



Journalists should not be allowed to write

Gotabhaya Rajapakse, Defence secretary of Sri Lanka- RSF

This younger brother of the president and secretary of state for defence, Gotabhaya Rajapakse is the leader of the war against Tamil separatists. He said in 2008, "Journalists should not be allowed to write about military matters and strong action should be taken against those who do." He was increasingly aggressive to journalists who refused to bow to his orders during 2007, specialising in making threats over the telephone. He phoned the editor of the Daily Mirror, threatening to get her sacked and to "wipe out" one of her colleagues if they did not stop publishing articles about the plight of civilians caught up in the war. Also in 2007, the printers of the Sunday Leader was torched by a commando unit backed by the army. And the defence ministry accused investigative journalist Iqbal Athas of taking part in "psychological operations by LTTE" after he revealed a corruption scandal within the army. He was forced to temporarily flee the country. The secretary, who has an American passport, allows paramilitary groups to do the "dirty work" which chiefly means attacking critical media. Two journalists were kidnapped in 2007 and the daily Uthayan came under new attacks in Jaffna, in the north of the country.