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## **Sri Lanka: Media must be allowed to work freely and safely**

Sri Lankan authorities must ensure that the country's media are allowed to work without restriction and in safety, Amnesty International said today.

"The Sri Lankan authorities are doing little to ensure the safety of the country's media, or to prosecute those responsible for murdering or attacking them. They are also directly responsible for subjecting journalists to harassment and interrogation," said Yolanda Foster, Amnesty International's Sri Lanka Researcher.

Sandaruwan Senadheera, editor of 'Lanka-e-news' was questioned for six hours today by officers from the special wing of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) at their headquarters in Colombo Fort about a complaint lodged by the Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapakse.

The complaint concerned an article posted on the website on 21 February 2008 headlined 'International intelligence service suspends providing information to Sri Lanka; Gota is responsible for the losses since December 31.' Mr Senadheera was told that officers would visit his office next week for further questioning.

This comes a day after an assault on Upali Tennakoon, chief editor of the *Rivira* weekly newspaper, and his wife Dhammika, and follows the fatal shooting earlier this month of Lasantha Wickramatunga, editor of the *Sunday Leader* newspaper.

At least 14 media workers have been unlawfully killed in Sri Lanka since the beginning of 2006. Others have been arbitrarily detained, tortured and allegedly disappeared while in the custody of security forces. More than 20 journalists have left the country in response to death threats.

"Without a free media that is able to express alternative views and offer the opportunity for public scrutiny, abuses can flourish under a veil of secrecy and denial. Sri Lanka's climate of impunity for attacks on the media has made it impossible to get an accurate impartial picture of what is happening in the country. By threatening journalists with the risk of arrest, and failing to protect them from attack, the government is failing its citizens," said Yolanda Foster.

**[Read more: Sri Lanka newspaper editor shot dead, 8 January](#)**