

CPJ condemns official silence on journalist's harassment

New York, October 4, 2007—After Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama declined to respond to questions or accept responsibility for the government's campaign of verbal attacks and intimidation against senior journalist Iqbal Athas, associate editor and defense correspondent for The Sunday Times in Colombo, the Committee to Protect Journalists issued the following statement: "Minister Bogollagama's response in Washington today was typical of the Sri Lankan government.

Even when it launches attacks against journalists on its official web sites, no one steps forward to take responsibility. It is the same pattern of nefarious behavior that has left the deaths of eight Sri Lankan journalists unsolved in recent years", said Bob Dietz, CPJ's Asia program coordinator.

"Bogollagama's response validates our concerns about the safety of Iqbal Athas and any other journalist who dares to investigate stories that are critical of the government," said Dietz.