

URGENT ACTION

SRI LANKA: STUDENT PROTESTORS RELEASED

Secretary of the Jaffna University Students' Union, P. Tharshananth and President of the Arts Faculty Student Union, K. Jenemajeyamenan, were released on 13 February on the orders of President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

P. Tharshananth and **K. Jenemajeyamenan** were arrested without a warrant on 1 December 2012 by the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) of the police. Their arrests came after several days of protests by students 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). They were transferred to a "rehabilitation camp" in Welikanda on 10 December 2012 and held there until their release. President Rajapaksa gave the order for release while chairing a District Development Committee meeting during a visit to Jaffna on 12 February, after the parents of the students made a personal appeal.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor this case and will request assistance as necessary

No further action is requested from the UA Network. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

There have been a series of violent attacks on student activists in Jaffna, as well as efforts to prevent students from organizing.

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 had ended three years earlier.

Since the armed conflict between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE ended in May 2009, the Sri Lankan authorities have placed tight restrictions on events and religious observances held to commemorate and mourn war victims, particularly those held around 27 November, the LTTE's 'Heroes Day' which had been established to commemorate cadres killed during Sri Lanka's armed conflict and which falls on the day after the late LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran's birthday. 27 November 2012 also coincided with the Hindu festival Karthikai Deepam, which involves the lighting of oil lamps, and the army reportedly prevented many Jaffna residents from lighting lamps to celebrate the festival.

Name: P. Tharshananth and K. Jenemajeyamenan

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 347/12 Index: ASA 37/005/2013 Issue Date: 13 February 2013