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IFJ Condemns Two-Month Detention Without Charge in Sri Lanka

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) demands authorities in Sri Lanka take immediate action to resolve the arbitrary two-month detention, without charge, of Jayaprakash Sittampalam Tissainayagam and two colleagues.

Tissainayagam, the editor of www.outreach.sl, has been detained since March 7 along with N. Jasiharan, an outreach writer and the owner of E-Kwality Printers, and Jasiharan's partner, Valarmathi, after Sri Lanka's Terrorist Information Department (TID) arrested seven media personnel from March 6 to 8.

TID officers said the seven were taken in for questioning in relation to the outreach website, according to the Free Media Movement (FMM), an IFJ affiliate. The E-Kwality printing press and outreach website office have been sealed and closed without recourse to legal procedures.

TID has since released reporter K. Wijesingha, visual editor Udayanan and cameraman Ranga (all associated with outreach) and the editor of the Tamil language *Sarinihar* magazine, S. Sivakumar.

In the case of Tissainayagam, a 90-day detention order was issued on March 27, 20 days after his arrest, following his submission of a fundamental rights petition to demand his release. In court, the State counsel is reported to have said he previously did not have a detention order.

Tissainayagam has a serious eye condition and is at risk of blindness if he does not receive specialist attention while Valarmathi is reported also to need urgent medical attention.

"After two months, if charges cannot be brought in a court of law in accordance with due legal process, Sri Lanka's authorities must release all three immediately," said IFJ Asia-Pacific Director Jacqueline Park.

"The manner in which these cases have proceeded indicates authorities are seeking to secure silence and instill fear among journalists who report in a critical and independent manner."

The IFJ joins the FMM in urging Sri Lanka's Government to abide by international human rights standards and ensure Tissainayagam and his colleagues receive a fair and just hearing