



# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TAMIL JOURNALISTS

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## Press Release

### Condemns the attacks

We, the International Association of Tamil Journalists (IATAJ) strongly condemn the attacks and intimidation by Sinhala- Buddhist fundamentalists against journalists who went to Aluthgama and Beruwela in order to collect information about the attacks on the Muslim community in those areas.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June there had been a clash between the persons believed to be associated to Bodu Bala Sena, a Sinhala Buddhist fundamentalist group which involved in violent actions against Muslims in the past, in the Aluthgama Dharga Town area. Subsequently this transformed into a full-scale attack on the Muslim community and spread to other areas of the Kalutara District.

Journalists belonging to the Al-Jazeera, Sunday Leader and Irudina media outlets were attacked and intimidated when they went to collect information regarding these incidents. In the meantime, higher authorities in Sri Lanka had warned local media outlets to avoid publishing any news about these incidents.

While we strongly condemn these incidents mentioned above, we request the International Community to, without delay, apply pressure on the Sri Lankan Government to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks on the journalists.

From April 2005 to date at-least 44 journalists have been brutally murdered or disappeared. Of these 37 journalists are Tamils, while 5 are Sinhalese and 1 is Muslim. Approximately 52 journalists have been forced to flee the country due to security reasons.

That the Media which is considered a pillar of democracy is being constantly suppressed, illustrates clearly that the Sovereignty which Sri Lanka prides itself on does not include democracy. Furthermore, we would like to highlight that the Sri Lankan government has shed its responsibility as protector of democracy and constantly remains a backer of the media repression in the island.

Therefore, we, the International Association of Tamil Journalists, request the International Community to immediately take adequate steps regarding constructive mechanisms to address these continuing acts of suppression of the media and journalists within the island of Sri Lanka.

Central Committee

International Association of Tamil Journalists