

# URGENT ACTION



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*Note: Please write on behalf of these persons even though you may not have received the original UA when issued on May 18, 2009. Thanks!*

27 August 2009

Further Information on UA 129/09 (18 May 2009) and follow-up (12 August 2009) - Fear for Safety/Incommunicado detention

**SRI LANKA** Dr. T. Sathiyamoorthy (m) medical doctor  
Dr. Varatharajah (m) medical doctor  
Dr. Shanmugarajah (m) medical doctor  
Dr. Kathirvel Ilancheliyan Vallavan  
**still detained:** Dr. S. Sivapalan

Four of the five doctors held under emergency regulations by the Sri Lankan government for providing “false information” to foreign journalists have been released on bail. However, Dr S. Sivapalan is still detained without charge, and is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Dr Veerakkathipillai Shanmugarajah, Dr Thurairaja Varatharaja, Dr Thangamuttu Sathiyamoorthy and Dr Kathirvel Ilancheliyan Vallavan were released on bail on 24 August. Colombo chief magistrate Nishantha Hapuarachchi ordered their release on conditions that included reporting to the Vavuniya Police during the last week of every month. The four doctors are still in danger, because their case was so high-profile



The doctors had been in custody since 15 May, when they were detained at the Omanthai crossing point, for providing “false information” and what the government said were pro-Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) statements to international media outlets.

On 8 July the authorities held a press conference where the doctors, including Dr S. Sivapalan, retracted their earlier reports from the conflict zone. They said they had “exaggerated” the numbers of civilian casualties, as a result of pressure from the LTTE.

Amnesty International is concerned about how genuine these “confessions” were, given the doctors’ prolonged detention; their vulnerability to torture and other ill-treatment by Sri Lankan officials, who have a record of mistreatment of detainees and witnesses. There are contradictions between the doctors’ recent public statements and independently verified facts.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Many parties in Sri Lanka have been implicated in violence against perceived opponents and critics, including assassinations of witnesses and enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings of individuals recently released

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*Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.*

from detention. High profile nature of doctors' case increases their vulnerability to potential violence and their need for protection.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:**

- Expressing concern for Dr.Sivapalan, who has been detained without charge since 15 May, and calling on the authorities to release him immediately, unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offense;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure the safety of the released doctors (naming them).
- Calling on the authorities to repeal or revise emergency regulations and other special security legislation so as to bring them into line with international human rights law and standards.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency the President Mahinda Rajapaksa  
Presidential Secretariat  
Colombo 1  
SRI LANKA

**Fax: 011 94 11 2446657**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Gotabhaya Rajapaksa  
Minister of Defence  
Ministry of Defence, Public Security, Law and Order  
15/5, Baudhaloka Mawatha  
Colombo 03, SRI LANKA

**Fax: 011 94 11 245 1529**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Ambassador JALIYA WICKRAMASURIYA  
Embassy of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka  
2148 Wyoming Ave. NW  
Washington DC 20008

**Fax: 1 202 232 7181**

**Email: [slembassy@slembassyusa.org](mailto:slembassy@slembassyusa.org)**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**

**Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 8 October 2009.**