



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TAMIL JOURNALISTS

சர்வதேச தமிழ்ச்செய்தியாளர் ஒன்றியம்

P.O Box 54079, London SW20 9WR

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PRESS RELEASE

On this World Media Freedom day, The International Association of Tamil Journalists expresses its deep concern at the abridgement of freedom of media person's world wide and Sri Lanka in particular.

Since the present Government in Sri Lanka came into power, it has systematically stifled the freedom of expression by media persons as can be seen from the following list.

Record of incidents to media persons since this Government came to power:

- 11 Journalists killed - 7 of them Tamils
- 28 Assaults
- 13 Arrests
- 5 Abductions
- The ever sliding loss of press freedom has pushed Sri Lanka to the rank of 165 out of 173 in the media abuse league.

The modus operandi to stifle media freedom are many

1. Censorship
2. Threats, intimidation, attacks on journalists and their families, kidnappings, detention without torture, and murder by the government sponsored thugs.
3. Damage to Media property
4. Prevention of distribution of papers
5. Prevention of challenging the Government version of things.

Although the government denies any involvement in these abuses, not a single culprit has yet been brought to justice. The facts speak for themselves.

The situation in Sri Lanka is so dire that many journalists including Iqbal Athas a military analyst have been forced to leave the country for personal safety and safety of their families.

There are a large number of journalists including Mr Tissanayagam, still languishing in prisons, without being brought before the judiciary. All requests by the International Media and Human rights organisations to either release him or charge him have been blatantly ignored by the Sri Lankan

GOVERNMENT.

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The war against the media is without witness. That the Fourth pillar of freedom is crumbling in Sri Lanka appears to be of little concern to the International community who have not imposed any sanctions on such action, thus giving the Government a comfort zone.

The Government's claims that the journalists are prevented from going to the war or safety zones for their own safety does not hold good. Journalists, without fear of life and limb, have been reporting from war zones in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other hot spots. There are reliable reports that the Sri Lankan Army is using cluster bombs and chemical weapon. Hundreds of women and children, youths and elderly have been killed. Scores of schools and hospitals have been bombed and destroyed. A once proud population has been reduced to the state of nomads, and the treatment in refuge camps is sub human. These are the facts that the government does not want the journalists to expose to the world.

IATAJ urges the International community to no longer be a silent onlooker to the abuses of media freedom by the Sri Lankan government and to take necessary action to safeguard the rights and freedom of the media.

The International Association of Tamil Journalists on this World Media Freedom Day salutes all journalists who have risked their lives and livelihood to go into dangerous areas to expose the dire conditions and consequences of civil wars and atrocities committed by those in power. There are many cases where journalists have been kidnapped, tortured and killed, but these journalists have succeeded in exposing to the world the untold human sufferings of the people and the utter disregard of the state apparatus to fundamental rights of life.

President

Mrs. Anandhi Suriyaprakasam

இவ்வண்ணம்

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