

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/sri-lanka-call-for-truth-about-cartoonist-s-24-01-2013,43941.html>

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Asia - Sri Lanka

Three years of silence

## Call for truth about cartoonist's disappearance three years ago

24 January 2013

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See the interview with former editor of the Sunday Leader, Frederica Jansz, now in exile, at the end of the press release

On the the third anniversary of the disappearance of **Prageeth Ekneligoda**, a freelance cartoonist and political analyst who worked for the Lanka-e-News website, Reporters Without Borders (RWB) and [Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka](#) (JDS) reiterate their call for justice and condemn the failure of the authorities to make any progress with the investigation.

"Ekneligoda has been missing for three years and the investigation by the Sri Lankan police and judicial authorities has ground to a complete halt," RWB and JDS said.

"The government's lack of action and supreme court chief justice Shirani Bandaranayake's recent replacement by a relative of President Mahinda Rajapakse is further proof that the Rajapaksa family is consolidating its grip on the judiciary and, in so doing, is suppressing the truth about many cases including those involving media freedom.

"By appointing Mohan Peiris, who told the United Nations outrageous lies, as supreme court chief justice, Sri Lanka's president is openly signalling his desire to quickly close the investigations into Ekneligoda's death and fellow journalist Lasantha Wickrematunga's murder."

Ekneligoda disappeared as he was leaving the offices of the *Lanka-e-News* website in Colombo on 24 January. Government officials made a series of [contradictory statements](#) about his disappearance while the police made few efforts to find him alive.

A former attorney-general, Mohan Peiris told the United Nations Committee Against Torture in Geneva on 9 November 2011 that Ekneligoda was alive and in hiding somewhere abroad but he retracted when questioned by a Colombo court last year.

Ekneligoda was a well-known cartoonist whose work advocated respect for democracy and minority rights. His disappearance came at a time of considerable political tension just three days before President Rajapakse's reelection on 27 January 2010.

His wife, Sandya Ekneligoda, reported his disappearance to several police stations and the National Commission on Human Rights. She went on to [seek international support](#), turning to UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon and the UN representative in Colombo. In March 2012, she went to Geneva to testify to the UN Human Rights Council.

Journalists, especially those who try to shed light on the human rights violations that took place during the final months of the Tamil rebellion, have been subject to an [unprecedented campaign of threats and intimidation](#) since 2009.

The campaign stepped up in March 2012 in the run-up to a UN Human Rights Council session that examined the situation in Sri Lanka. The council adopted a resolution calling on Sri Lanka to prosecute those suspected of human rights violations during the war.

The anniversary of Ekneligoda's disappearance comes just two weeks after the fourth

anniversary of the death of **Lasantha Wickrematunga**, the editor of the opposition *Sunday Leader* newspaper, [who was gunned down](#) in Colombo on 8 January 2009. His murder remains unpunished.

A country where journalists are permanently exposed to violence and impunity although its civil war officially ended in 2009, Sri Lanka is ranked 163rd out of 179 countries in the [2011-2012 press freedom index](#) and is classified as country "[under surveillance](#)" in the Reporters Without Borders Internet survey.

Reporters Without Borders has interviewed Sri Lankan journalist **Frederica Jansz**, a former *Sunday Leader* editor who recently left the country after receiving repeated death threats:

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