the Working Group following previous visits in 1991 and 1992. It expressed concern that many of its recommendations to prevent "disappearances" had not been implemented.

There has been an increase in reports of torture, "disappearances" and deaths in custody since new emergency regulations were introduced by the President in May 2000. Amnesty International is concerned that wider powers given to the security forces under the new regulations and the removal of several earlier safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention may have contributed to the increase.

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

- express concern for the safety of Ariyathas Vijayakumar and Shanmugasundaram Suyanthan, who have not been seen since they were taken into custody by members of the Sri Lanka army in the Vavuniya area on 15 August;
- urging the authorities to immediately provide information about their whereabouts and the reasons for their arrests;

- asking that if they are in detention, they are promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence, or are released immediately;
- urging that in the meantime steps are taken to guarantee their safety and to allow them access to their families;
- urging that those responsible for their "disappearance" be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

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**

Lt Gen Sri Lal Weerasooriya  
[retiring soon; from 24 August, write to: Lt Gen Lionel Balagalle]  
Army Commander, Army Headquarters, Colombo 1, SRI LANKA  
**Telegrams: Commander of the Army, Colombo, Sri Lanka**  
**Salutation: Dear Army Commander**

**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 2 October 2000.