

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/sri-lanka-outspoken-news-website-s-01-02-2011,39438.html>

Asia - Sri Lanka

Gutted by fire

Suspect arrested by police investigating Lanka-e-News arson attack

2 February 2011

Police investigating the arson attack on the Colombo headquarters of the Lanka-e-News online newspaper during the early hours of 31 January say they arrested a suspect on the evening of the same day. According to the police, he is a member of a gang that works on contract. A second suspect escaped at the time of the arrest.

The instigators of this attack, as well as the perpetrators, must be identified and punished, Reporters Without Borders said,

The staff of Lanka-e-News have meanwhile voiced concern that no forensic experts have visited their gutted headquarters and that rain is liable to erase all the forensic evidence. Reporters Without Borders reiterates its call for an independent and impartial investigation.

Dozens of Sri Lankan journalists participated in a march in Colombo today to voice support for Lanka-e-News and condemn the country's frequent press freedom violations (http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hqDfhphwftja_Q42qd122H3pD5A?docId=CNG.a9790e638b792cfc6d654bd68885cd31.2f1).

Outspoken news website's headquarters destroyed in arson attack 01.02.2011

Reporters Without Borders condemns yesterday's arson attack on the headquarters of the **Lanka-e-News** online newspaper in the Colombo suburb of Malabe, which [gutted](#) most of the building including the rooms housing its computers and library and forced it to suspend all activities.

"We call for an impartial and independent investigation to be carried out immediately into the circumstances of this attack, which has silenced a news website critical of the government," Reporters Without Borders said. "The authorities have a duty to provide protection to journalists and media when they request it. Sri Lanka's media are often the targets of threats and violence."

The arson attack on Lanka-e-News was carried out by two individuals who broke into the building at around 2 a.m. yesterday and used gasoline to start the fire. The fact that unidentified individuals were seen watching the building and asking about the website's employees during the preceding days suggest that it was planned well ahead of time.

The attack came several days after Lanka-e-News published an [article](#) questioning the testimony that defence secretary Gotabaya Rajapakse, the president's brother, gave in a case brought against former army commander Sarath Fonseka.

The website's editor, **Sandaruwan Senadheera**, fled to the United Kingdom last year with his family after receiving threats. **Prageeth Eknaligoda**, who worked as a [cartoonist](#) and political commentator for the website, has been missing since 24 January 2010 (see the [support](#)

[campaign](#)).

The **Voice of Asia** media group in Colombo was the target of a [similar arson](#) attack by a dozen armed men last July.

As a result of the frequent attacks, Sri Lanka's journalists feel every unsafe and censor themselves constantly. Sri Lanka was ranked 158th out of 178 countries in the 2010 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.
