

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 37/14/97

13 June 1997

Further information on UA 147/87 (ASA 37/13/97, 21 May 1997) - Extrajudicial execution / Rape and new concern: Fear for safety

**SRI LANKA Murugesupillai Koneswary (f), aged 35
Witnesses and neighbours**

According to media reports, in early June 1997 President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga ordered an inquiry into the alleged extrajudicial execution and rape of Murugesupillai Koneswary on 17 May. The inquiry has been entrusted to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), a specialist unit of the police. A team is said to have gone to the area from Colombo to carry out the investigations.

Amnesty International is concerned that the local police may threaten the neighbours and other witnesses not to give evidence to the CID or pressurize them to give evidence that would substantiate the police's version of events. According to one source, local police are now claiming that Murugesupillai Koneswary was killed by a shell, not a grenade. However, there is no damage to the house, apart from the crater inside the room.

There is also concern that the CID may not be seen to be impartial as they are part of the police, and that witnesses may be reluctant to come forward as a result.

Amnesty International has obtained further information about the possible circumstances leading up to the killing of Murugesupillai Koneswary. Apparently, she had been harassed by officers of the Central Camp police station since March 1997. Around that time, police officers had stolen timber which Murugesupillai Koneswary had bought to build a more permanent home than the small hut in which she had been living. She had made a complaint to the Officer-in-Charge of the police station, after which the timber had been returned. On the actual day of her killing, she had had a verbal altercation with police officers at a checkpoint. Witnesses reported that she had spoken back when they had used offensive language with her.

The alleged perpetrators of the killing and rape reportedly had put the youngest child, who was with Murugesupillai Koneswary on the night of 17 May, outside the house. The child had wandered into a neighbour's house around 11.30pm. Just around that time, the explosion was heard.

It has been confirmed that a post mortem was carried out at Kalmunai hospital, but the results are unknown.

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

- noting the inquiry ordered by the President of Sri Lanka into the killing and possible rape of Murugesupillai Koneswary at 11th Colony, Batticaloa district, on 17 May 1997;
- asking to be informed of the outcome;
- urging that protection be provided to witnesses to ensure that the alleged perpetrators cannot put pressure on them to influence the outcome of the inquiry and any legal process that may follow from it;
- urging that adequate compensation be provided to the husband and children of the victim.

APPEALS TO:

Her Excellency President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga
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"Temple Trees"
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka
Faxes: + 94 1 33 37 03
Telegrams: President Kumaratunga, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Salutation: Your Excellency

The Hon (General) Anuruddha Ratwatte
Deputy Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
15/5 Baladaksha Mawatha
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka
Faxes: + 94 1 54 15 29 or 68 77 68
Telegrams: Deputy Defence Minister, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Salutation: Dear Minister

Inspector General of Police
Police Headquarters
New Secretariat
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka
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 29 July 1997.