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<http://www.rsf.org/desire-to-silence-outspoken-18-02-2013,44088.html>

Asia - Sri Lanka

Nearly fatal reprisal

Desire to silence outspoken journalists seen in murder attempt

18 February 2013

Reporters Without Borders and its partner organization, Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka, firmly condemn an attempt to murder *Sunday Leader* journalist **Faraz Shaukatally** on the night 15 February, when he was shot and wounded by gunmen inside his Colombo home. Doctors say his life is no longer in danger.

"This appalling shooting suggests that the enemies of media freedom are trying to silence those journalists who still dare to report the news freely," Reporters Without Borders and Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka said.

"Even if a thorough investigation is needed to determine the motive with certainty, there are already many indications that this attack was a reprisal for Shaukatally's journalistic activities, especially as he had been threatened shortly after writing articles about government corruption and private sector embezzlement.

"We urge the authorities to react to this attack without delay and, in their investigation, to focus on the possibility that it was linked to his work, which seems the most likely motive at this stage. Shaukatally must also be given police protection at the hospital where he is being treated and after he leaves it, as well."

Shaukatally was speaking by phone with editorial staff at the *Sunday Leader* from his home in the south Colombo district of Mount Lavinia when three intruders appeared, cut his phone line and opened fire, wounding him in the neck.

Foreign tourists staying in the guest house beside his home took him to Colombo National Hospital, where doctors managed to extract the bullet fragments from his neck during the next 24 hours.

Witnesses say unidentified men went to his home two weeks ago, asking where he was. The *Sunday Leader* said: "It was clear that the attack on Faraz was well planned and coordinated as the gunmen knew the exact time he was at home on Friday, where his room is located and if he was alone in his room."

This attack comes just weeks after the third anniversary of cartoonist **Prageeth Ekneligoda's** [disappearance](#) on 24 January 2010, the fourth anniversary of *Sunday Leader* editor **Lasantha Wickrematunga's** [murder](#) on 8 January 2009 and the four anniversary of an attempt on the lives of *Rivira* editor **Upali Tennakoon** and his wife, also in January 2009.

Sri Lankan journalists are constantly the targets of threats and reprisals, often by the government. Former *Sunday Leader* editor **Frederica Jansz** recently [talked to Reporters Without Borders](#) about the violence and impunity that undermines the work of the media and forced her to flee the country.

Sri Lanka is classified by Reporters Without Borders as a [country "under surveillance"](#) because of its violations of online freedom of expression and is ranked 162nd out of 179 countries in its [2013 press freedom index](#).

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