

Protect Sri Lankan Journalist

Action End Date: November 30, 2009

Dileesha Abeysundera, a Sri Lankan journalist, is in danger after a gang of unidentified people threatened her and tried to forcefully gain access to her property in Sri Lanka on September 28. Ms. Abeysundera is an award-winning journalist and an activist in the movement for media rights in Sri Lanka. It is thought that the threat against her on Sept. 28 stemmed from her having organized a meeting on that day calling for the abolition of the Press Council Act, which has been used by the Sri Lankan government to restrict freedom of expression.

Since 2006, at least 14 media workers have been killed in Sri Lanka, with no one held accountable for these murders. Numerous journalists have been detained while others have left the country after receiving death threats. Call on the Sri Lankan government to ensure Dileesha Abeysundera's safety and to investigate the intimidation attempted against her and other Sri Lankan journalists and media workers. Ask the Sri Lankan government to end the climate of impunity that has allowed a long campaign, by state agents and others, of intimidation and violence against independent journalists in Sri Lanka.

Targets:

- a. President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka, fax: 011-94-11-2446657; email: presec@presidentsoffice.lk
- b. Ambassador Jaliya Wickramasuriya, Embassy of Sri Lanka, 2148 Wyoming Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20008, fax: 1-202-232-7181; email: slembassy@slembassyusa.org

Sample Letter;

Dear _____,

I am deeply concerned about Dileesha Abeysundera, a Sri Lankan journalist working for the Irudina newspaper. On September 28, around 11:45 P.M., several unidentified people traveling in white vans attempted to break into her compound in Colombo. They called repeatedly banged on her gate while calling out her name. Although the attempted entry was unsuccessful and Ms. Abeysundera was unharmed, I am concerned that she remains in danger.

Ms. Abeysundera had earlier on that day organized and attended a meeting calling for the abolition of the Press Council Act, which has been used by the Sri Lankan government to restrict freedom of expression. It is thought that the attempted intimidation of her that evening may have been due to her work campaigning for media rights, including holding the meeting earlier that day.

Since 2006, at least 14 media workers have been killed in Sri Lanka, with no one held accountable for these murders. Numerous journalists have been detained while others have left the country after receiving death threats. Physical attacks and the relentless intimidation of journalists are threatening freedom of expression in Sri Lanka. The attempted intimidation of Ms. Abeysundera on Sept. 28 is but one example.

I respectfully request that the Sri Lankan government ensure Dileesha Abeysundera's safety and investigate the intimidation attempted against her and other Sri Lankan journalists and media workers. I would also ask that the Sri Lankan government end the climate of impunity that has allowed a long campaign of intimidation and violence against independent journalists in Sri Lanka.

Thank you for your consideration.