You may well be tortured or killed when you return to Sri Lanka. But that's no reason to feel persecuted.

roughly out of the cell and stripped him

His wrists were tied and he was suspended upside down by his ankles with a blindfold cutting off his sight. His muscles were quivering, he had difficulty holding onto his bowels.

Last time they'd lit a fire under his

When his hair started to singe, he had passed out. But they had revived him and begun again.

Other times, they had beaten him with iron bars, or plastic pipes filled with sand that didn't leave permanent

He was afraid each time that they'd go too far. Some prisoners had left the cell and never returned.

Hands fussed about his body and something metallic was clamped to his penis. What happened next he won't describe. But fighting between screams for breath through tears and mucus that flooded his nasal passages and threatened to choke him, he knew that he must hold on, not die.

Like a sunlit cloud afloat on a dark horizon was the small hope that his parents would bribe his jailers and he might flee to safety abroad.

The tragedy was that he had already been through it all before. Been tortured. Escaped. Fled abroad.

This torture would not be happening if the civilised country in which he'd sought asylum had not returned him in handcuffs to the very oppressors from whom he had fled.

Murder in paradise.
Ravi Sundaralingam (not his real name) lived in a Tamil fishing village near the northern tip of Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan Tourist Board fea-

tures places like this in advertisements

that quote Marco Polo's description of

the island as an Eden, paradise on earth.

Since the late '70s, when fighting

began between government troops and

Tamil separatists, thousands of innocent people have been imprisoned without

Ravi was watching, "I could hear my

brother shouting 'Don't shoot, don't shoot.' I saw him and his friend stand

up and put their hands in the air. Then

I saw them fall. There was no warning

The truth is rather bloodier.

trial, tortured and killed

and no suggestion of an order, lawful or not. They just shot them."

Survivor of two massa

These brutal, senseless killings came as no surprise. The men of Ravi's village had once already been rounded up and beaten by Sri Lankan security forces

A few weeks after his brother's death, Sri Lankan soldiers came back to the village in the darkness before dawn and forced the villagers out of their homes

The men were taken to a military camp and made to squat all day in fierce sun. They were beaten with clubs and rifle butts. Ravi was crying with fear as the soldiers chos fifteen men at random and shot them, then doused the bodies with petrol and set them alight

Later that same year he saw twenty men mass another round-up. After that Ravi ran and hid whenever he saw a Sri Lankan soldier.

A desperate escape.

A year after the second massacre, Ravis village woke to the drone of approaching bombers. People scattered into the jungle

Heavy explosions shook the ground. When Ravi emerged, the village had gone. His home was a heap of burning

His father knew that Ravi's life was not safe in Sri Lanka. He must leave But how? They could hardly ask the authorities for a passport. No passport meant no visas.

But forged passports and 'visas' could be had on the black market. His father

mehow scraped the money together. Ravi fled Sri Lanka in December

1986. On 13th February 1987, with

Heathrow Airport and asked for political

A Home Office welcome:
Britain is a signatory to the 1951
UN Convention on Refugees, Article 1

of which defines a refugee as any person

Tamil tears that fail to wash in Whitehall

an interpreter, the Home Office declared that Ravi was lying.

This perfunctory approach was enough for David Waddington, Minister of St at the Home Office, who said that the Tamils' claims were so "clearly bogus" February 12th 1988, he was returned in handcuffs to Sri Lanka

Expelled to Sri Lank

could appeal against the decision, but only after he had been expelled.

the UK and ordered the Home Office to bring him back as quickly as possible

The Home Office took six months to comply, then quibbled about who should pay the air fare.

Epilogue: A growing scandal.
Of five young Tamils (Ravi among them) sent back to Sri Lanka in February 1988, three were detained and tortured

More than eighty other Tamils later expelled by the Home Office simply vanished into the killing ground. Of their fate, nothing is known.

Since March 1987, things have actually

become more difficult for people seeking political asylum in Britain.

Visas have been imposed on countries from which refugees are fleeing and airlines face severe fines for bringing in passengers without valid visas.

To avoid the fines, airline staff have reportedly resorted to kidnapping some asylum seekers to stop them from even reaching immigration control

What can you do to help?

Despite what happened after they expelled him to Sri Lanka, Ravi Sundaralingam has still not been given refugee status by the Home Office.

Amnesty International is working hard to help him and others in the sam

We want the British government to nour its obligations under the 1951 UN convention on Refugees.

We want asylum seekers to be clearly told their rights and allowed access to legal advice before their asylum interviews.

We want examining officials to be well-informed and properly trained, and interviews to be conducted in more depth.

We want asylum seekers to be given the right to appeal before being removed from the country.
Will you support us? One way is by

becoming a member of Amnesty. It only costs £12. You can also join our letter writing and urgent action campaigns to rescue prisoners of conscience from torture and execution.

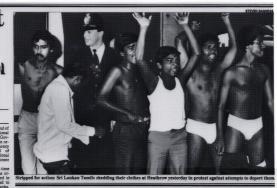
Please make a donation, if you can

possibly afford it.

Our resources are pitifully small. (We can only afford to run this advertisem once in this newspaper.)

Yet we need funds to continue our field investigations, to mount campaigns to free prisoners of conscience, to publicise tortures and killings by governments and to help asylum seekers like Ravi.

Please fill in the coupon. Some life depends on it.



I.PO movier

that he was disallowing MPs their customary right to intervene.

For pity's sake don't expel us. So eager was the Home Office to be rid of the Tamils that it bussed them to Heathrow for immediate expulsion

Some of the men, desperate not to be returned to Sri Lanka, stripped to their underwear in a last ditch effort to halt

They were carried onto the aircraft in their underpants, but stood on the seats and the pilot refused to take off.

Forty-five minutes after the aircraft's planned departure time, concerned British

in in hallnext was entirely predictable.

At Colombo airport Ravi was taken in for 'questioning' by the Sri Lankan CID. Thanks probably to the presence of his British escort, he was soon released.

Unfortunately there were no British officials to ensure fair play once he left

Shortly after getting home, Ravi was arrested by the Indian Peace Keeping Force, which had been invited into the during the year of his absence by the Sri Lankan Government.

He was held for seven months and tortured as we have described once every

four or five days. The electric shocks to his genitals left him unable to urinate for several days after each torture session. (And caused medical problems from which he still suffers.)

His father did indeed bribe the com manding officer of the Indian Army unit with a TV and video recorder. Ravi was released, but re-arrested within a month and tortured again.

His parents once more bought his release and this time Ravi went into hiding in the jungle. Ironically, back in Britain, his appeal was about to succeed. In March 1989, the High Court ruled

that Ravi had been entitled to political

with a well-founded fear of persecution One morning in April 1984, Ravi saw who is outside his or her country of origin his elder brother murdered in a setting and due to such a fear is unwilling to straight out of a Sri Lankan tourist Ravi did not know this. Nor was he His brother and a friend had gone in a allowed access to a lawyer who might boat to catch sardines. They were close to have advised him. shore, well inside the three mile fishing It is hard to see how Ravi's fear of limit, when a Sri Lankan naval vessel persecution could have been better-

> Given the seriousness of his allega tions and the number of people who witnessed the massacres, his story could and should have been checked.

But if was not.

lawyers managed to obtain a High Court injunction preventing it

Home Office now began to question whether what he had suffered could really be called 'persecution.'

"Mr Sundaralingam agreed," the immigration officer's report pointedly states, "that he was in no greater danger than the rest of the young Tamil population...

Splitting hairs. The Home Office's attitude amounted to this: You may well face torture and even death in Sri Lanka, But you cannot claim that you are being 'persecuted.' For 'persecution' implies being singled out and you are not being singled out since every young Tamil in Sri Lanka faces the ngers as you

On February 1st 1988, then Home Secretary Douglas Hurd said that "the Tamils had failed to prove that they had a justifiable fear of persecution in terms of the 1951 UN convention."

