

URGENT ACTION

DEMAND INVESTIGATION INTO MISSING JOURNALIST

Sri Lankan journalist and political analyst Prageeth Eknaligoda went missing on 24 January from Homagama, near the capital Colombo. His wife, Sandya Eknaligoda, was taken into custody when she went to lodge a complaint with the Homagama Police on 25 January. She has since been released.

Prageeth Eknaligoda disappeared shortly after leaving work at the Lanka-e-News office on 24 January. Local residents told Sri Lankan press of seeing a white van without number plates close to his house at around this time. The last contact with him was at 9:30 pm that day and since then his phone has not functioned and his friends and family have not heard from him. In the days leading up to his disappearance he had told a close friend that he believed he was being followed.

Sandya Eknaligoda tried to lodge a complaint about her husband's abduction the following day. She has subsequently expressed disappointment over police conduct because she was detained for several hours at the police station. A senior police official told press freedom organisations he was too busy with the presidential election to make the case a priority.

Prageeth Eknaligoda is a journalist and government critic who has been actively reporting on the 26 January presidential elections. Last week he had completed a comparative analysis of the two main presidential candidates, coming out in favour of the opposition candidate Sarath Fonseka.

On 27 August 2009 Prageeth Eknaligoda was abducted by a group who also arrived in a white van. He was forcibly bundled into the van, blindfolded, handcuffed and taken to an unknown destination before being released the following day. White vans have been used in many abductions and enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka, particularly since 2006, when state agents and paramilitary groups which are allied to the government stepped up attacks on critics of the government.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Sinhalese, Tamil or your own language:

- calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into the disappearance of Prageeth Eknaligoda and attacks on other Sri Lankan journalists and media workers, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- calling for an investigation into the conduct of the police personnel responsible for registering Sandya Eknaligoda's complaint about her husband's abduction;
- calling for the abolition or reform of legislation that is being used to suppress the right to freedom of expression and put an end to the climate of impunity that has allowed a long campaign, by state agents and paramilitary groups, of intimidation and violence against independent journalists in Sri Lanka.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 MARCH 2010 TO:

His Excellency the President

Mahinda Rajapaksa
Presidential Secretariat
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Fax: +94 11 2446657

Salutation: Your Excellency

Inspector General of Police

Mahinda Balasuriya
Sri Lanka Police Headquarters
101/1 Kew Road, Colombo 2
Sri Lanka

Fax: + 94 11 244 6174

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

DEMAND INVESTIGATION INTO MISSING JOURNALIST

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Physical attacks and the relentless intimidation of journalists, as well as government-imposed restrictions on reporting, are threatening freedom of expression in Sri Lanka. Unprecedented levels of violence against media workers reporting stories critical of the government have contributed to a climate of fear and self-censorship that denies Sri Lankans the right to information.

Numerous journalists have been detained while others have fled the country following death threats. At least 14 media workers have been killed since 2006. Investigations into the unlawful killings of journalists have failed to result in prosecutions.

UA: 24/10 Index: ASA 37/003/2010 Issue Date: 26 January 2010

