

TAMIL CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS - TCHR/CTDH CENTRE TAMOUL POUR LES DROITS DE L'HOMME

(Established in 1990)

(UN accredited NGO to the World Summit on Information Society and the Warsaw Conference)

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Where is this so-called democratic government heading for?

"We will have no truce or parlay with you (Hitler), or the grisly gang who work your wicked will. You do your worst and we will do our best." -- Sir Winston Churchill

While there is a serious international lobby by the Sri Lankan government propagandists about their 'democracy' and fight against terrorism, locally they do EVERYTHING under the Sun. There is no-one to question them. If anyone speaks about the realities or criticises their activities, they are branded as 'terrorist supporters' or justifying terrorism in Sri Lanka!

The solution for the 60 years of bloody ethnic conflict; for the humanitarian crisis - is military. Artillery firing and aerial bombardments. Civilians including children are butchered in the Vanni.

The solution for any question raised by MPs in the parliament; for people talking about the realities - is to carry out arson attacks and assassinations.

The solution for the increase in the cost of living - is to divert the people's attention towards temporary military victories.

If any queries come from the international community, - the simple answer is, 'We are fighting terrorism', introducing 'democracy' – conducting local, provincial and parliamentary elections - but not the Presidential election!

This is the pathetic situation today in Sri Lanka.

Since independence, no acceptable political solution has been proposed to the people in the North East by any of the successive governments, but they have each sucked the blood of those people.

Even with the continuous grievances the people in the North East managed to live in some pockets of peace in the land of their birth at least since 1984. Gradually almost everything has been ruined under the pretext of the fight against terrorism.

People are suffering in monsoon rain and flood, without food, shelter and other basic facilities. When they demand humanitarian assistance, the government pounds them with artillery shells and aerial bombardments. One day the culprits causing this agony – crimes against humanity - must face the international court – ICC.

The free media which talks about corruption within the government and highlights the realities of the war in the North East are intimidated, threatened and individuals are assassinated. The free media in Sri Lanka has a very long sad story to relate.

TCHR CONDEMNS THE BRUTAL SLAUGHTER OF A PROMINENT AND COURAGEOUS JOURNALIST

On 6 January 09, fifteen masked gunmen threw grenades and set fire to the main control room of Sri Lanka's largest private broadcaster - Maharaja Television/Broadcasting Network (MTV/MBC) in Pannipitiya, near Colombo.

On 8 January 09, the Chief Editor of the English weekly 'Sunday Leader' and 'Morning Leader' - Mr Lasantha Wickramatunga was shot dead by unknown gunmen. ***TCHR condemns this brutal slaughter of a prominent and courageous journalist.*** For the last few years, Mr Wickramatunga has been harassed and threatened by the State and its mercenaries. The Leader publication's printing press was attacked in 2005 and 2007, but the culprits were neither arrested nor punished.

The press release issued by Reporters Without Borders, (Reporters Sans Frontières - RSF), on 8 January 09, stated, ***"...President Mahinda Rajapaksa, his associates and the government media are directly to blame because they incited hatred against him and allowed an outrageous level of impunity to develop as regards violence against the press. Sri Lanka's image is badly sullied by this murder, which is an absolute scandal and must not go unpunished."***

Reporters Without Borders also said that during their meeting with President Rajapaksa in October last year, Rajapaksa had called Wickrematunga a "terrorist journalist"!

Several Sri Lankan journalists have been killed in the recent past and no one has been held responsible despite government promises to investigate these murders. Last year, the political officer of the British Embassy in Colombo was injured after being dragged out of his car and attacked, along with a journalist accompanying him.

The Minister of Labour Mervyn Silva walked into the Canadian High Commission with a pistol in his hand in **September 2007** to demand a visa for his son. Also Mervyn Silva assaulted a news editor of the state-owned Rupawahini cooperation for not broadcasting his speech in **December 2007**. He still remains as a cabinet minister with impunity.

During 2008, many journalists were intimidated, two journalists - Paranirupasingam Devakumar (28/5/08-*Maharaja Television*) and Mohamed Rashmi, (6/10/08-*Sirasa TV*) were killed and two other journalists, J. S. Tissanayagam and Vettivel Jasikaran were imprisoned and remain so.

As far as the free media is concerned, Reporters without Borders has ranked Sri Lanka 165th out of 173 countries. Is this the democracy that Sri Lankan propagandists are boasting about to the international community?

It is to be noted that on 6 January 09, the opposition leader in Sri Lanka, Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe requested the government to stop all types of "**state terrorism**".

With such an immense humanitarian catastrophe ongoing in the North East and persistent threats on the media - where is this country going with its military dictatorship?

JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ASSISTANTS KILLED IN SRI LANKA - SINCE 1990

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Media</u> | <u>Killed</u> | <u>Journalists (J)</u> <u>Media Asst. (M/A)</u> |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| Lasantha Wickramatunga | <i>Sunday Leader</i> | 8 January 2009 | J |
| Mohamed Rashmi | <i>Sirasa TV</i> | 6 October 2008 | J |
| Paranirupasingam Devakumar | <i>Maharaja Television</i> | 28 May 2008 | J |
| Sahathevan Nilakshan | <i>Chaalaram</i> | 1 August 2007 | J |
| Selvarajah Rajivarnam | <i>Uthayan</i> | 29 April 2007 | J |
| Chandrabose Suthaharan | <i>Nilam</i> | 16 April 2007 | J |
| Isaivizhi Chempiyan | <i>Voice of Tigers</i> | 27 November 2007 | M/A |
| Suresh Linbiyo | <i>Voice of Tigers</i> | 27 November 2007 | M/A |
| T. Tharmalingam | <i>Voice of Tigers</i> | 27 November 2007 | M/A |
| Sinnathamby Sivamaharajah | <i>Namathu Eelanadu</i> | 20 August 2006 | J |
| Sathasivam Baskaran | <i>Sudar Oli</i> | 15 August 2006 | M/A |
| Mariathas Manojanraj | <i>Thinakural/Veerakesari</i> | 27 July 2006 | M/A |
| Lakmal Silva | <i>Free-lance</i> | 1 July 2006 | J |
| Subramaniam Sugirdharajan SSR | <i>Sudar Oli</i> | 24 January 2006 | J |
| Ranjith Kumar | <i>Uthayan</i> | 02 May 2006 | M/A |
| Suresh Kumar | <i>Uthayan</i> | 02 May 2006 | M/A |
| K. Navarathnam | <i>Thinakkural</i> | 22 December 2005 | J |
| Relangi Selvarajah | <i>SL Rupawahini Corporation</i> | 12 August 2005 | J |
| Dharmeratnam Sivaram | <i>Daily Mirror, Virakesari and TamilNet</i> | 29 April 2005 | J |
| Kandasamy Iyer Balanadarajah | <i>Thinamurasu</i> | 16 August 2004 | J |
| Aiyathurai Nadesan | <i>Virakesari, IBC</i> | 31 May 2004 | J |
| Mylvaganam Nirmalarajan | <i>BBC & IBC, UK</i> | 20 October 2000 | J |
| Nadarajah Atputharajah | <i>Thinamurusu</i> | 02 November 1999 | J |
| Rohana Kumara | <i>Editor-Satana</i> | 07 September 1999 | J |
| Richard de Zoysa | <i>IPS</i> | 18 February 1990 | J |

(Source from year 2000 to 2009 – Reporters Without Borders - Reporters Sans Frontières - RSF)

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