

Spotlight falls on threats to media and journalists.

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London, 02 October, (Asiantribune.com): The threat to the media and journalists in Sri Lanka will be in the spotlight at a discussion in London later this month.

The discussion will be followed later in the day by further discussions on the wider subject of human rights in Sri Lanka to be held at London's Frontline Club which has in recent times drawn attention to the problems of media coverage in hotspots and related issues.

The focus on the media has been heightened by reports of the threat to the safety of Iqbal Athas, the defence correspondent of The Sunday Times and foreign media outlets and a series of incidents in which journalists have been killed or threatened in the exercise of their professional duties.

Several international and local media watchdogs and human rights organizations are due to participate at the discussion on October 10 which is said to be co-hosted by Andy Love, Labour Party MP and secretary of the All-Party Parliamentary Committee on Sri Lanka and supported by the London-based organisation The MediaWise Trust.

Two media representatives from Sri Lanka, Sunanda Deshapriya of the Free Media Movement and Nadaraja Kuruparan, Tamil news manager of ABC Radio, are scheduled to participate and are expected to appraise the gathering of the latest situation in Sri Lanka on what is titled "peace reporting" and the safety of journalists.

Also attending is Seyed Bazeer a human rights lawyer and a member of the Muslim Information Centre, UK.

Among those listed as participants are the president of the National Union of Journalists (UK and Ireland); Director, World Editors Forum Paris; head of the Asia Desk of Reporters Sans Frontieres; deputy director of the International Press Institute Geneva; London director of Human Rights Watch; a representative of the BBC Sinhala Service and Pearl Thevanayagam, a Sri Lankan journalist and secretary of the Exiled Journalists Network (EJN), one of the sponsors of the event.

Judging by the diverse media and human rights organizations scheduled to participate Sri Lanka is expected to run into heavy flak for the threats to media freedom, the government's laxity in providing protection for journalists and the threats the media faces from government policies and the remarks of government politicians and officials.

While Sri Lanka managed to stymie an attempt by some EU countries to have a resolution condemning the country's human rights record tabled at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, some governments and NGOs are pressing ahead with criticism at various international fora in the hope of keeping the call for international monitors to be posted to Sri Lanka in focus internationally.

