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Sri Lankan Government's move to silence the voice of the Tamils

The Media House – Switzerland strongly condemn the Sri Lankan air force attack against the Voice of Tiger radio station in the North of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Air Force bomber jets destroyed a transmission tower of the Voice of Tigers radio broadcast located in Kokkavil in the Northern part of Sri Lanka on Tuesday 17 October 2006.

Sri Lankan bombers dropped bombs and fired mortars, hitting the tower and the building 25 times, destroying the main 500 feet high broadcast tower and the main transmitter at Kokkavil

The main broadcast tower and transmitter of the Thamileelam Radio that broadcasts the official broadcast of the Liberation Tigers, the Voice of Tigers, 'Thamileelam Vanoli', a commercial Tamil service and a Sinhala language broadcast, were destroyed.

Two employees who were attached to the media station were also wounded in the attack.

This attack was meant to silence the voice of the Tamils at a time when peace talks about to be held. This is an another attack of a series of harassments by the Sri Lankan military machinery taking place against Tamil news medias in the context of escalating violence in North and East of the country.

- On 21st of August, 2006, the managing Director of Jaffna Tamil daily "Namathu Eelanadu" Sinnathamby Sivamaharajah, 68, was shot dead by the Sri Lankan Military intelligences at his residence Tellippalai Jaffna.
- On 29th August 2006 , the news director of 'Suriyan FM', a Tamil radio, Nadaraja Guruparan was abducted on his way to work from his home in Colombo early morning by the Sri Lankan Military intelligence and released mid night 29th August 2006.
- On the 10 September, 2006, two gunmen who entered to a Tamil news media's headquarters in the northern city of Jaffna and threatened the staff.
- On 7 September 2006, two gunmen entered 'Uthayan' Tamil news paper office and threatened its editorial committee.
- On 2 May 2006 five gunmen burst into a Tamil news paper office in Jaffna and opened fire on equipment and personnel. Four employees sustained gunshot injuries and two of them died.
- On the 08th of August 2006, two warehouses of a Tamil daily published news paper in Jaffna were destroyed in an arson attack.

- On 15 August 2006, Sathasivam Baskaran, 44, one of the Tamil newspaper's drivers, was killed at the wheel of a delivery truck in Jaffna.
- On 23 August 2006, an arson attack on the newspaper's printing press caused damaged put at millions of Dollars.

During the rule of the present Government of Sri Lanka under Mahinda Rajapakse, there have been a record number of attacks on media persons, press offices, newspaper distributors. The attack of the VOT tower joins this long list of attacks on media.

Voice of Tigers is the only radio broadcasting service that is outside the Government of Sri Lanka control area and thus able to broadcast without the usual threats posed by the Sri Lankan Government operated forces.

The Media House – Switzerland suspects the Sri Lankan Government's attack on the VOT broadcasting station is a planned agenda to suppress the freedom of expression prior to the talks scheduled in Geneva.

The Media House – Switzerland is deeply concerned by the continued targeted attacks on Tamil news media institutions as well as the Tamil media personal by the Sri Lankan Government.

We want to bring to your kind notice that if this tendency is to continue unabated freedom to Information of Tamil people in the north East will be drastically reduced and freedom of expression will be curtailed.

John Christopher
Genral Secretary
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