

04 July 2007

UA 172/07 **Fear for Safety / Death Threat**

SRI LANKA **Sadaruwan Senadheera, (m) aged 45, Editor**

Sadaruwan Senadheera is the editor of Lanka Enews, an online news service which reports on human rights and corruption issues in Sri Lanka. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety as he has been receiving threatening telephone calls and emails since January 2007. The most recent death threat came after the publication of a story which criticised the government in June.

On 27 June 2007, Lanka Enews published a story covering the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) criticism of the Sri Lankan government's investigation into the execution style killings of 17 *Action Contre La Faim* (ACF) Aid workers in Sri Lanka entitled, "Forensic evidence of killing of 17 aid workers tampered". Shortly after publication, Sadaruwan Senadheera received several intimidatory phone calls.

He also received a death threat as an e mail which said, "When Journalists change the truth & keep country & nation in danger, me & all innocent people have one wish. You all get either 5.52 mm or 7.62 mm bullet one day & sooner is better."

Sadaruwan Senadheera started to receive threatening phone calls and e mails from January 2007 and has filed a police complaint at Rajagiriya Walikade Police Station in Colombo about the recent threats against him.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The human rights situation in Sri Lanka has deteriorated dramatically in recent months, as escalating violence has resulted in widespread human rights abuses and a climate of fear and insecurity. There are increasing concerns for the safety of journalists and others working on human rights issues.

In the last week the Defence columnist of the Thinukkuran Daily newspaper K.P. Mohan was hospitalized after being severely assaulted by a group of air force personnel while he was on his way to the President's office.

Journalists have faced shootings and other physical assaults, abductions, intimidation and harassment, reportedly carried out by both government personnel and members of armed groups, including the LTTE and the Karuna faction (in eastern Sri Lanka). Nine media workers have been killed since the beginning of 2006 and one more is presumed dead having been reported disappeared.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Sadaruwan Senadheera, who has received a series of threatening emails and telephone calls, purely as a result of his peaceful and legitimate activities as a journalist;
- noting that his life may be at risk following the publication of an article on Lanka Enews, the online news service, which was published on 27 June 2007;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee the safety of Sadaruwan Senadheera;
- urging the authorities to conduct a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the death threats Sadaruwan Senadheera has received;
- calling on the Sri Lankan government to ensure that all journalists are allowed to work independently, without fear of attacks, harassment or other human rights violations.

APPEALS TO:

President Mahinda Rajapakse
Presidential Secretariat, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Fax: **+ 94 11 2446657/ 2472100**

Salutation: **Dear President Rajapakse**

Gotabaya Rajapaksa
Secretary, Ministry of Defence, 15/5 Baladaksha Mawatha, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

Fax: **+ 94 11 2446 300/ 2541 529**

Salutation: **Dear Secretary of Defence**

Inspector General of Police Victor Perera
Headquarters

New Secretariat
Colombo 1
Sri Lanka

Fax: + 94 11 2345227/2446174/2336711

igp@police.lk

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

COPIES TO:

Mahinda Samarasinghe

Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights, 383, Department of Meteorology, Bauddhaloka Mawatha,
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

Fax: +94 11 2681978 / 2881982

and to diplomatic representatives of Sri Lanka accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 August 2007
