

6th December, 2012

Statement Condemning the Arrest and Unlawful Detention of Four Students from the University of Jaffna, and Calling for their Immediate Release

We the undersigned, strongly condemn the arrest of four students of the University of Jaffna (UoJ) by the Terrorism Investigation Department (TID) on Thursday, November 29, 2012. While welcoming the release of Kanesamoorthy Sutharsan, a student of the Jaffna Medical Faculty on the morning of Tuesday, December 4, we condemn the continued detention of the remaining three Jaffna University Student Union members: Sanmugam Solaman (24), Kanagasundram Jenamajenth, and Student Union Secretary Paramalingam Tharshaanan (24).

The four are part of a group of seven Jaffna University students who were summoned by the Kopai Police (in the Jaffna District) on Thursday, November 29, 2012, in connection with an alleged arson (petrol bomb) attack on the office of the Sri Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) in Thirunelvely, Jaffna. Sri-TELO had opened its office at Thirunelvely near the Jaffna University, only a week prior to the alleged arson attack. The students were later charged with putting up posters around the Jaffna University relating to *Maaveerar Naal* (LTTE heroes/martyrs day) which fell on Tuesday, November 27, 2012.

Following the summons, Sanmugam Solaman and Kanagasundram Jenamajenth surrendered to the Kopai Police at 1300hrs on Thursday, November 29, accompanied by two Jaffna University lecturers and a lawyer. At the time of arrest, the lecturers were shown a document in Sinhala, which appeared to be the letter issued by the Officer in Charge of the Kopai police, dated Friday, November 30 (Ref No. OIC/KP/ODB/6067/2012), to the head of security at the Jaffna University. It stated that the seven students listed in the document must appear at Kopai Police station to make a statement on November 30, in relation to a complaint made to the Kopai police by one Somasuriyasingham Senthuran of Kondavil West (Jaffna District), on November 29. The two students Sanmugam Solaman and Kanagasundram Jenamajenth, were subsequently handed over to the TID office in Vavuniya (Vavuniya District) on November 30. Two more students – Paramalingam Tharshaanan and Kanesamoorthy Sutharsan – were arrested by the Kopai Police at 0100hrs on November 30 from their temporary residences in Kaladdi and Urumpirai (Jaffna District) and handed over to the TID office in Vavuniya on Saturday, November 31.

All four students are currently being held at the Vavuniya TID office. The families of the students have so far not been provided with any official document relating to their detention or charges. The students have also not been produced before either the Vavuniya or Jaffna Magistrate. We are therefore deeply concerned with regard to the legality of their continued detention. The parents of one student met all four students at the Vavuniya TID office on Monday, December 3.

Vavuniya Police have assured the students and the parents that they would be released subject to being produced before the Vavuniya Magistrate. The parents and the four students waited at the Vavuniya police station from 8am – 3pm on December 3 for the Vavuniya Magistrate to return from Colombo.

However the students have not been produced before the Magistrate so far. We are concerned by evidence that the university authorities have been informed by the Deputy Inspector General for the Northern Province that detention orders have been issued for the four students as on December 2. The parents of the students have not been provided a copy of the detention order to date.

Of the three remaining students summoned in the document dated November 3, two students have already graduated from the University of Jaffna and are employed under the Government Graduate Scheme in Nedunkerny, (Vavuniya District). Six of the seven students named in the letter dated 30th November have been active and outspoken members of the Jaffna University Student Union post war. The students have organized and participated in several protests and campaigns against human rights violations allegedly committed by the Sri Lanka Army in the North. On November 28, they were involved in organising a silent protest against the intimidation and attacks by the Sri Lanka Army on university students on the previous day. So far no charges or evidence has been produced linking the students with the alleged arson attack.

On November 30, the police raided and ransacked the houses of two other students from the Jaffna University. The names of these students were not included in the letter dated November 30. According to the students, the raid was carried out by Police officers and persons in civilian clothes who did not disclose their identity. One student was also subjected to intimidation and questioning by the officers. The other student's house was ransacked twice on the morning of November 30, and early morning on December 1. Since the student was not at his house on both occasions, the officers instructed his parents that he must surrender to the Point Pedro Police immediately.

In light of the facts above, we are deeply concerned that the students' arrests are baseless and politically motivated, and constitute an act of reprisal against their activism and campaign against human rights violations by the Sri Lanka Army. Jaffna University students are presently carrying out a protest campaign against these arrests and several acts of intimidation and attacks carried out by the Sri Lanka Army against Jaffna University students. Students have boycotted their classes in protest and many students have left hostel premises in fear of further attacks or arrests.

We are also deeply concerned about the impact of these actions by security forces on the Jaffna University, which has been brought to a virtual standstill, and the adverse repercussions on the students' academic work and their safety and security within the university.

We reiterate the call by the University Teachers Association of Jaffna (UTAJ) in its Open Letter to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Jaffna to take all measures to ensure the immediate release of the detained students and obtain assurance in order to create a more secure and conducive environment for teaching and learning within the University that no further student arrests will be made by security forces; to ensure the immediate removal of the presence of military, police and security checkpoints in the university environs since November 27; and ensure that no outside person, particularly military and police personnel, be permitted to enter the Jaffna University and hostel premises without the prior permission of University authorities.

We therefore call on the Sri Lankan Government to:

- **Release with immediate effect the three detained students in the absence of clear evidence linking them to the alleged crime**
- **Permit the students access to legal assistance and regular visits by their family members**
- **Ensure the safety, and physical and mental wellbeing of the students currently held in detention**
- **Put an immediate halt to any further arrests, acts of intimidation, harassment and reprisals carried out by the Sri Lanka Army on students from the University of Jaffna**
- **Stop all interference by security forces and law enforcement authorities in the internal administration of the University of Jaffna and its student body**
- **Investigate into all past attacks of violence against students of the University of Jaffna, including incidents where the perpetrator/s is unknown**

Update as at 7.30pm on the 6th of November, 2012

On the morning of 6th December, 2012, the Kopai Police have handed over a list of a further 10 students to the University authorities to be handed over to the Police for questioning, over an undisclosed charge. The list includes five students from the Jaffna University Medical Faculty and the Presidents of the Jaffna University Student Union, Science Faculty Union and Management Faculty Union. Currently the five Medical Faculty students are being accompanied by the Faculty Dean and lecturers, to the Vavuniya TID office for questioning. The situation in the Jaffna University remains tense and volatile.

Signed by:

CLERGY

1. **Most Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph - Bishop of the Diocese of Mannar**
2. **Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam - Bishop of the Diocese of Jaffna**
3. **Most Rev. Dr. Norbert Andradi OMI - Bishop of the Diocese of Anuradhapura**
4. **Most Rev. Dr. Raymond Wickramasinghe - Bishop of the Diocese of Galle**
5. **Most Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera - Bishop of the Diocese of Kurunegala**
6. **Ven. Buddhiyagama Chandra Rathna Thero**
7. **Bishop Duleep de Chickera - Diocese of Colombo**
8. **Rt. Revd. Kumara Illangasinghe - Bishop Emeritus of Kurunagala**

9. Fr. Arulanandam
10. Fr. Jeyabalan Croos
11. Fr. R. Augustine
12. Fr. Yoges
13. Rev. Jason J. Selvaraja - Assembly of God Church, Chavakachcheri
14. Rev. Fr. Lawrence Gnanathicam
15. Rev. Fr. M. Sathivel – Christian Solidarity Movement
16. Rev. Fr. S. Mahesan
17. Rev. Reid Fernando - Chaplain of YCW/CWM Archdiocese of Colombo
18. Sr. Angela Fernando
19. Sr. Helen Fernando
20. Sr. Immaculate
21. Sr. Marie Angela Cooray
22. Sr. Mary Christine
23. Sr. Milburga Fernando

ORGANIZATIONS

24. Ainslie Joseph - Christian Alliance for Social Action (CASA)
25. Balasingham Skanthakumar - Law & Society Trust, Colombo
26. Brito Fernando - Families of the Disappeared
27. Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu - Executive Director, Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA)
28. Herman Kumara – National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO)
29. J.C. Weliamuna – Convener, Lawyers for Democracy
30. N.A. Sampath Pushpakumara – Rights Now Collective for Democracy
31. Nadeeshani Bahabandara - Women’s Political Academy

32. **Nimalka Fernando – Executive Director, International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) Asia**
33. **Padmini Weerasooriya – Mothers and Daughters of Lanka**
34. **Philip Dissanayaka - Right to Life Human Rights Centre**
35. **Sanjendra Vignaraja - Project Manager, American Center for International Labor**
36. **Saroja Sivachandran – Centre for Women and Development, Jaffna**
37. **Sepali Kottegoda – Women & Media Collective**
38. **Sriya Ahangama - Women’s Centre**
39. **Sudarshana Gunawardana - Rights Now Collective for Democracy**
40. **Sunil Jayasekara – Free Media Movement (FMM)**
41. **Sunila Abeysekera – Executive Director, INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre**
42. **Thiruni Kelegama, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi**
43. **Udaya Kalupathirana – INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre**
44. **Visaka Dharmadasa - Association of War Affected Women (AWAW)**

45. **Activist for Human Rights (AHR)**
46. **Human Rights Defenders Network, Sri Lanka**
47. **Networking for Rights in Sri Lanka**
48. **Women's Action Network**

INDIVIDUALS

49. **Amal De Chickera**
50. **Ananda Jayasekera**
51. **Anushaya Collure**
52. **Ayeshea Perera**
53. **Bhavani Fonseka – Attorney-at-law**
54. **Chandraguptha Thenuwara**

55. Chulani Kodikara
56. Deanne Uyangoda
57. Dharisha Bastians
58. Dilshy Banu
59. Dinidu de Alwis - Freelance Journalist
60. Divya Martyn
61. Dr. Leonie Solomons
62. Dushiyanthini Kanagasabapathipillai
63. Dylan Perera
64. Ermiza Tegal - Attorney-at-Law
65. Francis Solomantine
66. Hans Billimoria
67. Harean Hettiarachchi
68. I.D. Geethika Dharmasinghe
69. Iromi Perera
70. Jagath Liyanarachchi – Attorney-at-law
71. Jake Oorloff
72. Jay Gunewardena
73. Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala
74. Jehanki Anandha
75. Jovita Arulanantham
76. Juanita Arulanantham - Attorney-at-Law
77. Juliana Arulanantham
78. K.S. Ratnavale – Attorney-at-law
79. Krishan Rajapakshe

80. Kushlani Perera
81. Kusum Weeratunge
82. Luwie Ganeshathasan
83. M.M. Jihad Al Shajhan
84. Mahendran Thiruvarangan
85. Maria Emmanuel
86. Marisa de Silva
87. Mathuri Thamilmaran – Attorney-at-Law
88. Megara Tegal
89. Melisha Yapa
90. Mirak Raheem
91. Mohamed Hisham
92. Nalini Sivathasan
93. Nicola Perera
94. Nigel V. Nugawela
95. Nihal de Silva
96. Niran Anketell
97. Nirmanusan Balasundaram - Independent Journalist / Human Rights Advocate
98. Nishan de Mel
99. P.N. Singham
100. Paba Deshapriya
101. Prabu Deepan
102. Priya Thangarajah
103. Priyanthie de Silva
104. Punitharani Markpillai

- 105. Ruki Fernando**
- 106. S.C. Asoka Obeyesekere**
- 107. Sankha Ranadheera Vithana**
- 108. Scholastica Perera**
- 109. Selyna Peiris**
- 110. Shehan de Alwis**
- 111. Shreen Abdul Saroor**
- 112. Suchetha Wijenayake**
- 113. Sumith Chaminda Leelarathne**
- 114. Sunanda Deshapriya**
- 115. Thiagi Piyadasa**
- 116. Thushari Madahapola**
- 117. Vaidehi Perera**
- 118. Velayutham Jayachitra**
- 119. Vinoth Ramachandra**
- 120. W.A. Upul Wickramasinghe – Chemist**
- 121. Zainab Ibrahim**