

AUSTRALASIAN FEDERATION OF TAMIL ASSOCIATIONS INC.

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PROMINENT TAMIL JOURNALIST MURDERED IN SRI LANKA

The Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations joins the international community in roundly condemning the brutal murder of Mr. Dhramaratnam Sivaram, the well known Tamil journalist whose bold and accurate portrayal of the Sri Lankan political establishment has embarrassed and damaged its reputation. Mr. Sivaram wrote under his own name and also under the pseudonym Taraki.

This murder is the latest in a series of brutal slayings of Tamil journalists which include BBC journalist, Mr Mylvaganam Nimalarajan and Mr Nadesan.

Reporters without Borders (RSF) said that it *"is revolted at the murder of Dharmaratnam Sivaram "Taraki" and that "He was targeted because of uncompromising coverage of the political and military situation, particularly since the emergence of the pro-government Tamil militia headed by Colonel Karuna"*

The President of the Foreign Correspondents' Association of Sri Lanka, Simon Gardner Says that he *"Vehemently condemns the killing of journalist, D.Sivaram. He was simply exercising his right to report freely on current affairs. To gun down an unarmed man is pure cowardice; to gun down a journalist is to attack freedom of speech"*

According to the Executive Director Ann Cooper of the New York based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), organisation *"the brazen abduction and execution of a veteran journalist sends a chilling message to others in the Tamil media."* The organisation has also pointed out that *"police searched his house twice last year looking for weapons, but did not find anything to incriminate him. This audacious and brutal crime is an attack on free speech in Sri Lanka"*.

Aidan White, General Secretary of The International Federation of Journalists says that *"This is a shocking, tragic and senseless killing of a prominent and distinguished commentator who was a leading voice of the Tamil minority"*

Former Ambassador of the United States to Sri Lanka and the current Director for South Asia, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, USA Teresita Schaffer has said that she is *"so distressed by this. I knew Sivaram as one of the best political analysts in Sri Lanka, and someone who valued and defended his independence of thought and action. Sri Lanka and the Tamil community need people like him. His loss is a true tragedy, and whoever killed him has done great harm to the country and the community,"*

The Government of Japan which is involved in the ongoing 'peace process' in Sri Lanka has condemned the abduction and killing of Sivaram with the Ambassador of Japan Mr.Akio Suda, saying that he was *"shocked and extremely disturbed by the news of the abduction and killing of a senior journalist and that such a heinous act should not be tolerated. This murder of Mr. Sivaram, a senior journalist is a blatant attack on democracy and the freedom of speech, and must not be ignored by those who advocate peace and democracy. I vehemently condemn this dastardly act of the murder of Mr. Sivaram and wish to state that such despicable acts will not hinder the efforts of promoting the peace process in Sri Lanka."*

We call upon the Australian Government and the Australian Media in particular to condemn this brutal and premeditated murder. AFTA is outraged that the Sri Lankan political establishment should continue silencing the voice of Tamils despite the cease-fire.