



COTANZ

Consortium of Tamil Associations in New Zealand

Auckland Wellington Christchurch Palmerston North

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Media Release

Sri Lankan Government's Attack on Tamil Media

On the 2nd of May 2006 in the northern Sri Lankan city of Jaffna five armed paramilitary gunmen entered the main office of the daily Tamil newspaper Uthayan. The gunmen opened fire on editorial staff, killing at least two staffers, including the daily's marketing manager and wounding two, according to initial reports.

"The gunmen were shooting at will, everybody they found inside the office were shot. Finally, they smashed all the computers in the office," said an eyewitness. One of the attackers, in black civilian clothes, was identified as a paramilitary cadre by the eyewitnesses in the area. (Source, TamilNet.)

The Committee to Protect Journalists (an independent, nonprofit organization defending press freedom, <http://www.cpj.org>) noted regarding this attack that "[the Sri Lankan] President Rajapakse is scheduled to address an international media freedom conference in Colombo on Wednesday, World Press Freedom Day. He should take that opportunity to pledge his government's renewed efforts to protect all Sri Lankan journalists."

In addition to last Tuesday's incident, last Friday (5th May) the Sri Lanka Army deployed soldiers around another Jaffna based Tamil daily newspaper, Namathu Eelanadu. Around fifteen gunshots were heard in front of the paper office, according to the staff. (Source, TamilNet.) Further details are not available at the moment.

On December 15, 2005, the editorial, administrative and press offices of this newspaper were searched by military personnel who conducted lengthy interrogations of staff.

A Tamil female journalist Sivaramya Sivanathan was arrested at the UNESCO WPF (World Press Freedom Day) conference in Colombo on 1st of May 2006.

Following from these incidents statement, COTANZ (Consortium of Tamil Association in New Zealand) humbly requests the Government and Ministers of New Zealand to:

To request the Sri Lankan government to investigate both these incidents and make freely available the methods and findings of the investigations.

In the opinion of COTANZ, while the Sri Lankan armed forces continue to operate in Tamil dominated electorates, violence against Tamil civilians and institutions will not only continue but in all likelihood increase in frequency and severity

George Arulanantham
Coordinator
Consortium of Tamil Associations in New Zealand
+64 9 620 6200, george_cotanz@yahoo.com

Dr Siva Naguleswaran
+64 4 389 6134, shweeva@clear.net.nz

See following webs for International Federation of Journalist Report.

<http://www.tamilcanadian.com/pageview.php?ID=4049&SID=135>

<http://www.ifj.org/default.asp?Index=3894&Language=EN>