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OFFICE ON MISSING PERSONS

MEDIA RELEASE

26 NOVEMBER 2020

List of Complaints and Information Received by the OMP Regarding Missing and Disappeared Persons

The Office on Missing Persons (OMP) is publishing a List of Complaints and Information Regarding Missing and Disappeared Persons received by the OMP which will be made available at the OMP Head Office in Colombo and its Regional Offices in Batticaloa, Jaffna, Mannar and Matara.

Persons who went missing or were disappeared in connection with the conflict, political unrest or civil disturbances or as an enforced disappearance; and personnel of the armed forces or police who have been identified as missing in action fall within the OMP's mandate, as per section 27 of the Office on Missing Persons (Establishment, Administration and Discharge of Functions) Act, No. 14 of 2016 (the Act). The OMP's primary mandate to search for and clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing or disappeared persons is not limited to a specific period, community or region.

The details included in the List were obtained from i) complaints received directly by the OMP; ii) complaints obtained by the former Ministry of National Integration and Reconciliation from District Secretariats and forwarded to the OMP; and iii) lists of Missing in Action personnel provided by the armed forces at the request of the OMP.

The List released contains information provided by persons regarding missing and disappeared persons residing in all districts, apart from Batticaloa which has the largest numbers of complaints and will be released soon.

The List contains the following information i) a reference number assigned by the OMP; ii) the name of the missing or disappeared person in English and in Sinhala or Tamil; iii) the date that the person went missing or were disappeared; and iv) the district in which the missing or disappeared person last resided.

For Missing in Action personnel, the list contains the following information: i) the reference number assigned by the OMP; ii) the name of the missing person in English; iii) the date that the

person went missing; iv) the service number assigned by the tri-forces to personnel; v) rank of the missing person; vi) the place where the person went missing and vii) in case of Army personnel, the regiment of the missing person.

The publication of the List is part of an ongoing process of collating data relating to missing and disappeared persons. The List includes cases that are within the OMP's mandate and cases that require further clarification in order to determine whether they fall within the OMP's mandate. It excludes cases that fall outside of the OMP's mandate.

In February 2020, the OMP commenced a process of verification by inviting families of the missing and disappeared to contact the OMP to review the information concerning their missing or disappeared loved ones. Simultaneously, the OMP has been engaging in an internal process of verification to avoid duplicate records. The OMP has been informing families if their cases do not fall within the OMP's mandate. In cases where the information provided was unclear or insufficient, the OMP has been requesting further information.

Families are encouraged to review the information recorded in the List and report any concerns to the OMP. Members of the public who may have information on the fate of a missing or disappeared person included in the List are encouraged to provide such information to the OMP. The OMP kindly informs families who have already submitted complaints to the OMP, but whose missing or disappeared loved ones have not been included, that the List will continue to be updated.

Despite the appointment of a number of Commissions of Inquiry related to missing and disappeared persons, to date, Sri Lanka does not have a consolidated official record of missing and disappeared persons. In terms of section 10(1)(e) of the Act, the OMP is required to collate and centralise data relating to missing and disappeared persons.

Developing a consolidated list of missing and disappeared persons falling within its mandate enables the OMP to conduct inquiries and investigations, develop internal processes, and make recommendations regarding the rights and interests of the missing and disappeared and their relatives.

The OMP acknowledges the devastating impact disappearances have on families and society as a whole and remain committed to providing answers and establishing the truth. This List is an important step towards establishing an official and comprehensive record of missing and disappeared persons in Sri Lanka.