

Military harass two journalists over Jaffna coverage

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Two journalists who took part in an army-organised press trip to the northern Jaffna region, where there is fighting between government forces and Tamil Tiger rebels, were subsequently subjected to verbal harassment by military officers who disliked their coverage.

Daily Mirror reporter Poornima Weerasekera was scolded by telephone by an officer on 8 April about photos of soldiers in Jaffna. The newspaper said they illustrated the military presence in the region, but the army said they were just there to protect the journalists during the trip.

Vindya Amaranayake, a reporter with the daily The Bottom Line, was admonished by telephone on 9 April by army spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakara, who accused her of giving a "negative" picture of the situation in Jaffna and said the army would think twice next time about inviting journalists to visit the region. Amaranayake said she felt directly threatened by Nanayakara's comments.

Reporters Without Borders calls for the lifting of restrictions put on the national and international press in its coverage of the conflict in the north and northeast of Sri Lanka.