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### LKA43202.E

Sri Lanka: The recruitment and extortion of Tamils in Colombo by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE); the profile of those recruited and extorted (January 2003 - November 2004)

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The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), "arguably the most lethal and well organised terrorist group in the world" (n.d.). Thus far, the LTTE has been outlawed by India, Malaysia, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia (SATP n.d.). Since 1983, the group has fought for the establishment of an independent state of "Tamil Eelam" in the north and east of Sri Lanka (*Herizons* 22 Mar. 2003; SATP n.d.). SATP notes that in 1987, the LTTE initiated a "deliberate policy of recruiting women and children" due to the large number of casualties it suffered during the conflict (ibid.). Indeed, all reports on recruitment by the LTTE which were published during the period covered by this Response (January 2003 to November 2004) referred to the recruitment of children, and although most made reference to the north and east of Sri Lanka, they did not specifically indicate whether such recruitment of children was also taking place in Colombo (HRW 11 Nov. 2004, 2; ibid. 29 June 2004; Freedom House 14 Sept. 2004; *Herizons* 22 Mar. 2003; AFP 22 Jan. 2003; ibid. 6 May 2004; ibid. 9 Sept. 2004; BBC 28 Jan. 2003; ibid. 7 Oct. 2003; ibid. 10 Dec. 2003; ibid. 22 Jan. 2004; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1.g, 5; *Daily News* 7 May 2004; AI 7 July 2004). Children most vulnerable to LTTE recruitment are aged between eleven and twelve years (HRW 11 Nov. 2004, 2), although there are reports that indicated that some children have been as young as 10 years old (AFP 13 Feb. 2004; *Daily News* 7 May 2004; Channel News Asia 19 Apr. 2004; BBC 22 Jan. 2004). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), some children have taken drastic steps to avoid recruitment:

... [b]ecause there is a general perception that the LTTE does not recruit from among married persons, some boys and girls have married believing that it will provide a measure of protection against recruitment. Girls feel particularly vulnerable—they can instantly be identified as former cadres by the short haircuts that the LTTE gives its recruits (11 Nov. 2004, 4).

It is relevant to note that according to the London-based Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which "works to prevent the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, to secure their demobilisation and to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration into society" (n.d.),

[t]he February 2002 ceasefire agreement [between the LTTE and the Sri Lanka

government] allowed unarmed LTTE members to enter government-controlled territory, reportedly enabling child kidnappings to take place (17 Nov. 2004; see also HRW 11 Nov. 2004, 3).

In its *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, the Coalition also reported that the LTTE had renewed its child recruitment campaign in October 2003 by "demanding one child from each family in several eastern districts and aggressively recruiting in the north" (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2004; see also *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1.g, 5; AFP 6 May 2004). That campaign, according to HRW was further "intensified" in June 2004 (29 June 2004; see also AI 7 July 2004). In November 2004, HRW released a report entitled *Living in Fear: Child Soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka*, in which it stated that as at 31 October 2004,

... the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had documented 3,516 new cases of underage recruitment since the signing of the cease-fire agreement (including the re-recruitment of formerly released child soldiers ...). The LTTE formally released only 1,206 children during this time. Of the cases registered by UNICEF, 1,395 were outstanding as of November 2004. UNICEF notes that the number of cases it registers represent[s] only a portion of the total number of children recruited.... Of the children who have been released or returned from the LTTE, only about 25 percent were previously listed in the UNICEF database. This suggests that the total number of children remaining with the LTTE may be as much as four times higher than the 1,395 figure suggests (11 Nov. 2004, 3-4).

The HRW report also indicated that in mid-2004, there was a sudden increase in political killings of Tamil politicians and journalists that were seen to be opposed to the LTTE (11 Nov. 2004, 15). These killings were taking place in the north and east of Sri Lanka, as well as in Colombo (HRW 11 Nov. 2004, 15).

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

The Forum for Human Dignity, in Colombo, did not respond to a letter requesting information.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, in Colombo, did not respond to a letter requesting information.

Human Rights Lawyer, Colombo.

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, in Colombo, did not respond to a letter requesting information.

Unsuccessful attempts to contact the Centre for Human Rights and Development, in Colombo.

**Internet sites, including:** European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), University Teachers for Human Rights (in Colombo).

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