

Human Rights Monitor of the Voiceless

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Police held over Sri Lanka kidnappings

A very Senior Sri Lankan police officer has said that serving and former police and security force personnel have been arrested over abductions in Sri Lanka. His statement at a media briefing came on the same day as the bullet-riddled bodies of five people were found in a field in the north of the country. Their remains were burned beyond recognition, according to police in the north-central district of Anuradhapura. It follows the discovery of five other bodies near the capital on Saturday. Police chief Victor Perera who on Monday admitted to newsmen that government security forces are involved in abductions of civilians for ransom. He said some organised groups are involved in the incidents of abductions and killings that is causing embarrassment for the government. He said a large number of officers and troops had been arrested on charges of abduction and extortion.

Sri Lanka security officials find 5 more burned bodies and 5 bodies killed in execution style

Police found five burned bodies Tuesday near an abandoned field in north-central Sri Lanka, the military said, as authorities vowed to rapidly investigate a growing number of unexplained killings and abductions in the island nation. Military spokesman Brig. Prasad Samarasinghe said the bodies were found in Thirapappane village in Anuradhapura district, about 160 kilometers (100 miles) northeast of Colombo. The bodies of five men shot in the head with their hands tied together and blindfolded were found Saturday by Sri Lankan police, who called the deaths an apparent "execution-style killing".

UN rights chief calls on Iran to adhere to treaties after arrest of over 30 women activists

The United Nations human rights chief today expressed strong concern over Iran's arrest of at least 31 women activists during a peaceful gathering in the capital Tehran at the weekend, and urged the authorities to adhere to all international rights agreements that the country is party to, including the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour

stressed that these women were exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, her office said in a press release. They were demonstrating against the arrests of five women activists who were charged with criminal offences against public order and security for having organized a protest in the capital last June.

Somalia: ship hijacking hinders UN effort to contract vessels to bring urgent food aid.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned today that it is facing increasing difficulties in contracting ships to deliver urgent food aid to hungry Somalis following the hijacking of one of its chartered vessels, now in its 10th day, off the coast of the East African country. WFP already has 2,423 metric tons of food aid waiting at port in Tanzania, and despite calling for shipping contracts a week ago, there has been no expression of interest. Usually competitive bids are received within days. This is a direct result of the hijacking, and it threatens our ability to get food into Somalia ahead of the upcoming rainy season, WFP Country Director Peter Goossens said. The next rains are expected in mid April and even light rainfall is enough to close down key sections of the dilapidated road network. Hijacking was the fourth such attack on UN supply vessels off Somalia in 20 months. In 2006, WFP delivered some 78,000 metric tonnes of relief food to 1.4 million people affected by drought and floods in southern Somalia.

Darfur: UN official says parties must cease all fighting, allow relief aid through

As the Security Council met Tuesday on the situation in Sudan's Darfur region, a senior United Nations envoy told reporters that the parties must cease all fighting and improve conditions for the delivery of relief aid..

Sri Lanka today in Pictures



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"

- Martin Luther King Jr. US Civil Rights Leader, Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963