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22 December 2006

LKA102249.E

Sri Lanka: Location and profile of persons in Sri Lanka targeted for extortion by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

In February 2002, the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) signed a ceasefire agreement, which stipulates that both parties "abstain from hostile acts against the civilian population," including extortion (SLMM n.d.). However, 2005 and 2006 news and human rights sources consulted indicate that extortion of persons in Sri Lanka by the LTTE has continued (*The Globe and Mail* 12 Dec. 2005; Reuters 16 May 2006; *The Hindu* 27 Sept. 2006; US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 2.c; AI 3 Feb. 2006).

In a news article in the Colombo-based *Daily News*, Sri Lanka's Cabinet Spokesman and Media and Information Minister was cited as stating that, between February 2002 and February 2006, there were over 100 reported cases of extortion in the country (10 Feb. 2006). *The Hindu* cites a study conducted by the Strategic Foresight Group (SFG), a think-tank based in Mumbai, that reportedly found that the LTTE's annual income is between 175 million and 385 million United States dollars (USD), with local "taxation" and extortion accounting for approximately USD 30 million (27 Sept. 2006).

News sources from 2005 and 2006 indicate that Tamil businessmen have been targeted for extortion by the LTTE (*Daily News* 2 Oct. 2006a; *The Globe and Mail* 12 Dec. 2005; *Hindustan Times* 14 Sept. 2006). A 12 December 2005 article in *The Globe and Mail* reports that, following the December 2004 tsunami, several Tamil businessmen were subjected to extortion by the LTTE after having received money for reconstruction work (12 Dec. 2005). The article further notes that, according to "veteran observers,"

[e]xtortion of Tamils is a new tactic for the LTTE ... and it may signal a new urgency in the movement's fundraising, in part because its navy was devastated in the tsunami and because the Tigers appear to be preparing for an all-out war (*The Globe and Mail* 12 Dec. 2005).

A 3 February 2006 report by Amnesty International (AI) indicates that Tamil and Muslim businesspeople, as well as persons "with a substantial income" are being targeted for extortion by the LTTE. According to the report, the LTTE "taxes" businesspeople and high income earners between five and ten percent of their income; those who are unwilling to pay "face the threat of being harassed or abducted" (AI 3 Feb. 2006; see also Reuters 16 May 2006). The AI

report further notes that

those returning from the Middle East, where many Sri Lankans migrate for work, are particularly targeted for extortion and ... some people do not keep bank accounts because they believe the LTTE can access their account details (3 Feb. 2006).

The extortion of businesspeople by the LTTE is reportedly taking place in Sri Lanka's North (Reuters 16 May 2006) and East (AI 3 Feb. 2006; *The Globe and Mail* 12 Dec. 2005), as well as in Colombo and its suburbs (*Daily News* 2 Oct. 2006a; *Hindustan Times* 14 Sept. 2006).

The Karuna faction of the LTTE is also believed to be involved in extorting money from businesspeople in the North (TamilNet 16 Mar. 2006; Reuters 16 May 2006) and the East (AI 3 Feb. 2006). According to a 16 May 2006 Reuters news article, while both the LTTE and its Karuna faction are involved in extorting money from local business leaders, "Karuna members demand more money and have a greater tendency to kill if they do not get it." The Reuters article also indicates that the Sri Lankan army may be supporting the Karuna faction in its activities (16 May 2006; see also TamilNet 26 Mar. 2006). According to Amnesty International (AI), those facing extortion by the Karuna faction, may also be threatened by the LTTE (3 Feb. 2006).

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005 indicates that Muslims in the East of Sri Lanka are being intimidated and subjected to extortion by the LTTE (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 2.c). In October 2006, *Daily News* reported that a fisherman, now seeking asylum in the United States, had been kidnapped in Jaffna district [northern Sri Lanka] by the LTTE but was released after being forced to pay the group approximately USD 500 (2 Oct. 2006b). In September 2006 in the district of Trincomalee [eastern Sri Lanka], a civilian was reportedly killed by LTTE members for refusing to pay extortion money (SATP n.d.).

A 30 May 2006 *Daily News* article indicates that LTTE extortion in the North-East of Sri Lanka "goes on unabated" and that "every single activity is subjected to a levy." The Social Services and Social Welfare Minister of Sri Lanka, cited in the same article, stated that "[t]hose [persons], including government officials, who refute [LTTE] orders are treated mercilessly" (*Daily News* 30 May 2006). One of the "levies" collected by the LTTE includes a toll on the main A-9 highway (AP 9 Nov. 2006; Sri Lanka 27 Nov. 2006; *Sunday Observer* 25 June 2006). A 9 November 2006 Associated Press (AP) article indicates that the A-9 has been closed since August 2006 as a result of the conflict between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan security forces. The AP article also notes that the government has been reluctant to re-open the main highway because it believes the LTTE will use the road to move its equipment and fighters to government-controlled areas and to extort civilians travelling on the road (AP 9 Nov. 2006). According to a 25 June 2006 article in the *Sunday Observer*, the Sunday edition of the *Daily News*, the toll at the Pallai entry-exit point on the A-9 provides the LTTE with an estimated monthly income of 200 to 300 million Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR) [approximately CAD 2.1 million (XE.com 11 Dec. 2006a) to CAD 3.2 million (ibid. 11 Dec. 2006b)].

A 27 November 2006 article by the Media Centre for National Security, a division of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence, Public Security, Law and Order, lists a number of "extortion rates of the LTTE" for persons living in LTTE-controlled areas. The article outlines the amount of money the LTTE demands from persons

having relatives in the Middle East and in Europe, persons owning vehicles, ordinary families and rich families, shop and boutique owners, persons returning from abroad (rate per journey), government employees, individuals traveling along the A-9, as well as other persons (Sri Lanka 27 Nov. 2006). For the Sri Lankan government's complete listing of "extortion rates of the LTTE," please refer to the article, which is attached to this Response to Information Request.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom Home Office.

Attachment

Sri Lanka. 27 November 2006. Ministry of Defence, Public Security, Law and Order; The Media Centre for National Security. "A-9, the Life-Line of the Tigers." <<http://www.nationalsecurity.lk/fullnews.php?id=2522>> [Accessed 8 Dec. 2006]. 6 pp.

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