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## **PUBLIC STATEMENT**

### **Sri Lanka**

#### **Amnesty International Condemns Killing of Mayoress of Jaffna**

In a message to the representatives of the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) abroad, Amnesty International today condemned the fatal shooting on Sunday of Sarojini Yogeswaran, the first elected mayoress of Jaffna in 14 years.

Sarojini Yogeswaran, a member of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), was killed at her home at 10.30 am on Sunday. Two men reportedly arrived at her house and asked to speak to her. When she invited them inside, one of them shot her 10 to 12 times. She was reportedly unarmed and had no bodyguards.

Responsibility for Sarojini Yogeswaran's death has been claimed by the "Sangilian force", a previously unknown group suspected to be a front organization for the LTTE. The group has reportedly stated in a statement delivered to a local newspaper that she was killed because she declined to resign from her post, despite several warnings.

Amnesty International deplores this attack, which is in breach of international humanitarian standards, and calls on the LTTE to make a clear statement condemning the killing of Sarojini Yogeswaran, who, although, as a mayoress of Jaffna, had important political responsibilities, cannot be considered in any capacity to have taken a direct part in the conduct of hostilities. It also appeals to the LTTE to ensure that such attacks by the LTTE forces, or by forces under LTTE control on civilians taking no direct part in hostilities will not be tolerated.

Sarojini Yogeswaran was sworn in to office as mayoress of Jaffna in March 1998. She entered politics after the assassination of her husband, Vettival Yogeswaran, former TULF member of parliament for Jaffna, who was killed in 1989 in an attack thought to have been the responsibility of the LTTE.

Amnesty International acknowledges the challenge Sri Lankan authorities face in finding the suspected perpetrators of Sarojini Yogeswaran's murder. However, it appeals to authorities engaged in the investigation of her death to follow procedures which conform to international standards relating to arrest and detention.

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