

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: ASA 37/07/92

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UA 153/92 "Disappearance"/Unacknowledged detention

11 May 1992

SRI LANKA:

Krishnapillai Thangarajah, aged 48	Pillaiyan Chitravel	26
Thangarajah Suresh 17	Arumugam Kanagaratnam	27
Sinnathamby Sivanesarajah 38	Ganesharajah Kamalaraja	15
Sivanesarajah Sitharan 15	Kadaravelu Mahalingam	15
Arumugam Karunakaran 25	Kadanamathamby Sivanathan	16
Manoharan Rajanikandan 9	Palaniyanthy Chelliah	48
Kanagasuriyam Nanthan 17	Suppiah Sukalingam	70
Samithamby Nesarajah 42	Nadesan Vengadasalam	45
Nesarajah Chantharamohan 14		

The above 17 Tamil men and boys from Rugam village, situated along the road between Badulla and Batticaloa, in Batticaloa District, allegedly "disappeared" on 30 April 1992 after they were arrested during a round-up operation conducted by army personnel based at Pullumalai. They were among a group of 40 people arrested from their homes and farms during this round-up, 20 of whom were released later that day. The bodies of three others were later found with gunshot wounds.

Army personnel deny any knowledge of the arrest of the remaining 17. However, relatives who have tried to make inquiries at the Pullumalai Army Camp, have testified to having seen the 17 people inside the camp. Appeals have been made to the Commanding Officer of Batticaloa district, but to date no information has been forthcoming about their fate or whereabouts.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International is concerned at recent reports of a number of reprisal killings and "disappearances" of Tamil civilians in eastern Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the killing on 28 April 1992 of more than 50 Muslim villagers at Alichipathana, Polonnaruwa district, by members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the main armed Tamil opposition group fighting the Sri Lankan security forces in the area. LTTE cadres reportedly attacked the village at around 2am and shot and hacked to death more than 50 villagers, including 31 children. Several hours later, Muslim Home Guards, possibly accompanied by villagers, entered the nearby Tamil villages of Muthugala and Karapola and killed in apparent retaliation more than 50 civilians. Since then, the situation in the area has been very tense and further reports of extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" of Tamil civilians, have been received, including the "disappearance" of the above 17 people from Rugam village. Both Muslim Home Guards and members of the Sri Lanka security forces have been held responsible for these reprisals.

Amnesty International is appealing to the LTTE to immediately stop all killings of civilians.

On 7 May, President Ranasinghe Premadasa announced a preliminary inquiry into the widespread killings on 28 April 1992. To date, Amnesty International has not been able to get full details on the terms of reference of this inquiry. While welcoming the government's prompt action to investigate this incident, it urges that all other reports of human rights violations, including the "disappearance" of the 17 villagers from Rugam, are fully and impartially investigated. Such investigations would be in accordance with one of the 30 recommendations made by Amnesty International in its September 1991 report on the situation in the northeast of Sri Lanka, which were subsequently accepted by the Sri Lanka

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government. It also urges that those found to be responsible are brought to trial and that the victims or their relatives are provided with adequate compensation.

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

- acknowledging the difficult task faced by Sri Lankan security forces in maintaining law and order in the east, particularly in the aftermath of the killing of more than 50 Muslim villages at Alichipathana on 28 April 1992 by the LTTE;
- expressing concern about the reported arrest and subsequent "disappearance" of the 17 people listed above who were among 40 taken into custody on 30 April 1992 at Rugam village, Batticaloa district;
- 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;
- urging that all possible steps be taken to halt further "disappearances" and killings in reprisal for the killing of the Muslim villages at Alichipathana.

**APPEALS TO**

1) His Excellency President R. Premadasa **Salutation: 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 **Salutation: 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 Cecil Waidyaratne **Salutation: Dear Lieutenant**  
Commander in Chief of the Army **General**  
Flower Road  
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka  
**Telegrams: Commander-in-Chief Wansinghe, Colombo, Sri Lanka**

**Telexes: 22496 AYCADC SL**

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

**Salutation: Dear Justice Soza**

5) Justice H A G de Silva  
Chairperson

**Salutation: Dear Justice de Silva**

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 OF YOUR APPEALS 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 22 June 1992.