**Intimidation of trade unionists in Sri Lanka**

The Clean Clothes Campaign is gravely concerned about the recent developments in Sri Lanka, where trade unionists are intimidated and threatened with abduction, as a result of a public campaign depicting them as traitors and terrorists. Please write to the Sri Lankan president to demand safety for all trade unionists under threat.

On 6 February, three men, including a trade unionist, were abducted in Colombo by unknown groups. This sparked a spontaneous protest the next day in front of the main Fort Railway Station by trade unionists. Two days later, on 8 February, the Sri Lankan government declared that the abducted men, including the trade unionist, were in government custody, and that they were being interrogated on suspicion of collaboration with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) insurgents.

**Trade unionists receiving death threats**

This seems to fit in with a campaign explicitly aimed at linking trade unionists with insurgents. Key trade union activists who participated in the Fort Railway Station protest on 6 February are now being publicly accused of being covert terrorist operatives.

Since 8 February, posters depicting trade union leaders as traitors and terrorists have begun to appear in many parts of the country, calling for their arrest. Anton Marcus of the Free Trade Zone and General Services Employees' Union (FTZGSEU)- which is affiliated to the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF), Sman Ratnapriya and Ravi Kumudesh of the Health Sector Trade Union Alliance (HSTUA), Sampath Rajitha and Raja Kannangara of the Joint Railway Trade Union Alliance (JRTUA), and Joseph Stalin of the Ceylon Teachers' Union (CTU) are among the targeted trade unionists.

As a result of these false allegations, several threats, including death threats, have been made against trade unionists. On 21 February, the FTZGSEU and the HSTUA lodged a number of complaints with the police, in order to seek protection for their right to continue their trade union activities and to protect their lives. To date the law enforcement authorities have failed to take constructive measures to guarantee their safety. Click here for the original appeal issued by the Sri Lankan trade unions.

The Asian Human Rights Commission warns that in Sri Lanka in recent decades disappearances have been developed as a very sophisticated technique to deal with opponents, whether they be political opponents, trade unionists or anyone else engaged in any form of protest. The AHRC stresses the lack of significant action on the part of the government to bring the recent increase in disappearances to a halt. Click here for the AHRC press release.

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**Take action now!**

Please send a letter of concern to the president of Sri Lanka, urging him to take immediate measures in order to guarantee the safety of all trade unionists under threat and ensure an environment which is free of intimidation and is conducive to a normal development of trade union activities.

You can use this form to mail the following letter directly to: President Mahinda Rajapakse

At the moment there's a problem contacting the president by e-mail. We are
On 6 February, three men, including a trade unionist, were abducted in Colombo by unknown groups. This sparked a spontaneous protest the next day in front of the main Fort Railway Station by trade unionists. Two days later, on 8 February, your government declared that the abducted men, including the trade unionist, were in government custody, and that they were being interrogated on suspicion of collaboration with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) insurgents.

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As a result of these false allegations, several threats, including death threats, have been made against trade unionists. On 21 February, the FTZGSEU and the HSTUA lodged a number of complaints with the police, in order to seek protection for their right to continue their trade union activities and to protect their lives. I understand that to date the law enforcement authorities have failed to take constructive measures to guarantee their safety.

The exercise of trade union rights is enshrined in International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions numbers 87 (Freedom of Association) and 98 (the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining), to which your country is a signatory. Your government should therefore take measures in order to provide a climate in which these rights, as stipulated in the abovementioned ILO Conventions, can be implemented.

Trade Unions have no objections to the government's plans of safeguarding law and order and are willing to extend their fullest cooperation to such efforts. However these efforts can not be at the expense of workers human rights or human rights in general, which I know would agree, are critical to democracy in your country.

I urge you to take immediate measures in order to:

- guarantee the safety of all trade unionists under threat, and ensure an environment which is free of intimidation and is conducive to a normal development of trade union activities;
- investigate the complaints lodged by the aforesaid trade unionists and guarantee their safety;
- ensure the due process of law on all acts of threats and intimidation.

I look forward to your timely intervention and response.

Yours respectfully,
The exercise of trade union rights is enshrined in the ILO conventions, can be guaranteed by the governments of signatory. Your government should understand that trade unionists have no objections to the government's plans of safeguarding law and order, but they do want their leaders as traitors and terrorists. Please write to the Sri Lankan president to demand safety for all trade unionists. Two days later, on 8 February, a number of complaints with the police, in order to seek protection for their lives. I urge you to take immediate measures in order to guarantee their safety; to deal with opposers, whether they be political opponents, civil rights groups, or trade union supporters.

Intimidation and threats of abduction to trade unionists have begun to appear in many parts of the country, calling for a spontaneous protest the next day in front of the police, in order to seek protection for their lives. I look forward to your timely intervention and action on the part of the authorities.

As a result of these false allegations, several trade unionists under threat. Anton and the Zone and General Services Employees' Union and to protect their lives. On 6 February, three men, including a trade unionist, were abducted in Colombo by unknown groups. This sparked a spontaneous protest the next day in front of a police station. A few days later, a second protest was organized with insurgents.

Please send a letter of concern to the president of Sri Lanka, urging him to take immediate measures in order to guarantee their safety.

Yours respectfully,

I urge you to take immediate measures in order to guarantee their safety. The Asian Human Rights Commission warns that the government of Sri Lanka must make every effort to guarantee the safety of all trade unionists who are now being publicly accused of being covert terrorist operatives.

Sample letter:

Click to aforesaid trade unionists and investigate the complaints lodged by the police. I urge you to take immediate measures in order to guarantee their safety.

Mail your protest letter now!

Sample form:

Name
Organisation Name (optional)
e-mail address

Country
Fax No: +94 11 2542919

Additional comments:

Name
Organisation Name (optional)
e-mail address

Country
Fax No: +94 11 2542919

Additional comments:

Mail your protest letter now!