

URGENT ACTION

TWO STUDENTS RELEASED FROM DETENTION

On 22 January, students Sanmugam Solaman and V. Bhavananadan were released from detention in a “Rehabilitation” centre in Welikanda by the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID). Two others, P. Tharshananth and K. Jenemajeyamenan, remain in detention and at risk of torture.

On 1 December 2012, four students – including Sanmugam Solaman – were arrested in Jaffna (capital city of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka) by the TID without a warrant, reportedly due to their alleged involvement in a petrol bomb attack on the office of a local political organisation, as well as their involvement in organising demonstrations. A fifth student, V. Bhavananadan, surrendered to the TID in Jaffna on 7 December. Local media reports that Sanmugam Solaman and V. Bhavananadan were transferred from TID custody to a “Rehabilitation” centre in Welikanda until their release, and that **P. Tharshananth**, Secretary of the Jaffna University Students' Union, and **K. Jenemajeyamenan**, President of the Arts Faculty Student Union, are still being held in detention there. Kaneshamurthy Sudarsan had earlier reportedly been released on bail.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to release P. Tharshananth and K. Jenemajeyamenan or charge them with a recognizably criminal offence and to try them promptly in accordance with internationally recognized safeguards;
- Urging them to ensure that the detainees are treated in accordance with international standards, especially that they are not tortured and are given full access to their lawyers, families and any medical attention they may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 MARCH 2013 TO:

Inspector General of Police

N K Illangakoon
New Secretariat, Colombo 1
Sri Lanka
Fax: +94 11 244 0440
Email: igp@police.lk
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

Defence Secretary

Gotabhaya Rajapaksa
Ministry of Defence and Urban
Development
15/5, Baladaksha Mawatha,
Colombo 03, Sri Lanka
Fax: +94 11 254 1529 (keep trying)
Email: secdef@slt.net.lk
Salutation: Dear Defence Secretary

And copies to:

Secretary
Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission:
No. 108 Barnes Place Colombo 07,
Sri Lanka
Fax: +94 11 268 9558 (keep trying)
Email: sechrc@slt.net.lk

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 347/12. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA37/015/2012/en>.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The arrests of the five students came after several days of student protests following efforts by the security forces to suppress peaceful commemorations of Maaveerar Naal (Heroes Day), a day of remembrance established by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). On 27 November 2012, security forces disrupted a lamp lighting ceremony at the women's hostel at Jaffna University, reportedly breaking lamps and threatening students with weapons. The following day students responded with a silent protest and short march and held placards denouncing the restrictions on freedom of expression. At least 20 undergraduates were injured and beaten by riot police and officers in civilian dress, including Sanmugam Solaman. Security forces allege that the students had thrown stones at them, prompting them to react; university staff told local media that the event was peaceful until the authorities attacked the marchers.

There have been a series of previous violent attacks on student activists in Jaffna, as well as efforts to prevent students from organizing events. In October 2011 Subramaniam Thavapalasingham, President of the Jaffna University Students' Union, was attacked by unidentified assailants wielding iron bars who accused him of supporting Tamil separatism; he blamed Sri Lankan military intelligence for the attack. In May 2012, P. Tharshananth was attacked in a similar way and was very badly beaten shortly before he was to address a remembrance event, commemorating victims of the armed conflict that ended three years earlier.

Following the crackdown at the University of Jaffna, the TID has reportedly detained approximately 50 people suspected of having links to the LTTE, many of whom have been transferred to Boosa detention centre in the south of the country.

Since armed conflict with the LTTE erupted in 1983, tens of thousands of Tamils suspected of links to the LTTE have been arrested and detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency Regulations (now lapsed) promulgated under the Public Security Ordinance, for the purpose of investigation and interrogation by Sri Lanka's intelligence and security forces, or for what the Sri Lankan authorities have termed "rehabilitation".

Detainees in Sri Lanka are often held for long periods without being produced before a magistrate. In the case of people held for so-called rehabilitation, the time period detainees are held without charge or judicial review can stretch into years, without access to counsel, and in some cases with no communication with family.

P. Tharshananth is Secretary of the Jaffna University Students' Union and K. Jenemajeyamenan is President of the Arts Faculty Student Union.

Name: P. Tharshananth and K. Jenemajeyamenan
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 347/12 Index: ASA 37/002/2013 Issue Date: 29 January 2013