

UA 336/06 "Disappearance"/fear of torture or ill-treatment/health concernSRI LANKA **Professor Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath (m), aged 55, Vice-Chancellor,
Eastern University, Batticaloa**

Professor Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath, the Vice-Chancellor of Eastern University, was reportedly abducted while at a conference in the capital, Colombo, on 15 December. Since he was in an area tightly controlled by the military, it seems likely that his captors are an armed group operating with the tacit support of the security forces. He is at risk of torture. He suffers from heart disease, putting his life in greater danger.

Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath had been attending a conference of the Sri Lankan Association for the Advancement of Science and was reportedly last seen by colleagues during the tea break between sessions.

On 20 September, gunmen abducted his colleague, the Dean of the Arts Faculty of the Eastern University, Dr Bala Sugamar. It is widely reported that the kidnappers had demanded the immediate resignation of Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath in return for Dr Bala Sugamar's release. Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath handed in his resignation and Dr Bala Sugamar was released soon after. The University did not accept his resignation, on the grounds that it was a presidential appointment, but he had not yet felt it was safe enough for him to return to the university, and had been carrying out his duties from Colombo. His family have said that Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath had received several threats, though it is not clear from whom.

According to the head of a local NGO, Eastern University has a reputation for violent internal politics, mostly about control of the university. Many faculty members have resigned, gone missing or have been killed in the past. Some people within the university have claimed that Professor Raveendranath is a supporter of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), but his family maintain that he is entirely apolitical.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The human rights situation in Sri Lanka has deteriorated dramatically in recent months. Fighting between the security forces and the LTTE has increased since April, and this has led to scores of civilians being killed or injured, and forced more than 200,000 people to flee their homes. Neither the security forces nor the LTTE appear to be taking adequate precautions to ensure that civilians are not killed or injured by military actions. Despite the escalating violence, both sides maintain that they are committed to a 2002 ceasefire agreement. Over two decades of conflict in Sri Lanka have claimed the lives of more than 65,000 people, the majority of them civilians.

In recent months in areas in the north and east of Sri Lanka, there have been reports of a number of people "disappearing" or being abducted by the security forces or armed groups. Such people are often called or taken in "for questioning" and held incommunicado. No receipts or records of their detention are made available, and the official mechanisms for reporting such events, such as through the National Human Rights Commission, are often unable to find where the missing people are. Anyone held this way is in clear danger of torture or ill treatment.

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

- calling on the authorities to immediately do everything necessary to locate Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath, who was allegedly abducted on 15 December;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath is not tortured or ill-treated, and that he is allowed immediate and unfettered access to his family, a lawyer of his choice and any medical treatment he may require;
- urging the authorities to conduct a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the abduction of Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath, to make the findings public and to promptly bring those responsible to justice in a free and fair trial;
- if Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath is found to be in custody, calling on the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

President Mahinda Rajapakse
Presidential Secretariat, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Fax: +94 11 2446657
+94 11 2472100

Salutation: Dear President Rajapakse

Lt Gen Sarath Fonseka

Army Commander, Army Headquarters, Flagstaff Street, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Fax: +94 11 2855 018
+94 11 2434 862
+94 11 2338 653
+94 11 2421 374

Salutation: Dear Lt General

Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Secretary, Ministry of Defence, 15/5 Baladaksha Mawatha, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

Fax: +94 11 2446 300
+94 11 2541 529

Salutation: Dear Secretary of Defence

Mahinda Samarasinghe

Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights, 383, Department of Meteorology, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

Fax: +94 11 2681978
+94 11 2881982

Salutation: Dear Minister

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 31 January 2007.*****