

Media groups hit out at police

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Several media organizations criticized attempts by police media spokesman Ranjith Gunasekara's to violate the fundamental rights of the people by resorting to making biased statements to defend controversial Minister Mervyn Silva.

The Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association, the Federation of Media Trade Unions, the Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum, the Sri Lanka Tamil Media Association and the Free Media Movement in a joint statement said the SSP had told the media on August 7, that media personnel should not have attempted to video the minister regardless of his protests.

"However we challenge him to point out the law that prevents media personnel from taking photos of politicians at a public function. It is quite obvious that the Police media spokesman does not know the fundamentals of democracy," the statement said.

"The SSP said the Sirasa media crew should not have covered the event if the minister was not pleased with it.

This senior police officer was of opinion that media personnel should have immediately ceased the coverage when the minister, who has a bad reputation of resorting to violence, ordered them to leave. How can we expect police officers of this calibre to protect the people?."

"Any journalist or even an ordinary citizen has a right to take photos of public places and to cover the events. The police media spokesman's attempt is intended at protecting corrupt politicians and depriving the people of their right to information," the statement alleged concluding that police officers of his caliber would only bring disrepute to the entire police department.