

Tissainayagam is being detained under the Emergency Regulations

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The International Association of Tamil Journalists (IATAJ) is extremely disturbed by a new 90-day extension of a detention order against journalist J.S. Tissainayagam, who has been held without charge in Sri Lanka since his arrest on March 8, 2008.

Tissainayagam is being detained under the Emergency Regulations (2005) Act. The latest detention order was issued by the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) of the Sri Lankan police force on June 5.

TID has refused to provide details of Tissainayagam's arrest except to say, initially, that he was being held under emergency regulations for 30 days.

Tissainayagam, a Tamil and the editor of outreachsl.com website, was arrested following the similar detention of E-Kwality Printers owner N. Jesiharan and his wife Valarmathy, who share the same office building.

Three others associated with the website – reporter Wihesingha, visual editor Udayanan, and cameraman Ranga – were also taken in for questioning and held incommunicado for several days before being released without charge on March 19.

Despite filing a Fundamental Rights case to the Supreme Court on March 19 on the grounds of his medical condition and denial of legal rights, Tissainayagam has been granted limited access to family, legal representation and information pertaining to his case.

TID officials are reported to have repeatedly ignored his scheduled appointments to appear before a Magistrate's Court to finalise a charge against him, as stipulated by the Emergency Regulations (2005) Act.

“There is an obvious failure by the Sri Lankan police to provide and protect Tissainayagam's basic human rights to medical attention, personal safety and freedom from unexplained detention,” IFJ Asia-Pacific said.

“Enough time has passed for proper judicial process to have been implemented. The detention of Tissainayagam for 177 days without charge is deplorable. It points to authorities using a journalist as a tool for political game-playing.”