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<http://www.rsf.org/sri-lanka-second-armed-attack-on-tamil-15-04-2013,44377.html>

Asia - Sri Lanka

Arson attack

Second armed attack on Tamil newspaper in 10 days

15 April 2013

Uthayan's website was inaccessible at the time that this press release issued ([see cached version](#)).

Reporters Without Borders and its partner organization, Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS), firmly condemn a pre-dawn armed attack on the Tamil-language daily *Uthayan's* headquarters in the northern city of Jaffna on 13 April, just 10 days after a similar attack on Uthayan's distribution office in the town of Kilinochchi.

In the 13 April attack, three gunmen threatened Uthayan security guards and staff members and forced their way into the printing department, where they opened fire on equipment and then set fire to it, causing major damage but no injuries.

"We are appalled by this latest attack, which comes amid growing threats and violence against the Tamil media, and we offer our complete support for *Uthayan's* journalists, whose courage has our admiration and respect," Reporters Without Borders and JDS said.

"The police should have agreed to the newspaper's request for protection after the [3 April attack on its office in Kilinochchi](#). The passivity of the police in the face of repeated crimes of violence against *Uthayan*, and the systematic impunity enjoyed by those who carry out these crimes, render the government directly responsible."

Uthayan editor Premananth Thevanayagam told JDS: "Speaking in Tamil and threatening them with their guns, the attackers told the staff in the printing section to disperse. When the staff refused to obey, they opened fire on them and the machinery, before setting fire to the

machinery. Fortunately, no one was injured.”

Thevanayagam added: “We will no longer be able to print the newspaper at full strength as our main printing machine is damaged beyond repair.”

The only Tamil-language daily that never stopped publishing during the 1983-2009 civil war, *Uthayan* recently covered cases of land seizures by the military and local authorities in the north of the island.

Thevanayagam said he thought this coverage “could have been one of the motives for the attacks, as well as the debates prompted by the elections of provincial councillors.”

In the pre-dawn attack on *Uthayan*’s distribution office in Kilinochchi, 100 km southeast of Jaffna, on 3 April, the office was ransacked and four employees were injured. Following this attack, *Uthayan* asked those in charge of the police in the north of the island to provide the newspaper’s main offices with protection, but the request was ignored.

There has been a wave of harassment and violence against *Uthayan* since the start of the year. An *Uthayan* distributor was attacked on 10 January and the newspapers he was transporting were burned. **Thevanayagam** was summoned by the Criminal Investigation Department on 18 January for questioning about an article implicating senior army officers.

At least five of the *Uthayan*’s journalists have been killed since 2002 in attacks by government forces or pro-government paramilitaries.

Sri Lanka is on the Reporters Without Borders lists of “[countries under surveillance](#)” and is ranked 162nd out of 179 countries in the [2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

Photo : onlineuthayan.com

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