

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 37/12/97

21 May 1997

Further information (1) on UA 82/97 (ASA 37/09/97, 21 March 1997) - Rape/ Fear for safety

SRI LANKA Velan Rasamma, aged 34
Velan Vasantha, aged 28

On 22 March, four soldiers from the Mayilampaveli army camp were taken into custody on suspicion of being responsible for the reported rape of Velan Rasamma and her sister, Velan Vasantha, on 17 March 1997. The soldiers were initially remanded by the Batticaloa magistrate. On 28 March, an identification parade was held but the two women reportedly failed to identify the soldiers responsible for raping them. However, their mother was able to identify one of the soldiers.

The captain in charge of Mayilampaveli army camp was transferred out of the area shortly after the incident, apparently as a disciplinary measure.

Although the preliminary judicial inquiry is proceeding, it is unsure whether the prosecution will be successful. The four soldiers have been released on bail.

Amnesty International has received reliable reports that Velan Vasantha attempted to commit suicide by swallowing poison. She had reportedly left a note explaining to her prospective husband that she was unable to continue to live after what happened to her. The suicide attempt was unsuccessful.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: please continue appeals:

- welcoming the initial action taken against the suspected perpetrators of the reported rape of sisters Velan Rasamma and Velan Vasantha on 17 March 1997;
- urging, however, that protection be provided to the women to allow them to give evidence without fear of intimidation;
- asking to be informed of the outcome of the trial.

APPEALS TO:

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Salutation: Dear Minister

Lt-General Rohan Daluwatte
Army Commander
Army Headquarters

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Telegrams: Army Commander, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Salutation: Dear Army Commander

Inspector General of Police
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Telegrams: Inspector General of Police, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

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 July 1997.