

Free Tissa

Protect Journalistic Freedom



For Immediate Release

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Free Tissa Campaign Welcomes Release On Bail For Tissa

Campaign Calls For Unconditional Pardon For Tissa and For Name To Be Cleared

J.S. Tissainayagam, a veteran journalist who was sentenced to 20 years of hard labour by the Sri Lankan government last year, has been released on bail today pending his appeal. Tissainayagam has been in jail since March 2008 and was required to surrender his passport and post a bail bond of 50,000 rupees to secure his release.

Tissainayagam had been charged and convicted of writing articles that created "communal disharmony" under Sri Lanka's draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency Regulations. During last year's World Press Freedom Day, President Barack Obama cited Tissainayagam as an emblematic example of a journalist persecuted for doing his job. Tissainayagam is also the recipient of the 2009 International Press Freedom Award and the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism.

The Free Tissa Campaign calls for an unconditional presidential pardon for Tissainayagam. All charges against Tissainayagam should be dismissed and his safety and security should be ensured. The Campaign also calls for all attacks against the independent media to cease as journalists are a cornerstone of a functioning democracy.

Sri Lanka is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists, as they are at risk of being threatened, arrested, attacked, and killed. In 2009, Reporters Without Borders ranked Sri Lanka 163 out of 175 countries in the world for press freedom.

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