

Canadian Tamil leader arrested as terror threat. (1995, October 21)  
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# Canadian Tamil leader arrested as terror threat

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The arrest of one of Canada's top Tamil leaders on allegations of terrorism has shocked members of the community in Metro.

Manickavasagam Suresh was taken into custody Wednesday after Canada's immigration minister, Sergio Marchi, and the federal solicitor-general signed a national security certificate for his arrest.

Suresh, 39, who lives in Toronto's east end, is described by members of Metro's Tamil community as a leader who has organized demonstrations against the violence in Sri Lanka.

Marugesapillai Duraiswamy, president of the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada, described Suresh as one of the important personalities in the world Tamil movement.

"He has a lot of confidence and respect of the Tamil community in Canada," Duraiswamy said.

Suresh is being detained under a special section of the Immigration Act that allows the immigration minister and Canada's solicitor-general to sign a certificate ordering a person to be taken into custody.

Documents served on Suresh at the time of his arrest identified him as a person who has or may engage in acts of espionage or subversion against a democratic government, institution or process.

Immigration spokesperson Kevin Sack said he couldn't indicate what charges had been brought against Suresh, but said he'll face an in-camera hearing before a federal court judge within a week.

Sack said Suresh would have normally appeared at an immigration hearing shortly after his arrest, but there's no need for a hearing until a judge of the federal court rules on the reasonableness of the national security certificate.

"The security certificate provides for a person to be detained for the entire process," he said.

Immigration intelligence sources said the arrest was made following a lengthy investigation after authorities received information Suresh could pose a security risk in Canada.

Duraiswamy said it's nonsense to suggest Suresh was involved in any terrorist activity.

"He's been charged on false information," he said. "That's my belief. That's what majority of the Tamils believe. I can vouch and say he had never been involved in any terrorist activities, that's a for sure."

Duraiswamy also thinks it's wrong that Suresh should face a secret hearing.

"I'm almost sure this is a result of someone trying to implicate him in something," he said.

Max Berger, an immigration lawyer who represents many Tamils, said it wouldn't surprise him if someone from the other side had made allegations against Suresh.

Berger said the arrest was made as local Tamils were preparing to travel to New York to stage a peaceful protest against Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga during celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations.