

PUBLIC

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Fear of "I

SRI LANKAVinayagamoorthy Vijayarajah (22)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Vinayagamoorthy Vijayarajah, whose whereabouts remain unknown after soldiers arrested him on 3 January 2000.

He was seen being arrested by members of the Sri Lankan army near the Hindu temple at Valaichenai, in Batticaloa district, at around 10am. He had been cycling back to his home in Kannakipuram village after accompanying one of his relatives to Valaichenai Hindu College.

When his parents went to Valaichenai Harbour View army camp the next day, they were reportedly told that their son had been taken into custody and would be released after questioning. However, when they returned the following day the army denied that Vinayagamoorthy Vijayarajah had been arrested. Inquiries at several other camps in the area, and with army and police authorities, have had no success.

A member of parliament has raised concern about Vinayagamoorthy Vijayarajah's "disappearance" with the Committee against Undue Harassment and Arrest. The Committee was appointed by President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga in 1998 to investigate human right violations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Large numbers of "disappearances" have been reported in Sri Lanka since the mid 1980s, many of them during years of fighting between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and government forces in the north and east of the country.

In 1999 Amnesty International recorded some 10 cases of "disappearance" in the country, including six in Batticaloa district. The United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances visited Sri Lanka in October 1999 to evaluate the government's progress in implementing its recommendations made after two previous visits in 1991 and 1992. The report of its visit is due to be submitted to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in March 2000.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Vinayagamoorthy Vijayarajah, who has not been seen since he was arrested by the army on 3 January 2000;
- urging the government to immediately provide information about his whereabouts and why he was arrested;
- urging that if he is in detention he be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence, or immediately released, and that in the meantime steps are taken to guarantee his safety and to allow him access to his family and legal counsel;
- urging that those responsible for his "disappearance" be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President

Her Excellency President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga
Presidential Residence
"Temple Trees"
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: President Kumaratunga, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Faxes: + 94 1 33 37 03
Salutation: Your Excellency

Army Commander

Lieutenant-General Sri Lal Weerasooriya
Army Commander
Army Headquarters
Flagstaff Street
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

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

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 22 February 2000.