

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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PLEASE ORGANIZE UP TO TEN APPEALS PER SECTION

UA 37/91

Unacknowledged Detention/Fear of
"Disappearance"

5 February 1991

SRI LANKA:

Lakana Rasala PIERIS

Lakana Rasala Pieris, a 26-year-old teacher at the Young Men Buddhist Association in Dehiwala, was arrested in his classroom at around 3pm on 2 February 1991. The arrest was reportedly carried out by one person in police uniform who entered the classroom and dragged Lakana Rasala Pieris out by his collar. Several witnesses, including students and people passing by, say that he was put in a Hiace van with the help of two other people. The numberplate of the vehicle was recorded as ending in: SRI 0344. The first numbers were not recorded.

Inquiries were made the next day at the Dehiwela police station, but officers there said that they had not taken Lakana Rasala Pieris into custody. Relatives have also made an appeal to the Senior Superintendent of Police of the area.

Amnesty International does not know why Lakana Rasala Pieris has been arrested. According to the reports received the police officer who carried out the arrest did not identify himself or provide any information about the reasons for the arrest.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reports of arbitrary arrests and "disappearances" in southern Sri Lanka have continued in the last few months. The victims include people who the security forces apparently suspect of having had connection with the violent opposition Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, People's Liberation Front).

On 11 January, the government announced the establishment of a three-member Commission of Inquiry into new cases of "disappearances", the exact terms of reference of which Amnesty International has not yet been able to obtain. However, it is clear that this commission will only look into cases of "disappearances" which occur after 11 January 1991 and that it is not empowered to investigate reports of the thousands of people who "disappeared" after arrest by security forces personnel in the period 1983-1990.

As Lakana Rasala Pieris was arrested after 11 January, Amnesty International is also calling upon the newly established commission to immediately investigate his arrest and "disappearance" and inform his relatives of his whereabouts.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern about the reported arrest and subsequent "disappearance" of Lakana Rasala Pieris on 2 February 1991 around 3pm;
- urging that an immediate investigation be conducted into his "disappearance" to determine his place of detention;
- seeking assurances that if he is in custody, he is being humanely treated and granted immediate and regular access to his relatives and lawyer.

APPEALS TO

His Excellency President R Premadasa
 Presidential Secretariat
 Republic Square
 Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: President Premadasa, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22650 PRESEC CE
Faxes: + 94 1 54 6657

The Hon Ranjan Wijeratne
 Minister of Plantation Industries and Minister of State for Defence
 Ministry of Defence
 Colombo, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Minister Defence, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22229 MINDEF CE
Faxes: + 94 1 54 6091

Ernest Perera
 Inspector General of Police
 Sri Lanka Police Headquarters
 Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Police Inspector General, Sri Lanka Police HQ, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Bradman Weerakoon
 Presidential Adviser on International Relations
 Presidential Secretariat
 Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: International Relations Adviser, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22650 PRESEC CE (Attn: Presidential Adviser International Relations)
Faxes: + 94 1 54 6657 (Attn: Presidential Adviser International Relations)

Mr H A G de Silva
 Chairman
 Commission of Inquiry into "Disappearances"
 Presidential Secretariat
 Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Disappearances Inquiry Commission Chairman, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Telexes: 22650 PRESEC CE (Attn: Chairman Disappearances Inquiry Commission)

**Faxes: + 94 1 54 6657 (Attn: Chairman
Disappearances Inquiry Commission)**

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat or your section office if sending appeals after 19 March 1991.