

Britain deports Sri Lankan who had claimed sanctuary. (1989, January 21). *The Ottawa citizen*.

## Britain deports Sri Lankan who had claimed sanctuary

LONDON (AP) — A Sri Lankan who for two years sought asylum in an Anglican church before being dragged out by police was deported by the British government Friday.

The Home Office, which is responsible for immigration, said Viraj Mendis was escorted by three police and immigration officers aboard an Air Lanka flight to the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo.

Mendis, 32, had been expected to seek refuge in a third country.

The Home Office said it had not received indications another country was willing to accept him by its declared noon deadline.

Police arrested Mendis on Wednesday after smashing their way into a church vestry in the northern England city of Manchester. Mendis moved into the church after being issued a deportation order in 1986, 13 years after arriving in Britain as a student.

Mendis said he feared persecution or death if returned to his In-

dian Ocean homeland, which is wracked by ethnic violence between guerrillas from the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamil populations.

But in Colombo, Foreign Ministry Secretary W. T. Jayasinghe said: "I don't think anything is going to happen to Mendis when he arrives."

Mendis, who is Sinhalese, claims his life is threatened because of his political support for communism and the Tamil minority.



**Viraj Mendis**  
Fears death in homeland