



Tamil Information Centre

தமிழ் தகவல் நடுவம்

Committed to Human Rights and Community Development

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TIC PRESS RELEASE CALLING FOR ACTION 06 February 2007

Abduction of Sinhalese leftist journalists underlines the deepening chaos in Sri Lanka

M. A. Sisira Priyankara, trade union activist and editor of the monthly newspaper *Akuna*, Nihal Serasinghe, member of the railway trade union Dumriya Kamkaru Ekathuva and Lalith Seneviratne were abducted on 5 February in Colombo, allegedly by the security forces. These abductions have outraged the Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim intellectuals, journalists, community leaders as well as many ordinary citizens of Sri Lanka. The Tamil Information Centre (TIC) is gravely concerned for their safety. So far, no law enforcement authority has claimed responsibility. We deplore these actions which endanger the lives of journalists and call on the government to launch an immediate impartial investigation into abductions by security forces.

Threats, attacks and abduction of journalists reporting on the ongoing conflict, corruption and government misdeeds, have increased dramatically in Sri Lanka in recent times. Murder, arrest, threats and bombing of reporters, particularly in northeast Tamil homeland have also become frequent. These attacks on the press appear to be part and parcel of a policy of the current regime.

Freedom of expression is very limited in Sri Lanka, with little tolerance by government authorities or armed factions of criticism by individuals or the media. The government is also reported to have enforced an unofficial censorship on media personnel. These actions, along with many other repressive measures, indicate the true character of the "democracy" that the present government practices in Sri Lanka.

Since the election of the new President, the TIC has documented dozens of incidents in which journalists have been assaulted, shot and injured or killed. The TIC has deplored the failure to investigate these incidents and hold those responsible to account and the situation that allows perpetrators to continue to carry out human rights violations with impunity. Journalists in touch with the TIC say that the threat of kidnapping and murder has precluded them from living normal personal or professional lives.

The TIC calls upon the Sri Lankan President and the government to -

- take immediate and decisive action to have the three abducted journalists released;
- launch an investigation and ensure that the perpetrators within the security forces are identified and punished; and
- respect the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press and take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of journalists.

The TIC calls upon the international community, including other governments to -

- impress upon the Sri Lankan government the true value of the freedom of expression for democratic governance; and
- take other measures as are necessary and appropriate for the safety and security of journalists in Sri Lanka

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Please write to the relevant authorities listed below, expressing your serious concern about the safety of the journalists and urging the authorities take immediate action to ensure release of those abducted.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse
President
Socialist Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka
C/- Office of the President
Temple Trees
150, Galle Road, Colombo 3
SRI LANKA
Fax: +94 11 2472100 / +94 11 2446657
Email: secretary@presidentsoffice.lk

Mr. Ratnasiri Wickremanayake
Prime Minister
Temple Trees
Galle Road, Colombo 03
SRI LANKA
Tel: +94 11 2 575317-8 or 370 737-8
Fax: +94 11 2 575454

Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights
Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights
383, Bauddhaloka Mawatha
Colombo 07
SRI LANKA
Tel: +94 11 2 390895, 384116

Secretary
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
No. 36, Kynsey Road
Colombo 8
SRI LANKA
Tel: +94 11 2 694 925 / 673 806
Fax: +94 11 2 694 924 / 696 470
E-mail: sechrc@slt.net.lk <<mailto:sechrc@slt.net.lk>>

Mr. Victor Perera
Inspector General of Police
New Secretariat
Colombo 1
SRI LANKA
Fax: +94 11 2 440440/327877
E-mail: igp@police.lk <<mailto:igp@police.lk>>

Mr. K. C. Kamalasesan
Attorney General
Attorney General's Department
Colombo 12
SRI LANKA
Fax: +94 11 2 436421
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Mr. Philip Alston
Special Rapporteur on Extra-judicial, Summary, or Arbitrary
Executions
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