



For immediate release – 16 July 2009

PRESS RELEASE

Sri Lanka: Deteriorating Press Freedom Continues Post-Conflict

Today the International Press Freedom Mission to Sri Lanka, of which ARTICLE 19 is a member, issued an open letter to Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa expressing extreme concern over the deterioration of press freedom despite the military victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The International Press Freedom Mission to Sri Lanka has outlined an 11-point plan to the government of Sri Lanka to redress the perilous condition of press freedom.

In particular, the Mission has asked the government to:

1. Combat impunity through the creation of a Special Prosecutor's Office for the investigation of crimes against the media;
2. Put in place effective measures to ensure that all journalists can work safely.
3. Release imprisoned journalist J.S. Tissainayagam and his colleagues B. Jasiharan and V. Vallarmathy;
4. Release the first results of the investigation into the murder of Lasantha Wickrematunge;
5. Provide full and unconditional access to the IDP camps for all media;
6. Repeal the Press Council Act No. 5 of 1973;
7. Introduce training for the police, army and the intelligence agencies on freedom of expression;
8. Award financial compensation to journalists who have been arbitrarily detained, beaten or otherwise harassed by security forces;
9. Invite the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom and Expression to visit Sri Lanka;
10. Work with the state-owned media to ensure the immediate end to direct verbal attacks and threats against independent journalists and press freedom activists; and
11. Introduce structural legal reforms to create an enabling environment for a free and independent media.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact Toby Mendel, a19law@hfx.eastlink.ca, tel +1 902 431-3688.
- The full text of the letter can be found at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/open-letter-to-his-excellency-president-mahinda-rajapaksa.pdf>.
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.