

UA 276/00

"Disappea.**SRI LANKA Gulam Mohideen Mohammad Zakariya (45)**

A father of five has been arrested at a navy checkpoint in the eastern district of Trincomalee, and the navy has since denied having him in custody. His whereabouts are unknown, and Amnesty International believes his life is in danger.

Gulam Mohideen Mohammad Zakariya had been visiting his mother, who lives in another part of the town of Nilaveli, with his wife and one of their children. They were on their way home on a bicycle when they were stopped, at around 7.30am on 11 August.

The navy personnel took him away, and told his wife to take a bus home with her child. From the bus, she saw them questioning her husband. Later that day, when he did not come home, she made enquiries at the Nilaveli navy camp and was told that "no such person has been arrested".

His relatives have since appealed to the President of Sri Lanka and made complaints with the National Human Rights Commission and other local institutions. They have also asked the army for information about him, to no avail.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There has been a worrying increase in the number of "disappearances" reported from the north and east of Sri Lanka. On 31 August, Amnesty International appealed to President Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandaranaike to intervene to end the sudden increase in "disappearances" in Vavuniya district in the north, after seven people arrested there between 10 and 26 August reportedly "disappeared".

The "disappearance" of Gulam Mohideen Mohammad Zakariya is the second reported from Trincomalee this year. In late February, Vyramuttu Jeyakili also "disappeared" after he was arrested by navy personnel based at the same navy camp at Nilaveli.

These "disappearances" have taken place as fighting has intensified between government troops and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who are fighting for an independent state in the north and east of the country.

New emergency regulations announced in May this year gave wider powers to the security forces to arrest and detain suspects, and no longer contain earlier safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. Amnesty International has expressed concern to the Sri Lankan authorities that these new regulations may have contributed to the deterioration of the human rights situation.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Gulam Mohideen Mohammad Zakariya, who has not been seen since he was arrested by the navy on 11 August 2000;
- urging the government to immediately reveal his whereabouts and the reasons for his arrest;
- 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 to allow him access to his family and any medical attention he may need;
- 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

Navy Commander

Cecil Tissera
Navy Headquarters
Flagstaff Street
Colombo 1
Sri Lanka

Telegrams: Navy Commander, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Salutation: Dear 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 23 October 2000.