

URGENT APPEAL

PRESIDENT MAHINDA RAJAPAKSE

Socialist Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka
Office of the President
Temple Trees, 150, Galle Road
Colombo 3, SRI LANKA

Dear **Mr. President**,

The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), a regional federation of human rights organizations working directly on the issue of enforced disappearance in Asia, is deeply concerned with the report we received from the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) about the sudden disappearance of **Mr. Pattani Razeek**, a human rights defender and Managing Trustee of the Community Trust Fund (CTF) in Puttalam, Sri Lanka on 11 February 2010.

Mr. Razeek was last seen together with other staff members of CTF in Polonnaruwa on their way home from a mission when their vehicle was intercepted by a white van which is known in Sri Lanka as the preferred vehicle of groups responsible for abductions and disappearances. Although, Mr. Razeek opted to join the group in the white van peacefully and assured his colleagues that he would meet them later, CTF was informed the following day by Mr. Razeek's family that he did not arrive home from the mission. His family and colleagues have been searching for him since then. Despite the complaint filed by the victim's relatives before the police station in Puttalam and the information sent to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka about his disappearance, there is no substantial progress so far regarding the investigation on his disappearance.

Mr. President, it is shocking to learn that under your administration, there are people particularly human rights defenders who are being abducted and made to disappear in public places in broad daylight, yet little attempt is made to ascertain the identity of the perpetrators and locate the victim's whereabouts. This alarming pattern of disappearances in Sri Lanka and attack on human rights defenders are aggravated by the absence of effective remedies for families of the disappeared to search for their loved ones. We believe that your government's peace efforts will be undermined if you will not take serious steps in recognizing and protecting the basic rights of all Sri Lankan people, whether Sinhalese or Tamil, and to bring accountability for human rights violations.

In May 2009, you promised UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that the Sri Lankan government would investigate alleged laws-of-war violations. Since then, your government's only action to all accusations of human rights violations has been an automatic and sheer denial. The failure of your government to take seriously the allegations of human rights transgressions perpetrated by your own armed forces has allowed a culture of impunity to develop in increasing likelihood of further violations.

Your reelection for a second term as president on 26 January 2010 presents you with a momentous opportunity to improve the human rights situation in your country. We therefore, urge you to exercise your political will to exhaust all means possible to locate the whereabouts of the victims. The protection and assistance to their families must also be guaranteed as priority measures by your government. The victims' families must be actively involved and should be kept informed on the progress of the investigation. Addressing past crimes is also crucial so that the thousands of victims of human rights violations committed during the decade-long civil war will not continue to be denied of justice.

In view of the above, we call on your government to sign and ratify the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance at the soonest possible time and urgently pass a law criminalizing enforced disappearance to demonstrate your government's serious commitments for human rights.

Respectfully yours,

SGD. MUGIYANTO
Chairperson

SGD. MARY AILEEN D. BACALSO
Secretary-General