

UA 328/00

"Disappea**SRI LANKA Tharmalingam Sriranganathan (aged 21)
Shanmugalingam Thushyanthan (aged 19)**

Tharmalingam Sriranganathan and Shanmugalingam Thushyanthan have "disappeared" after they were arrested by the Sri Lankan army in separate incidents earlier this month. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

On the evening of 1 October, about ten uniformed soldiers travelling on bicycles arrested Tharmalingam Sriranganathan from Paddaikadu, Veppankulam, Vavuniya district, where he was living temporarily. He was reportedly seen with head wounds inside the Thandikulam army camp on 2 October. However, the army continues to deny his arrest.

Shanmugalingam Thushyanthan has been missing since he was detained on 7 October at an army checkpoint in Veeravapuliyankulam, Vavuniya district. Two of his friends, who were detained at the same time, were released later that day. When inquiring at the checkpoint, his relatives were told that he had been taken to the 211 Brigade Headquarters, but officers there denied holding him. Despite making further inquiries with the army camp in Kuderripu, the Special Task Force camp and the police station, his family still do not know what has happened to him or where he is.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The above are the first "disappearances" reported to Amnesty International from Vavuniya since August, when seven people went missing. This brings the number of "disappearances" in the area to eleven this year.

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga ordered an internal inquiry into the "disappearances" on 31 August, following appeals by Amnesty International. This appeared to result in a temporary halt to "disappearances" in the area. However, to Amnesty International's knowledge it has not yet been established what happened to the seven people who went missing in August, and no arrests have been made of those responsible. It would appear that the President's action is losing its effect. The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has repeatedly pointed out that impunity is probably the one most important factor in the continuing practice of "disappearances".

The "disappearances" are taking place in the context of the ongoing armed conflict between the security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who are fighting for an independent state in the north and east of the country.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Tharmalingam Sriranganathan and Shanmugalingam Thushyanthan;
- urging the government to clarify where they are and why they were arrested, and to guarantee their safety;
- asking that if they are in detention, they are promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence, or immediately released, and that they are allowed access to their families, lawyers and medical attention;
- urging that those responsible for their "disappearance" are brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

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

Lt Gen Lionel Balagalle

Army Commander

Army Headquarters

Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Telegrams:Commander of the Army, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Salutation:Dear Army 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 7 December 2000.