

PUBLIC

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"Disappearance"

13 July 2000

SRI LANKA

Gnanapragasam Gnaneswaran

Gnanapragasam Gnaneswaran was taken from his home by men in camouflage uniforms on 1 July. The police unit believed to be holding him has reportedly denied having him in custody, which raises fears that he may "disappear".

The men called him out of his house, at Thandikulam, Vavuniya, at 10.45pm. Gnanapragasam came out with all his family, and fearing that he was about to be killed, he started to cry. One of the men said he would shoot him if he did not stop crying.

The men questioned Gnanapragasam, confiscated his National Identity Card and Police Residential Pass and searched the house. They took him away in a white van, telling his wife that he was being taken for further questioning.

The men who arrested him are believed to be members of the police Security Co-ordinating Unit (SCU), which is involved in interrogating suspected members of the armed opposition group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The SCU has so far reportedly denied that he is in their custody.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There have been many "disappearances" reported in Sri Lanka since the mid-1980s, mainly connected with the fighting between the LTTE and government forces in the north and east of the country.

Gnanapragasam Gnaneswaran is the sixth person reported to have "disappeared" this year. Amnesty International recorded 10 "disappearances" in 1999. The United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances visited Sri Lanka in October 1999 to see what progress the government had made in implementing the recommendations it had made after previous visits in 1991 and 1992. It expressed concern that many of its recommendations to prevent "disappearances" had not been implemented.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Gnanapragasam Gnaneswaran, who has not been seen since he was arrested by uniformed men, believed to be SCU members, on 1 July;
- urging the authorities to immediately reveal where he is and why he has been arrested;
- asking that if he is in detention he be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence, or immediately released;
- urging the authorities in the meantime to take steps to guarantee his safety, and allow him access to his family and any medical treatment he needs;
- 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

Inspector General of Police

B L V de S Kodithuwakku
Police Headquarters
New Secretariat

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Colombo 1

Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Inspector General Police, Sri Lanka

Faxes: +94 1 43 89 15

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 24 August 2000.