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காணாமல் போன ஆட்கள் பற்றிய அலுவலகம்  
OFFICE ON MISSING PERSONS

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Shrawasthi  
No. 32,  
Sir Marcus Fernando Mawatha,  
Colombo 07, Sri Lanka.

OMP Reference: OMP/ CH/PR/14

7<sup>th</sup> April 2020

His Excellency Gotabaya Rajapaksa,  
President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka,  
Presidential Secretariat,  
Colombo 1.

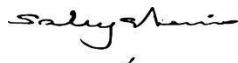
Your Excellency

**Families of the missing and disappeared to be included as beneficiaries for rations**

1. The Office on Missing Persons (OMP) established under the Office on Missing Persons (Establishment, Administration and Discharge of Functions) Act, No. 14 of 2016 has a mandate to search for and trace missing persons to clarify the circumstances in which such persons went missing and their fate and protect the rights and interests of missing persons and their relatives.
2. The OMP recognizes the grave threat posed by COVID-19 to Sri Lankan society. Further the OMP acknowledges the severe strain imposed on state resources when adopting measures in response to such a threat. The lockdown and the subsequent curfew that was imposed in order to minimize and prevent the spread of the virus have created difficulties, particularly for the more vulnerable sections of Sri Lankan society. The OMP wishes to bring to Your Excellency's attention the need to include one such extremely vulnerable group - the families of the missing and disappeared - whose situation should be considered when developing relief measures in the current context.
3. The OMP observes that Gazette No 2168/8, dated 6 March 2020 which establishes the Presidential Task Force, at paragraph 11, provides the Task Force with a specific mandate to "take steps to focus special attention on women, low-income families and persons directly at risk when undertaking above measures."
4. As Your Excellency is aware disappearances have impacted every region and community in our country over the past four decades, resulting in devastating consequences for both civilian and military and police families whose family members have been reported as missing in action.
5. As observed in the OMP's Interim Report of August 2018, some families of the missing and disappeared have suffered the emotional, social and economic consequences of disappearances for over thirty years with either limited or no state assistance. In many cases, it was the primary bread winner – a husband or a son - who was disappeared leaving behind wives, elderly parents and young children. These families in addition to having no income, are not able to access welfare benefits, wages and social assistance to which the disappeared person is entitled.

The Office on Missing Persons (OMP) is a permanent institution established under the Office on Missing Persons (Establishment, Administration and Discharge of Functions) Act, No. 14 of 2016

6. In acknowledgement of the situation of extreme poverty faced by some families, in its Interim Report of August 2018, at paragraphs 45(a)-(f) the OMP recommended a range of interim relief measures for the most vulnerable among families of the missing and disappeared pending the award of a reparations package. In response to one of the interim relief measures recommended by the OMP, the Government proposed to allocate Rs. 500 million in the 2019 Budget, to provide Rs. 6000 monthly relief to families of missing and disappeared persons, including members of the armed forces and police identified as missing in action on the condition of them of possessing a Certificate of Absence.
7. According to information received by the OMP, interim relief payments valued at approximately Rs.11 million have been paid to 153 beneficiaries, up to 11 November 2019.
8. The OMP observes that in many cases, the most vulnerable among families of the missing and disappeared are elderly and are female headed households and survive on the daily wages of one family member.
9. The prevailing situation in the country has had dire consequences on these families, as they are no longer able to earn their wages and they have limited or no assets.
10. The OMP recommends that families of the missing and disappeared be included in any proposed relief measures, including the provision of food and financial assistance in response to the current crisis.
11. In particular, as a short-term measure the OMP recommends that dry rations be provided to families of the missing and disappeared through Grama Niladharis. Grama Niladharis have already collected information regarding missing and disappeared in their local area, and such lists could be used to avoid duplication in instances where such families are also beneficiaries under other state assistance schemes for vulnerable persons.



Saliya Pieris P.C.  
Chairperson  
Office on Missing Persons