

Sri Lanka: Ensure Tamil detainees are charged or released

Brief Description:

Mano, a 29-year-old Tamil man, was arrested in March 2007 “on suspicion” of being a member of the opposition Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and remains detained. While in custody he has been tortured. Almost two years after the end of the war in Sri Lanka, hundreds of people are languishing in prison, like Mano, without charge or trial under the country’s repressive anti-terrorism laws. Call on the Sri Lankan government to immediately release these detainees or charge them with recognizable crimes. Under international law, everyone has the right to a fair trial.

Target(s):

President Mahinda Rajapaksa

Presidential Secretariat
Colombo 1
Sri Lanka
Fax: 011-44-11-2446657
E-mail: prsec@presidentsoffice.lk
Salutation: Your Excellency

Ambassador Jaliya Wickramasuriya

Embassy of the Democratic Socialist
Republic of Sri Lanka
2148 Wyoming Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: 202-483-4025
Fax: 202-232-7181
E-mail: slembassy@slembassyusa.org
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Sample Letter:

I am writing to urge you to immediately release those arrested under the emergency regulations or the Prevention of Terrorism Act, unless they are charged with recognizably criminal offenses and remanded in custody by a civilian court.

More than two years after the end of the war in Sri Lanka -- during which both sides committed gross human rights abuses, including deliberate and indiscriminate attacks against civilians, torture and the use of child soldiers -- hundreds of people are languishing in prison without charge or trial under Sri Lanka’s repressive anti-terrorism laws.

Under international human rights law, all people have the right to challenge the lawfulness of their detention, the right to a fair trial and the right to be free from torture. I call on you to end these human rights violations, hold accountable all those responsible and ensure that the rights of victims are upheld.

I respectfully urge you to immediately release those arrested under the emergency regulations or the Prevention of Terrorism Act, unless they are charged with recognizably criminal offenses and remanded in custody by a civilian court. Any trials must be held promptly and in regularly constituted courts with all internationally recognized safeguards provided. Any arrest or detention must be done in strict compliance with the 2006 Presidential Decree regarding registration of detainees and disclosure of their whereabouts, and in compliance with Sri Lanka's obligations under international human rights law, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Prevention of Terrorism Act should be promptly repealed and the system of administrative detention abolished without delay.