

NY Amnesty rally protests violence against journalists in Sri Lanka

Colombo, 14.04.2008



Several hundred human rights activists participated in a protest event "Get On The Bus (GOTB)" sponsored by Amnesty International, in New York Friday afternoon outside the Sri Lanka consulate in midtown, protesting against violence against media in Sri Lanka, attendees to the event said. The protesters visited three other country missions in New York, Libyan Mission (political prisoners), Darfur (international justice and accountability), and Myanmar (people of Burma/democracy).

The protesters highlighted the month-long detention of J.S. Tissanayagam and the killing of 'Sudar Oli' correspondent Subramaniam Sugirdharajan in Trincomalee in 2006.

The Amnesty delegation spokeswoman, after meeting with the Sri Lankan Consul-General, said that the official assured her that the charges against Mr. Tissainayagam would be investigated, and that within the next two weeks, Tissainayagam would receive medical treatment for his current health issues.

Miriam Young of the US NGO Forum on Sri Lanka, addressing the demonstrators at the St. Barts Church on Fifth Avenue, said that the Emergency Regulations under which Mr. Tissanayagam is being held are in contravention of international standards.

She said that Amnesty members must press the US government to pressure Colombo to either bring charges on Mr. Tissanayagam or to release him immediately. If there is a trial, a representative from the US Embassy must attend the trial every day, she said.

Ms. Young added that although the U.S. has no strategic interests in the island, it still provides training and surveillance equipment to the Sri Lankan armed forces and so has influence over its actions. She emphasized that a healthy democracy requires freedom of expression and that this freedom is under threat on the island.